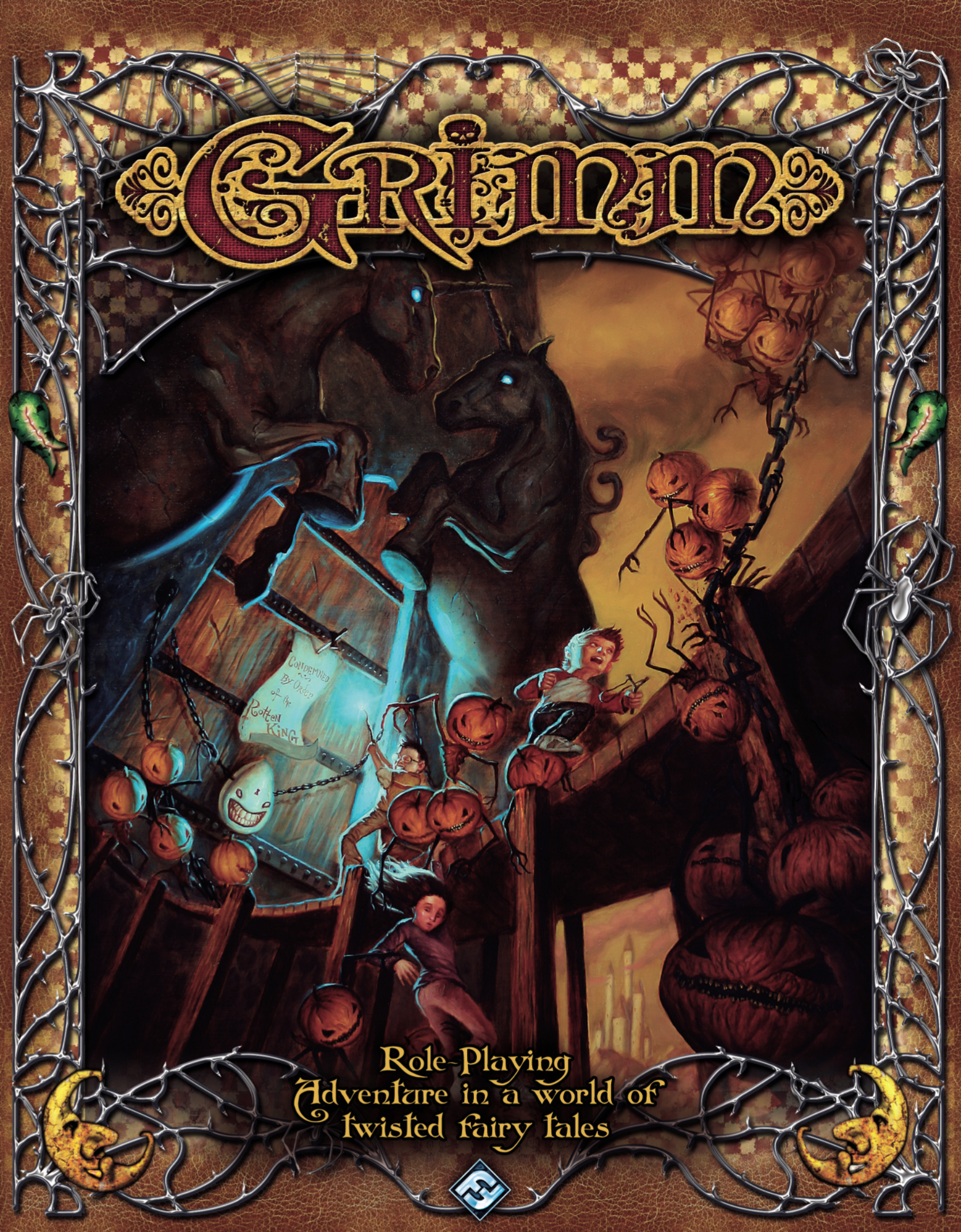
# Grimm™




Role-Playing
Adventure in a world of
twisted fairy tales

# GRIMM

## Credits

**Lead Developer**
Robert Vaughn

**Writing**
Gary Astleford
Eric Cagle
Steve Darlington
Shannon Kalvar
Andrew Law
Jody MacGregor
Alejandro Melchor
Robert J. Schwalb
Peter Schweighofer
Robert Vaughn
Kurtis Wiebe

**Editing**
Michael Hurley
James D. Torr
Robert Vaughn

**Layout**
Robert Vaughn

**Original Concept**
Christian T. Petersen

**Linear D6 System**
Greg Benage

**Cover Illustration**
Scott Altmann

**Cover Art Direction**
Christian T. Petersen

**Graphic Design**
Scott Nicely

**Additional Graphic Design**
Andrew Navaro

**Character Sheet Design**
Andrew Navaro

**Art Administration**
Zoe Robinson

**Publisher**
Christian T. Petersen

**First Edition Writing**
Robert J. Schwalb

**Interior Illustrations**
Dave Allsop
Scott Altmann
Steven Bagatzky
Jim Brady
Felicia Cano
Lee Carter
Miguel Coimbra
Jesper Ejsing
Garry Eyre
Andy Hopp
Jeff Lee Johnson
Michel Koch
Larry MacDougall
Alex McVey
Cara Mitten
Regis Moulun
James Ryman
Scott Schomburg
David Sourwine
Derk Venneman

***Horizon: Grimm*** is © 2003 and TM Fantasy Flight Publishing, Inc.
***Grimm*** is © 2007 and TM Fantasy Flight Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.

**FANTASY FLIGHT GAMES**
1975 County Rd. B2 #1
Roseville, MN 55113
www.fantasyflightgames.com

# Table of Contents


Introduction . . . . . .iv

## Chapter One: Character Creation

Step 1: Physical Features . . . . . .2
Shape . . . . . .2
Stature . . . . . .2
Speed . . . . . .3
Step 2: Archetypes . . . . . .3
Step 3: Traits and Talents . . . . . .4
Customizing Your Traits . . . .4
Your Iconic Core Trait . . . . . .4
Selecting Your Talents . . . . . .4
Spending Your 8 Credits . . . .4
Step 4: Who Are You? . . . . . .5
Step 5: How'd You Get Here? . .5
Character Advancement . . . . . .6

## Chapter Two: Archetypes

The Bully . . . . . .7
The Dreamer . . . . . .9
The Jock . . . . . .11
The Nerd . . . . . .12
The Normal Kid . . . . . .14
The Outcast . . . . . .16
The Popular Kid . . . . . .18

## Chapter Three: Traits and Talents

Traits . . . . . .20
Trait Levels . . . . . .20
Core Traits . . . . . .21
Cool . . . . . .22
Pluck . . . . . .22
Imagination . . . . . .23
Luck . . . . . .23
Muscle . . . . . .24
Playground Traits . . . . . .24
Hide . . . . . .24
Seek . . . . . .24
Scamper . . . . . .25
Scrap . . . . . .25
Throw . . . . . .25
Study Traits . . . . . .26
4-H . . . . . .26
Book Learning . . . . . .26
Boy Scouts . . . . . .27
Country Club . . . . . .27
Gaming . . . . . .27
Home Ec . . . . . .28
Industrial Arts . . . . . .28
Juvie . . . . . .29
Talents . . . . . .29
Origin Talents . . . . . .29
General Talents . . . . . .32

## Chapter Four: Action!

The Linear D6 System . . . . . .40
Trait Tests . . . . . .40
Performing Above Your Grade . . . . . .40
Performing Below Your Grade . . . . . .41
Multiple Dice . . . . . .41
Opposed Trait Tests . . . . . .41
Increasing Your Chances . . . .42
Advantages . . . . . .42
Focusing . . . . . .43
Stepping Up . . . . . .44
Teamwork . . . . . .44
Action Scenes . . . . . .45
Action Scene Steps . . . . . .45
Dramatic Moments . . . . . .46
Steps in an Action Scene . . . .46
Determining Turn Order . . . .49
Declaring Actions . . . . . .49
Performing Actions . . . . . .50
Another Round? . . . . . .50
Fighting . . . . . .52
Evade . . . . . .52
Guard . . . . . .52
Scrap . . . . . .53
Throw . . . . . .53
Wrestle . . . . . .53
Moving . . . . . .56
Intercept . . . . . .56
Scamper . . . . . .56
Surmount . . . . . .56
Other Actions . . . . . .57
Miscellaneous Game Terms . . . .57
Protection . . . . . .57
Range . . . . . .57
Stature . . . . . .57
Wounds . . . . . .60
Healing . . . . . .60

## Chapter Five: Tools of the Trade

Items . . . . . .62
Protective Gear . . . . . .62
Weapons . . . . . .63
Miscellaneous Gear . . . . . .65
Clothing . . . . . .65
Keepsakes . . . . . .66
Talismans . . . . . .68
Imaginings . . . . . .71
Magic . . . . . .73
Learning Magic . . . . . .73
Apprenticeship . . . . . .74
Study . . . . . .75
Precociousness . . . . . .75
Learning Progressive Spells . . . . . .76
Using Magic . . . . . .76
Progressive Spells . . . . . .76
Kids and Magic . . . . . .76
Weakening . . . . . .76
Estrangement . . . . . .77
Magical Duels . . . . . .78
Magical Methods . . . . . .78
Magical Styles . . . . . .79
Artificers . . . . . .79
Enchanters . . . . . .81
Guardians . . . . . .82
Seers . . . . . .84
Witches . . . . . .85
Wizards . . . . . .88

## Chapter Six: Running the Game

Sources . . . . . .90
Grimm Sagas . . . . . .91
Goals . . . . . .91
Themes . . . . . .91
Graduation and Story Progression . . . . . .92
Tone . . . . . .93
Telling the Story . . . . . .94
Creating the Twist . . . . . .94
Structuring the Story . . . . . .95
Setting the Scene . . . . . .97
Tips and Tricks . . . . . .98
A Narrative System . . . . . .98
Everyone Shines . . . . . .99
There Are No Useless Traits . . . . . .101
Special Rules . . . . . .102
Despair . . . . . .102
Hazards . . . . . .102
Drowning . . . . . .102
Falling . . . . . .102
Fire . . . . . .103
Oaths . . . . . .103
Poison . . . . . .105
Swallowed Whole . . . . . .105
Temptations . . . . . .106

## Chapter Seven: The Grimm Lands

The Land's Shape . . . . . .108
Leaving the Land . . . . . .109
The Beanstalk . . . . . .109
Inside the Beanstalk . . . . . .110
The Checkerboard Kingdoms . . .114
Kings and Queens . . . . . .114
A Kingdom Unto Itself . . . . . .116
Sample Kingdoms . . . . . .117
The City of Kings . . . . . .117
The Clocktower . . . . . .118
The Duchy of Ducats . . . . . .120
The Ferret's Nest . . . . . .122
The Glorious Empire . . . . . .123
The Hollow Tree . . . . . .125
The Land of Fear . . . . . .126

The Land of Gold . . . . . .129
The League of Witches and Warlocks . . . . . .130
Rapunzel's Tower . . . . . .131
Riddle Manor . . . . . .132
The Rose Garden . . . . . .134
Spinnenbruch . . . . . .134
The Stray Kingdom . . . . . .136
Tin and Spices . . . . . .138
The Great and Awful Forest . . . .139
Dangers . . . . . .140
Carnivorous Plants . . . . . .140
Enchanted Streams . . . . . .142
Woodland Caves . . . . . .143
Forest Locales . . . . . .143
Hunting Grounds . . . . . .143
Castle of the Snake . . . . . .143
Cottage of the Three Bears 144
Gingerbread House . . . . . .145
Hans the Hedgehog's Hut .146
Mother Holle's Hovel . . . .146
Old Woman Not Living in a Shoe . . . . . .147
The Rotten Kingdom . . . . .148
Slave Camp . . . . . .148
Sleeping Beauty's Bower . .148
Seven Kids' House . . . . . .150
Tower of the Birds . . . . . .151
The Rioting River . . . . . .152
The River's Ways . . . . . .152
Wild Tempers . . . . . .152
Unpredictable Path . . . . . .153
Crossing the River . . . . . .153
People and Places of Note . . .154
The Cursed Ferryman . . . .154
The Fifty-Fingered Delta . .155
The Sand Castle . . . . . .155
London Bridge . . . . . .156
The River Styx . . . . . .157
Don't Drink the Water . .157
Stirring Up the Dead . . .157
Adventures in the River . . . . .158
The Ultimate Medicine .158
The Wishing Fish . . . . . .158
The River Race . . . . . .158
The Sea . . . . . .159
Above and Beneath the Waves . . . . . .159
The Faces of the Sea . . . . . .159
The Sea's Four Faces . . . . .160
The Maiden of Gulls . . .160
The Woman of the Waves . . . . . .161
The Mother of Fishes . . .162
The Old Fishwife . . . . . .162
The Sea's Moods . . . . . .163
Entreating the Sea . . . . . .163
Calling to Her . . . . . .163
Of Favors and Fishes . . . . .163
What She Can Do . . . . . .164
Finding Things at Sea . .164
Passage . . . . . .164
Wash an Oddity to Shore.164
People and Places of Note . . .164
Oddities . . . . . .165
Beneficial Oddities . . . .165
Dangerous Oddities . . . .166
Strange Oddities . . . . . .166
Fairwater Bay . . . . . .167
The Lost Children . . . . .168
Dead Man's Cove . . . . . .169
Pirate Treasures . . . . . .169
Ghost Pirates . . . . . .169
The Devil's Punchbowl . . .169
Strange Fishing Villages . .170
All the Islands of the Sea . . . .170
Beaches . . . . . .171
Climate . . . . . .171
Description . . . . . .171
Inhabitants . . . . . .172
Challenge . . . . . .172
Reward . . . . . .172
World's Edge Mountains . . . . . .173
People and Places of Note . . .174
Dwarfs . . . . . .174
Snow White. . . . . .174
Hermit Dwarfs . . . . . .175
Giants . . . . . .175
Golf . . . . . .175
Headless Heights . . . . . .176
The Headless Knights . .176
Headless Knights . . . . . .176
The King and His Sword 177
The Ruined Castle . . . . . .177
The Sphinx and the Griffon.179
Glass Mountain . . . . . 179

## Chapter Eight: Friends and Foes

Character Descriptions. . . . . .181
Minor Characters . . . . . .182
Animals . . . . . .182
Bear . . . . . .182
Bird of Prey . . . . . .182
Bird, Song . . . . . .183
Cat . . . . . .183
Cow . . . . . .184
Dog . . . . . .184
Horse . . . . . .184
Destrier . . . . . .184
Donkey/Mule . . . . . .184
Mouse . . . . . .184
Rat . . . . . .184
Wolf . . . . . .185
Carnivorous Plants . . . . . .185
Carnivorous Shrub . . . . . .185
Carnivorous Tree . . . . . .186
Carnivorous Vine . . . . . .186
Cleaners . . . . . .186
Dwarfs . . . . . .187
Faeries . . . . . .188
Brownie . . . . . .188
Changeling . . . . . .189
Pixie . . . . . .189
Sylph . . . . . .189
Fetch . . . . . .189
Flat Folk . . . . . .190
Giant Bugs . . . . . .190
Ant . . . . . .191
Bee . . . . . .191
Cockroach . . . . . .191
Cricket . . . . . .191
Spider . . . . . .192
Giants . . . . . .192
Gnomes . . . . . .193
Goblins . . . . . .194
Broker . . . . . .194
Brute . . . . . .195
Redcap . . . . . .195
Sneak . . . . . .195
Living Objects . . . . . .195
Animated Broomstick . . . .196
Animated Flatware . . . . . .196
Animated Furniture . . . . . .196
People . . . . . .196
Common Folk . . . . . .196
Common Kid . . . . . .196
Skilled Worker . . . . . .196
Guards . . . . . .197
Guard (4th grade) . . . . . .197
Guard (6th grade) . . . . . .197
Guard (8th grade) . . . . . .197
Guard (10th grade) . . . . . .197
Noble Folk . . . . . .197
Knights . . . . . .198
Princesses . . . . . .198
Woodsmen . . . . . .198
Trolls . . . . . .198
Major Characters . . . . . .199
Beast . . . . . .199
Beauty . . . . . .199
Big Bad Wolf . . . . . .199
Chris Barnum . . . . . .200
Cinderella (Humpty's Queen) 201
Crooked Man . . . . . .201
Dragon . . . . . .202
Griffon . . . . . .203
Hansel and Gretel . . . . . .203
Hans the Hedgehog . . . . . .204
Hans's Riding Rooster . . . .204
Humpty Dumpty . . . . . .205
Jack . . . . . .206
Kanaka and Kahuna . . . . . .207
Mad Marion . . . . . .207
Mr. Hoots . . . . . .208
Mother Goose . . . . . .208
Goose . . . . . .209
Peter Peter . . . . . .209
Serge the Clockmaster . . . . . .209
Spider-Filled Rapunzel . . . . . .210
The Three "Little" Pigs . . . . .211
The Three Spinsters . . . . . .212
The Tooth Fairy . . . . . .212
The Ugly Duckling . . . . . .213
The Witch of the Woods . . . .214
The Three Riders . . . . . .214

## Appendix

Stature Tables . . . . . .216
Speed and Range Tables . . . . . .217
Index . . . . . .217

# Welcome to Grimm . . .

*Adam woke with a start, sweating. It was that dream again, with the witch and the oven. And the shoes. He could never see himself in the dream, and then in the end he saw his favorite shoes, his blue chucks, sitting in front of the oven, lost and forlorn, no feet to fill them. And that's when he realized, every time, that he couldn't see himself because he was already in the oven. He was already dead.*

*The recurring nightmare had started after his grandparents had given him an old book of fairy tales, with cracked pages and creepy paintings. But he didn't tell anyone about the dreams. It was just a little kid's book, after all.*

*Once he had gotten dressed and had his breakfast, it seemed like just another ordinary day in an ordinary week of an ordinary school year. But it wasn't. It was the most extraordinary day of Adam's life.*

*Adam didn't think of himself as being in any way special, unique, or worthy of much attention. In fact, he tried to be just like everyone else. Sure, he was special to his mom and dad, and to his grammy and pappy, but to everyone else he was a very normal, very unremarkable boy. Or at least, he was until today.*

*Adam climbed on board the bus at seven o'clock like he did every day, except for Saturday and Sunday, or when there was snow. The bus driver, Miss Mary, was strange and fearsome, with a single tooth in her head and a tangle of orange hair that seemed to find new ways to poke out of her green hat. Adam shuddered. She reminded him of the witch, he realized suddenly. He couldn't help but feel her eyes on him, gazing in the mirror, waiting to put the bus into gear until he had found a seat. But it was crowded today. Sam was making faces at Jennifer; Morgan was reading one of her boring books, her science fair project taking up the seat next to her. Adam sat in the only space available, next to some girl whose name he couldn't remember.*

*She smelled funny, like cabbage and beans. She was a frightful little thing with wide eyes, made wider by overlarge glasses. She wore a plain gray dress, the same one she wore every day, the one with thin spots on the shoulders and patches on the elbows. Up until Adam sat down, she had been staring out the window. When he took his seat, her head swiveled (like a robot) and examined him, her tiny mouth pinched in disapproval and a furrow forming between her bushy eyebrows.*

*"Hey," Adam muttered.*

*She said nothing. She just stared.*

*The bus lurched into motion, rumbling down the neighborhood streets toward the Andrew Johnson Elementary School, a grim building with a suspicious past, but one that nobody, not even parents, would discuss. After a few minutes, the brown-bricked, two-story building situated atop a low hill in the center of town loomed into view. The girl continued to stare. Adam fidgeted. The children screamed, the driver cast warning glances in the mirror, appalling noises emerged in their flatulent glory from Nate's noisome armpit, and still the girl stared. Adam sighed and did his best to ignore her, throwing his full attention onto the floor, studying the rubber lining and the duct-taped seat peering up at him from between his legs. He pushed his head into the seat in front of him, wishing he could escape this dreadful predicament, but he knew that no matter how hard he wished, he was in the bus, next to the staring girl, on his way to crummy school.*

*A few minutes later, the wheels of the bus squealed in protest as it slowed. It was making the final turn into the semi-circular drive that led to the school's front doors. Many of the children started gathering their things: backpacks, lunchboxes, fistfuls of tissue, class projects, baseball bats and gloves, a special toy they were bringing to show-and-tell, and the occasional critter liberated from their homes. Adam was one of the eager kids, crazy to escape the penetrating glare of the girl beside him. He pulled his backpack up from the floor and gave the girl a small smile. She just looked at him. It was like he offended her just by being there. He didn't care. She was a nerd, a dork, a geek, a freak, a spaz, and everything in between. Why should Adam care about her stares? She probably had lice.*

*The bus stopped, the shriek of the doors opening brought Adam back from his thoughts, and he quickly stood, jostled by the other children as they pressed to get off the bus first. As he wormed his way into the crowd, he felt a tug on his shirt. He looked. The girl again!*

*"What?" he hissed.*

*"I know things," she said.*

*"Good for you. Now leggo, freak."*

*For the first time, she lowered her great googly eyes to the floor. Adam felt sorry for what he said, but she deserved it. She was weird!*

*Nate cried out, "Adam's got a girlfriend!"*

*Adam rolled his eyes, hung his head, and then shot Nate a look, "Yeah? You wanna pick her nose like you pick your own?"*

*That got laughs, because it had a kernel of truth.*

*After a few moments, the children were free of the yellow behemoth and marching through the old metal doors into the school. Each child went his or her own way, filing toward lockers to get books, stow lunches, and go through the rituals that children everywhere performed as they made ready for another day of school.*

*Today's lunch was pizza. Just like every other Tuesday, except Tuesdays during the summer. It made the otherwise terrible day not-so-terrible. Along with the greasy square slice, Adam had a Styrofoam cup of red dinosaur-shaped Jell-o, a carton of chocolate milk, and a small basket of flaccid fries. He emerged from the kitchen line, damp plastic tray in hand, and scanned the lunchroom, looking for his friends. It was a sea of faces and colors, filled with the sounds of important discussions about cartoons, who likes who, who did what, what happened when, the answers to last period's quiz, the unfairness of grounding, or who peed in what trashcan. It didn't take long; he spied Sam and Randy right away.*

*Adam walked across the cracked vinyl-tiled floor, passing under the nose of the lunchroom monitor, one Mr. Dickens–whose name was ever the subject of laughter. He was a grim man who was a bit free with the paddle and had a long, sad face and watery eyes. Adam did his best not to look at him, hurrying to where his friends sat. He swung a leg over the bench as he set his tray down, finding himself in the middle of a serious discussion about whether Beamstalker could or could not kick a Starkiller Knight's butt. Sam figured that Beamstalker wins, because he can shoot the Starkiller from across a whole city. Adam weighed in sagely that a Starkiller Knight had Psion Sight, so he'd be able to sense the beams coming, and could use his sword to deflect them.*

*"Hey," said a voice, interrupting Adam as he was proving how a Starkiller Knight has to be the greatest swordsman from his planet in order to be inducted into the order. Sam, seated across from him, looked over Adam's shoulder, clearly grossed out. Randy snickered and played with his Jell-o.*

*Adam turned and saw Lizard and Sally standing behind him, along with that strange staring girl with no name. She fidgeted with her gray dress, looking down at the floor. Lizzie looked very uncomfortable; she was talking to a bunch of boys, after all. Sally, confident as ever, stood with one hand on her hip and gesticulated, as she said, "Mandy…"*

*"Who?" asked Adam.*

*"Her, idiot," Sally said, gesturing with her one free-from-hip hand to the girl with no name. "Mandy says she knows something about Mr. Trickles."*

*"Good for her," Adam said and then turned back to his friends, shaking his head at the utter yuckiness of girls.*

*"Now, listen, 'Spasm Adam.' You were very mean to Mandy this morning. You know she's an* orphan*." She added the last in a serious voice as if by saying it, she justified the whole situation, even interrupting what had otherwise been a perfectly fine lunch. He got the feeling that Sally was doing this all for show.*

*Adam turned around. He didn't care she was an orphan. Heck, sometimes he wished* he *was an orphan. "So what does this have to do with me?" He looked at Mandy. She looked at the floor. Lizzie had nervously turned and started talking to another girl at the table behind her. Adam's friends giggled and made nasty*

jokes about eating boogers.

Sally said, "She wants to show us."

"Thanks but no thanks. I don't care and I'm not going anywhere. We have important things to talk about."

"Oh sure, toys. You and your dolls. I think Nate would be awfully interested to hear how you're scared."

Adam grumbled. If she told Nate anything, he'd never hear the end of it. Ever since Nate had overheard Adam talking about how he was scared of the big, old tree in his backyard, the bully had seen him as just another target.

"Fine. Sam, Randy? You coming?"

"Not me," said Sam.

Randy shrugged. "Nope."

Wussies. "Fine. See you in Social Studies." Adam stood and said, "Lead the way."

Lizzie was too engrossed in whispering with her friends about which boy band she liked and which lead singer she would marry, so they left her behind, too. Mandy led the way with Sally following, and Adam trailing far enough behind that maybe no one would think he was hanging out with these two. Sally was such a nosy girl, always butting in where she wasn't supposed to. It almost always got her in trouble. If everyone didn't want to be her friend so bad, she wouldn't have any friends at all.

The three children left the lunchroom and entered the quiet hall, leaving behind the noise, the laughter, and their lunches. Mandy walked with her head down, staring at the floor, her gray dress swishing as she walked. Sally was humming, some tuneless song probably by Chastity Shields. Chastity was annoying and girly. And his mom didn't like her. Sally had the pop star's smiling face on her lunch box, and sometimes dressed like her, too. Adam's mom called it "racy."

Lockers lined the hall and the fluorescents reflected off the polished vinyl floor, darkened with splotches of abandoned gum. Every so many feet, a wooden door to a classroom broke the line of lockers. Crude posters for class president hung on the walls, alongside dark pictures warning of the dangers of drugs, and bulletin boards holding event s chedules and tryouts for baseball, soccer, and a variety of other activities. The children passed the library, and Adam noticed Ms. Randall in there, a weird thin woman sitting at a table, wiping her eyes, as she looked at a letter. The children whispered that she was weird–she didn't eat meat! They said she had a hundred cats and flew about on a broomstick. Adam didn't believe any of it, or at least the not eating meat part.

Mandy turned and headed down the hall toward Mr. Trickles's class room. The lights flickered overhead and there was an awful smell in the air, as if someone had just puked. It was dark and kind of scary. Adam suddenly became unsure about all this, and rushed to catch up with Sally.

"Isn't he in there?" he asked.

"Nope," said Sally. "No one knows where he went. He had first period, but wasn't there for second or third. The principal's been sitting in and having study hall."

"So what are we doing here?" he asked.

"I dunno. Mandy knows." Sally giggled, and added in a lower voice, "She's sort of weird, isn't she?"

"You're telling me!"

Mandy finally stopped in front of the door. For the first time since leaving the lunchroom, she raised her head and looked through the glass. Sally came to her side and put an arm around her shoulder. Adam walked around to the other side, bored, confused, and wanting to go back and finish his chocolate milk. Mandy still smelled like cabbage.

"We have to go in," said the strange little girl.

Adam nudged the girls out of the way and stepped forward, peering through the window into the classroom. The window had a mesh inside it, so it was hard to see. It was dark, but he could make out the student's desks in rows, and the teacher's desk in front of the blackboard. There were no windows in that room, and the walls were concrete blocks painted in boring brown. Unlike other teachers' rooms, where there were decorations, maps, posters, and stuff, the walls here were empty.

"No one's there. So, orphan girl, you gonna tell us why we're here?" Adam asked.

"Yeah, tell us," said a fourth voice from behind them.

Sally loosed a little scream. Adam jumped. It was Nate, who had sneaked up on them. Mandy hadn't reacted at all. She just turned and looked at the bully, her eyes sad and strange.

"What's goin' on, Adam? Two girlfriends? Well, well, the girls must like you. I bet it's the dolls."

"Shut up, jerk," said Adam.

"Make me," said Nate. "I owe you one for the bus."

"Both of you stop it. No one invited you, Nate. Go away," said Sally.

"Maybe I don't wanna. Tell me what you guys are doing, or I'll tell 'the Dick' that you're sneaking around in the halls."

Sally looked frightened at the idea of getting into trouble again, but Adam just muttered "Snitch," and returned Nate's stare. Some kids were afraid of Nate, but not Adam. He'd beat him once on the playground, and he'd do it again.

"We have to go inside," whispered Mandy.

"Ugh. What's with you?" asked Nate.

"Leave her alone," Sally snapped and stood in between the strange girl and the larger boy.

"Look, let's just get this over with," Adam muttered, turning to open the door.

Mandy took a step back. Sally gave Nate a nasty look and stepped into the darkened class room. Adam reached for the light switch, but Mandy stopped him. "Don't."

"Fine," he said.

Nate pushed his way in, his big clumsy body almost twice the size of Mandy and a few inches taller than Adam himself.

*"So, we're here. What's the big deal? It's a dark classroom. Oooh, scary," said Nate.*

*"Look," pointed out Sally.*

*Adam followed her finger and saw muddy footprints leading past Mr. Trickles's desk and into the supply room.*

*"So?" Nate shrugged, scared but covering it up by sounding annoyed. "Maybe Mr. Trickles had muddy shoes." He boldly strutted up to look into the room. Sally followed Nate. Mandy pulled out that annoying flashlight she kept on her keychain, and started turning it on and off, on and off. She was always getting in trouble for staring into it during class. Adam plopped down at a desk, already bored by this whole affair.*

*"What's that?" asked Nate. Sally peaked around the bully to see what he was pointing that.*

*"Stairs." she said. "But there didn't used to be stairs there."*

*Adam got back up and wandered over to the children, finally interested. He didn't notice Mandy's moan.*

*It was dark inside, but the children could see wet stone steps winding down.*

*"Look, there's sand!" exclaimed Adam.*

*"In there?" asked Sally, looking to Mandy.*

*The mute girl nodded.*

*"We should tell someone," said Nate. He didn't want to go down there. It was clear on his face.*

*"We* have *to go. What if Mr. Trickles is in trouble?" Sally asked.*

*"So what? I never liked him anyway," muttered Nate.*

*Was it darker in here? Adam rubbed his eyes as Sally and Nate argued. When he opened them, he looked around. Mandy was gone. "Wait. You guys, where's Mandy?"*

*Sally and Nate looked into the hole, seeing the light from her mini-light fading as she traveled down the stairs.*

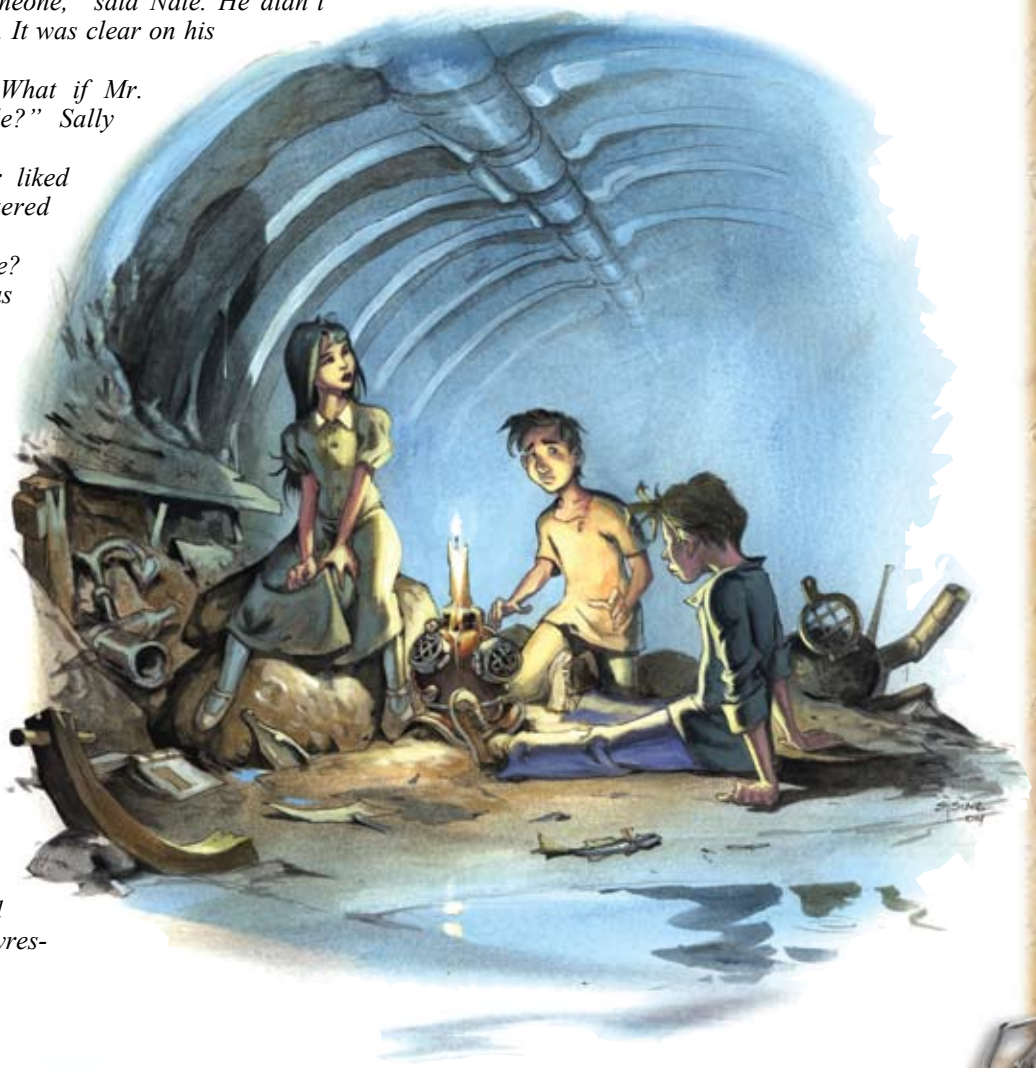
*"We'll, I'm not waiting for you scared boys. Mandy? Mandy, wait!" Sally carefully climbed down the steps, giving Adam an imploring look before vanishing out of sight.*

*The light dimmed even more as Adam wrestled with the choice.*

Darn it! *he thought,* That girl's gonna get me in deep trouble. *Adam found his courage and took a first step onto the wet stone, then proceeded after Sally.*

*"Hey, wait up," called Nate, and soon the bully was following. He was pale and sweating, his eyes darting around as if looking for something. Strangely, Nate acting scared put Adam at ease.*

*It didn't take long for the boys to catch up with Sally, and it wasn't long after that until they saw Mandy's bobbing light. The world they left behind, somewhere many feet above them, seemed distant. They walked cautiously down the spiral stairs, going around and around until they all felt a bit dizzy. Condensation on the walls and puddles of dark water and mud from those odd prints made each step slippery. Nate thought to himself that this was possibly the weirdest, coolest thing he'd ever seen. Like in a story. But it was scary, too. If he was reading about this, he'd think the kid was dumb for going down some muddy stairs beneath a school. There'd be monsters and stuff. But this wasn't a story, so…he stopped thinking about it when they made a turn and found themselves running into Mandy, who had stopped at the bottom of the stairs.*



*"Why did you go off like that?" scolded Sally.*

*Mandy looked at her shoes. Nate looked up the way they had come.*

*"What is this place? Like a boiler room?" Adam asked, ignoring the girls. They were in a dank cave. Puddles, sand, and strange rusty metal bits lay scattered on the floor, which seemed almost soft, fleshy. At the bottom of the stairs, atop an old diving helmet like the kind in black-and-white movies, was a fat candle. As they stood before it, it suddenly flaired up into life.*

*"Wow!" said Nate.*

*Adam jumped. Nate was standing next to him.*

*"This is sort of weird," Sally said. "There aren't any caves beneath the school."*

*Nate rebutted, "A trap door in Mr. Trickles's room! Cool!"*

*Mandy whimpered.*

*"You know," Adam said, turning, "if you don't want to be here, then why'd you bring us down…holy crap! The stairs!"*

*Dread filled Adam as he ran back to where the steps had been just a moment ago.*

*Instead of a staircase, there was now a blank stone wall. "What!?" exclaimed Nate. That was when he noticed the ceiling. Those didn't look like normal rafters.*

*He decided not to think about it. "Where'd the stairs go, Adam?" asked Sally.*

*Mandy whimpered again.*

*Adam felt his face grow flushed. Nate stood, his mouth hanging open like an idiot. Adam turned, "Okay, Mandy. Where did the stairs go?" He was serious now.*

*"I don't know," she whispered.*

*"What do you mean you don't know? You brought us here!" he snarled.*

*"I know. But, but they didn't go anywhere when I was here last."*

*"I have a test in fifth period! Make the steps come back!" cried Sally, who, for the first time any of them had seen let her grownup face dissolve into childish tears.*

*Mandy walked up to the wall, running her hands over the stony surface. "I…he said…I…he had this heavy ball, on a chain, and he tied it to my leg, and…"*

*Nate started blubbering too.*

*"He? He? What he?" asked Adam, his voice shaking. Suddenly the big dark cave wasn't anything like Mammoth Cave. It wasn't safe, but strange, dark, and foreboding. Like in a story. And if it was like a story, that meant…*

*Mandy said, "The man with the parrot told me to bring my friends."*

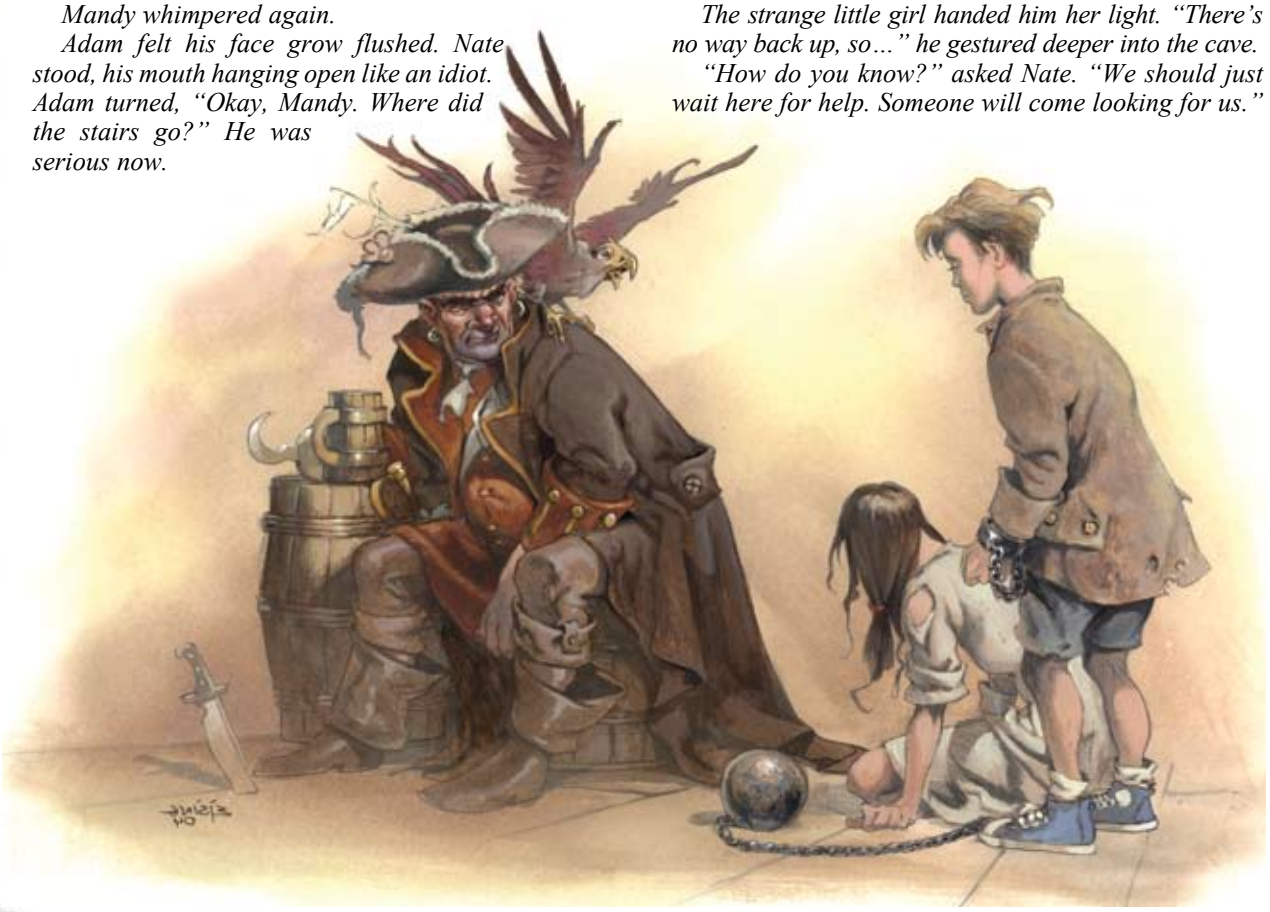
*"Your friends? We're not your friends, freak girl," snarled Nate. He balled his fists and looked like he was going to smack her. Sally quickly stepped in and put her arm around Mandy. "Geeze, Nate," she said through her tears, "She didn't ask you to come, did she?"*

*Nate had nothing to say to this.*

*"Well, yelling at orphan girl isn't going to get us out of here," Adam said. He wanted to go home, but someone had to be brave, and it turned out that it wasn't going to be Sally. "Mandy, give me that flashlight."*

*The strange little girl handed him her light. "There's no way back up, so…" he gestured deeper into the cave.*

*"How do you know?" asked Nate. "We should just wait here for help. Someone will come looking for us."*



*"And how're they gonna find us?" Sally asked.*

*"Right," said Adam.*

*"So what, we're gonna go…in there?" Nate asked, voice shaking.*

*"What else are we going to do?" Adam replied. "Look. It'll take a long time for any help to dig their way down here. I'll be grounded if I don't make it home for supper, so I don't think I want to sit here forever and wait, do you? There has to be another way out. So come on."*

*Adam didn't want to go deeper into the dark cave any more than Nate did, and he might have just sat down and cried if he was alone, but he wouldn't cry in front of Sally. Or Nate. Or even Mandy.*

*He looked around. The little girl stood there, not disappearing this time. She looked at her worn shoes, sniffling.*

*Adam raised the light overhead and took a step forward, pushing back the darkness, the cave yawning ahead like some tired giant just before bed. One by one, the other children cast longing looks at the darkening stone wall and then hurried to catch up with Adam.*

*The boys and girls walked for what felt like hours. The cave floor was broken in places, and deep, dark cracks dropped away into the darkness. They navigated each obstacle, helping each other climb over the rocks, balance on stones as they hopped across pools filled with pale fish, and wriggle through narrow fissures that felt as if they would crush the life out of them. Onwards they walked until Sally said, "Wait!"*

*They were very tired and dirty and scratched and sore, so they all stopped at once.*

*"Do you hear that?" Sally asked.*

*"No," Nate scowled.*

*"It's a whistling noise. I think it's wind!"*

*"Wait, yeah. I hear it to." Adam replied, looking at his companions.*

*Mandy was nodding. Nate shrugged, "So what. Wind. Great."*

*"Stupid, if there's wind, there's a way out!"*

*"Oh. Oh! What are we waiting for, let's go!" Nate cried and hopped to his feet.*

*Mandy looked hopeful. Sally smiled. Adam said, "Yeah, let's get out of here."*

*They moved quickly, having found they weren't as tired as they thought, what with the promise of sunshine, clouds, grass, and escape from the dark cave. They were nearly running when they heard the sounds of the ocean, waves breaking on a shore. The wind was louder, and the children were laughing, surprised by the strangeness of it all. Adam began to slow as it dawned on him how impossible it was for there to be an ocean. They weren't anywhere near the water.*

*"Come on, Adam, I see light ahead," Sally called, moving forward. Mandy was walking. Nate was nearly out of sight.*

*Adam, now nervous, followed after the other kids, but a bit more slowly, being very unsure about all of this. It was light enough to see without the flashlight, so he pocketed it. The others were out of sight, and the cave felt lonely.*

*"Go back…" he heard. "Run little boy, run away!" a voice whispered. "Go home." Adam looked around, but there was no one there.*

*"Hello?" he called. His voice sounded mute and dull.*

*A scream sounded from ahead.* His friends! *He forgot the voice, forgot that none of those kids had been his friends when the day began, and ran forward. He stumbled out of the cave and into a wall of water. It was raining, and hard, too. He was on a rocky beach, the stones sharp and jagged, clotted with seaweed. As he looked for his friends, he spied a ship a ways from the shore. It looked like a pirate ship. Then he heard a scream again, "Adam! Run! Run away!" He saw Sally hanging like a sack over the shoulder of a big scary man. Mandy was nowhere in sight, and Nate was holding a large stick doing his best to fight off two…pirates!? Adam stepped forward to help, but one of the pirates saw him and started heading his way. The one still on Nate knocked the stick to the rocks and cuffed the boy on the head. Nate fell down. The big pirate carrying Sally turned and looked, showing his ugly face and flashing a gold-toothed smile at Adam. Sally screamed, "Run, Adam!"*

*He couldn't do anything for his friends, so he ran as hard as he could, away from the pirates, hopping over rocks and trying to keep his balance. A pirate was chasing him. Adam risked a look behind and saw the man was thin and dirty, his eyes big and rolling around in his head. He had a sharp knife drawn and made a stabbing motion at Adam as he closed the distance. Unfortunately, he didn't have a peg-leg to slow him down.*

*Adam ran harder. To his right was the sea. To his left, a great mountain, all gloomy and swirling with clouds. Lightning flashed overhead. Somehow, as he ran, he heard Mandy call for him. He turned and saw a narrow crevice in the face of the mountain. He turned and slipped in. It was pitch black. "Come on Adam, get inside." Adam tripped over a stone, falling to the ground and scraping his knee. Tears came unbidden. He rolled over to look at his leg.*

*Another flash of lighting outside filled the cave with white light, and Adam saw that he had cut himself. He looked up. The pirate was there. He was sliding into the cave, his knife hand forward and swishing through the air.*

*"Yaar, laddie, welcome thee to the Grymme Lands. Methinks ye'll be liking it here." He pushed his way inside and Adam began to cry. The pirate chuckled, laughing, and said, "Ye'll fetch a nice price from the Rotten King, ye will." He stepped forward, filthy hand extended to grab him, when there was an awful crunching noise. The man collapsed and a bloody stone rolled to the floor.*

*Adam looked up in surprise, wiping the tears away with the back of hand. Mandy. She was hidden in the rocks. She was pale, her black hair clinging to her face. She was crying too. She slid down from her hiding place and ran forward to hug Adam. The two children wept*

*bitter tears, not knowing where they were, how they would get home, and what would happen to their friends. Welcome to the Grimm Lands, indeed…*

# What Next?

What happens next for Adam and his friends is one of the many possible adventures in *Grimm: The Roleplaying Game.* If you're new to roleplaying games, flip ahead to page xv for a quick overview of how they work. If you're an old hat at roleplaying games, but new to *Grimm,* get ready for a unique gaming experience. *Grimm* is a strange and wonderful game, set in a fantastic world of the strangely familiar, a place both unnerving and thrilling. As a player, you take the role of a child who has found himself along with his fellow kids in a magical world ruled by imagination. Fairy tales and nursery rhymes are real, here, albeit strangely dark and twisted from the versions we remember reading in our own childhoods. If you are the narrator, you bring this world to life for the players, adding your own personal twist of horror or delight to the impossible characters, the unusual places, and the dramatic stories. Whether your character searches for a way to escape and find his way home, or chooses to right the wrongs of the Grimm Lands and set things in their proper order, *Grimm* is your doorway to a new world of fantastic adventure.

## The Land's Beginning

*Our project is almost finished. The length and breadth of Germania have been scoured by Jacob and me, and I believe the land to have been raped of all it can give us. We are rapists, I am certain. The creatures and folk behave exactly as that vile book said they would. I pity them, and hope their souls find sanctity in their new world, as it was not granted to them in ours. Or should I pity myself instead? We brothers do this under duress, I have always claimed. But there is a reward. And we could have said no, all those years ago, despite the temptations she offered and the promises she gave. But we did not. Mere humans, we, unlike the tales we have bound. Those are immortal. And immortal, I would guess, must be their hatred of us.*

–Wilhelm Grimm, the eleventh day of October in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and seventeen

## The Kids

In *Grimm*, you and your fellow players are average, everyday kids. Sure, you're special in your own way. Everyone's special; so say your teachers, guidance counselors, maybe your parents, and even the purple dinosaur that your little sibling watches. It doesn't matter what they think, though. What matters most is what the other kids think. To them, you're the Jock, the Bully, the Nerd; to your peers, you're Normal, or Popular, or an Outcast. And all of you, even if you don't realize it, have a bit of a Dreamer in you. And that means that all of you have a hidden, awesome power. It is the power to open a pathway, knowingly or unknowingly, directly or in a roundabout way, to another place.

At the game's beginning, you're caught. Caught between age brackets: You're no longer a toddler, but not yet a teenager. Caught between being babied and not being trusted with any responsibility. Caught in a world of generic suburbia, mindless cartoons, and endless rules and restrictions. And soon, you'll be caught by something far more exciting, and for more frightening: the Grimm Lands.

## The Grimm Lands

The game setting is a fantasy world known as the Grimm Lands, a place between places, forged from the imaginations, dreams, and nightmares of little boys and girls, and brought into startling view by those with the misfortune to stumble onto its patchwork realms of strangeness and oddity. In many ways, the Grimm Lands resemble our own world: There's a sun, a moon, grass, trees, air to breathe, rivers, lakes, people, and everything in between. Yet for as much as this world has in common with our own, it is also decidedly stranger, and tends to follow its own rules rather than slavishly following the laws of nature. Here, the Sun and Moon are recurring characters, and the grass and trees don't necessarily feed on just the soil. No, the more one explores the Grimm Lands, the less it seems like the ordinary world, and more it becomes like our world turned inside out and upside down.

### How It All Began

Everyone knows that the Brothers Grimm scoured their native land for folk stories and compiled them in a book called *Kinder-und Hausmarchen* (Children and Household Tales), which the world eventually came to know as *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. What few know is that their search served another purpose. The characters of the tales and the monsters of legend were real. Some believed that the Devil himself

created these monsters to plague humanity. Others held that the monsters arose from the minds of the people of Europe as personifications of humanity's darkest fears. The exact nature of the monsters is lost to time, but it is known that the Brothers Grimm undertook an obsessive quest to locate and record their times' strange people, places, and events.

Some say that they captured their first creature accidentally, coming upon a giant man trapped in the twists of a similarly large-scaled beanstalk. They tortured the hapless creature for days, until it finally agreed to give them its only treasure in exchange for its release: a mystical book filled with tales aplenty, but none of which were complete. As the brothers wandered with their prize, they found themselves being led to strange occurrence after strange occurrence, event after event, that mirrored the beginnings of each tale within the tome. And so they accumulated not stories, but stories' endings. And where the endings were not so happy, the brothers used literary license to change them. But none of this explains why they worked so arduously to complete the book.

The answer lies with a creature named Melusine, who begins to appear in the Grimms' journal entries soon after their acquisition of the book. She is described as a woman, yet seemed more and less than a mortal. She alternately threatened, cajoled, seduced, and begged the brothers to complete their cataloging, hounding their heels to the last story and rhyme. The brothers do not admit to the reward offered by this dark temptress, nor do they even fully explain what she demanded of them. They hint only that, whatever their actions, they were not pure of heart.

The results of their efforts are not known to the general populace. To those who have entered the Grimm Lands, however, and found their way out, it is all too obvious: In cataloging these stories for Melusine's amusement, they formed a world apart. Those whose stories were mystically captured were damned to populate this other place, the Grimm Lands, for eternity. The Grimm brothers are long since dead and dust, and Melusine may or may not have shuffled off a mortal coil. Regardless, their legacy lives on.

Of all people, it is only children who see the doors to the Grimm Lands, and of them, only the most imaginative can make their way through. Oftentimes, a child slips through by accident, the Lands themselves groping hungrily for new victims. When a much-coveted morsel of humanity slips into the Grimm Lands, all of its creatures compete for the child's attention. How the denizens of the Grimm Lands deal with the children varies. Some enjoy the children, exulting in their laughter and joy. Most, however, have far darker desires. They may crave

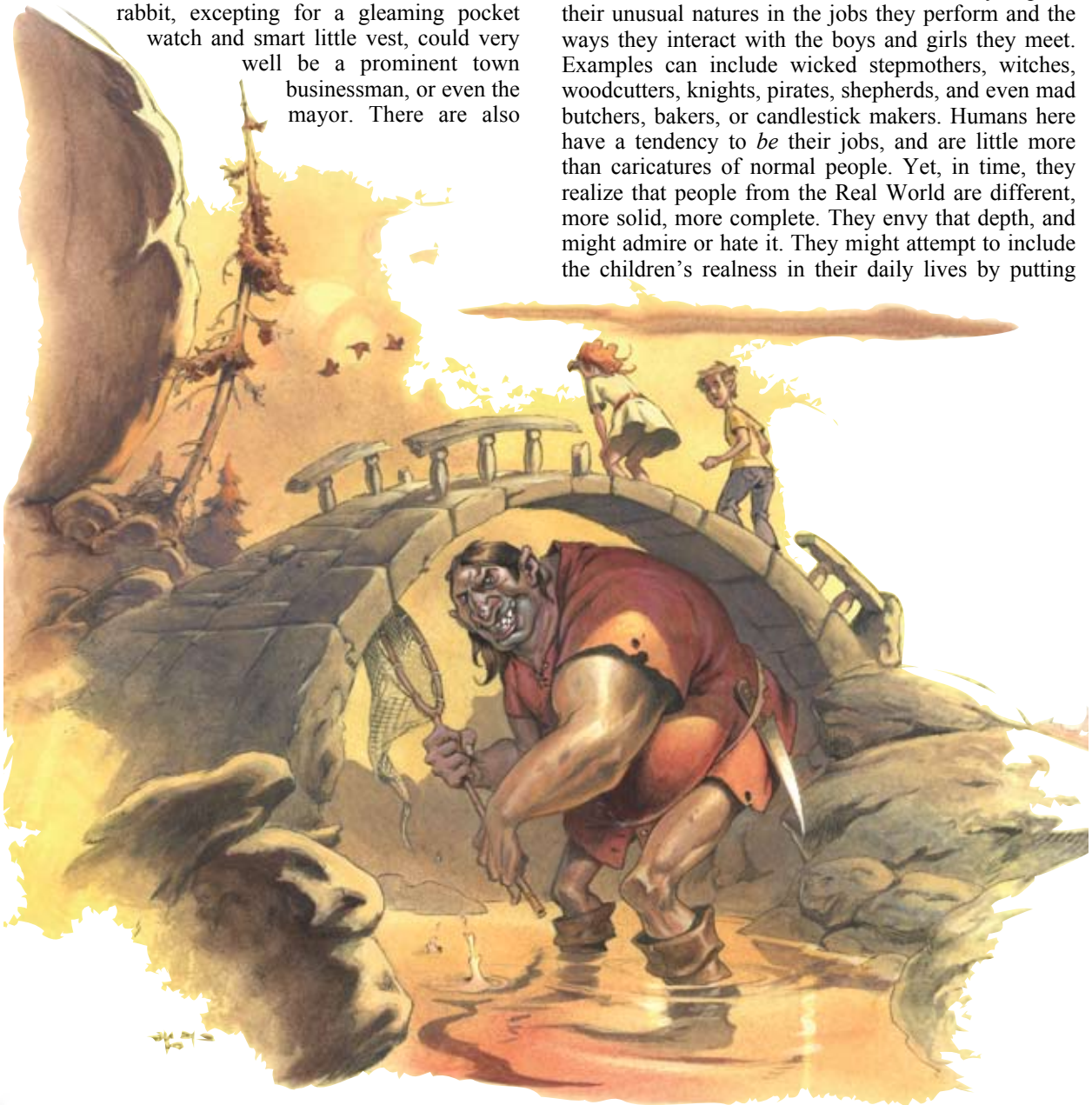
the succulent flesh of a plump child to feed their inhuman desires. Or perhaps they simply enjoy dealing out sugary spoonfuls of horrific pain, reveling in the shrieks of the frightened and desperate captive. The children unlucky enough to find themselves in the Grimm Lands are sure to find that they have a very deadly and treacherous path to tread if they ever hope to leave it sane, much less alive. These are their stories… and there might not be a happy ending.

## People of Grimm

The most telling difference between the Grimm Lands and our world is in its people. In this place, the notion of "people" extends much further than we are accustomed to. What might look like an ordinary rabbit, excepting for a gleaming pocket watch and smart little vest, could very well be a prominent town businessman, or even the mayor. There are also scary witches lurking in houses built from gingerbread, gloomy castles floating on clouds and haunted by ravenous giants, and deep dark forests harboring unspeakable monsters, villainous wolves, mad woodcutters, lost children, and even the groaning bulk of the Rotten King. As a result, the term "people" is used a bit more widely in the Grimm Lands.

### Humans

The countryside is full of quaint little villages, filled with ordinary folks working ordinary jobs and doing ordinary things, but beneath the veneer of respectability is a brimming madness, a queerness that's only evident when one speaks to the villagers or spends some time with them. Grimm Lands humans seem to be infected with the twisted nature of the land, and they express their unusual natures in the jobs they perform and the ways they interact with the boys and girls they meet. Examples can include wicked stepmothers, witches, woodcutters, knights, pirates, shepherds, and even mad butchers, bakers, or candlestick makers. Humans here have a tendency to *be* their jobs, and are little more than caricatures of normal people. Yet, in time, they realize that people from the Real World are different, more solid, more complete. They envy that depth, and might admire or hate it. They might attempt to include the children's realness in their daily lives by putting



them on a pedestal and keeping them captive, or they might attempt to take it for themselves by gobbling the kids right up.

### Talking Animals

Existing in numbers seemingly equal to the isolated pockets of humanity are the talking animals. Everything from blind mice to pigs in houses to hungry wolves dressed in drag call the Grimm Lands home. They may walk upright or on all fours, but oddly, these characters have more depth and sanity than do humans. This makes them somewhat more reasonable and reliable allies, but also more dangerous enemies.

### Mythical Monsters

The Grimm Lands are also home to many strange and mythical creatures, wondrous beasts, and terrifying monsters. There seems to be no end to the variety and innovation of the things that live here, and if a thing has been imagined and made into a myth in the Real World, it likely has a place somewhere in the Grimm Lands. Ogres and fairies, gryphons and sphinxes, crooked men and child-headed centipedes, these and much more all lay in wait to snatch the unwary traveler and make a meal of their squalling prey. Not all such creatures are ravenous beasts, and some might just prove helpful, if you can overlook their unsettling qualities. But it's usually a good strategy to assume the worst of anything you might encounter.

### The Very Strange

As if talking animals and familiar creatures from fables weren't strange enough, the Grimm Lands feature a variety of other beings that are neither animal nor human nor beast. One constant trait of the Grimm Lands, for instance, is that ordinary objects have a disturbing tendency to be alive and animated. What might seem like a candlestick at first glance can turn out to be a chatty individual with a silly accent. Trees and other plants, rocks, even the clouds can all exhibit human-like characteristics, making just stepping outside your cottage door in the morning into an unpredictable adventure. Even the Sun and the Moon are unreal in their ability and tendency to do as they like. The Sun may drift closer to the land to scrutinize something it finds interesting, only to incinerate or blind everything nearby. The Moon, a cruel and mad thing, scours the land in search of children, shining its beams like spotlights to alert predators as to the location of these lost souls. The Grimm Lands are strange, and being prepared for any item to be able to help you, for any object to want to eat you, goes a long way toward surviving its perils.

## Places in Grimm

With all this talk about the unusual people and creatures of the Grimm Lands, one might wonder about the place they live. When the trees can pick up and move, when rocks complain when stepped upon, and when rivers change course when offended, is anything constant? Yes and no. The Grimm Lands are mutable, changing and reshaping themselves with caprice. Few things are fixed, and a cottage that stands one night may well vanish the next morning. Mountains pick up and wander, marching east or west to get away from the Sun. Yet the landmarks themselves are immutable, even if their locations are not. The World's Edge Mountains are always there, on the horizon. The fallen Beanstalk will take you to any kingdom you wish, even if it's a thousand miles away today from where it was yesterday.

The reason for this changing landscape stems from the fact that the Grimm Lands are inextricably tied to the imaginations of those who explore them. It responds to the expectations of its visitors, shaping itself to mirror their hopes and fears, but never quite getting it right. Although the Grimm Lands are subject to sudden and surprising alterations, a few places are more permanent than are others. Whether or not they figure into your stories, and how they do so, is up to you.

### The Checkerboard Kingdoms

The heart of civilization in the Grimm Lands is the Checkerboard Kingdoms. While not always noticeable from the ground, a bird, if it was inclined, could tell a visitor that each kingdom fits neatly within a square. The kingdoms all have a large fairytale structure, usually with a castle somewhere near the center, which is surrounded by a quaint little village. To the uninitiated, the villages of the Checkerboard Kingdoms have the illusion of being safer than elsewhere in the Grimm Lands. There are fewer dangerous animals or hungry monsters there, and some peasants may offer shelter to a group of weary, hungry, and scared children. Villages offer no safe haven, however: They simply do a better job at masking their evil. The villages are home to creepy old men who like to work on living things as much as they do on clocks, but treat them little differently. They hide lusty, envious men who hide their dead wives inside pumpkins, and sweet-smelling bakeries where the special, secret ingredient might be you!

The castles, towers, and other seats of power are little better. As paragons of a mad land, the rulers of these kingdoms range from being a little "off" to being stark, raving mad. Some are isolated tyrants who wish to be left alone when they are not preying on their people, while others are spoiled nobility who constantly make impossible demands from the sycophants who surround them. The rulers' homes are filled with wonders and riches to tempt any child, but can easily become prisons to those who displease the heads of state. A few may actually be good-hearted and mostly harmless, but these tend to become easy prey for the Rotten King's machinations.

## The Fallen Beanstalk

Although the Grimm Lands' ability to change without warning can be a source of constant frustration to those lost here, there are a few landmarks to help make one's way. The greatest of them all, without a doubt, is the giant beanstalk. Felled ages ago by a boy named Jack, it remains just as he left it, lying across the whole of the Grimm Lands. What makes the Beanstalk more than just an obstacle is that it is offers a relatively safe way to travel across the countryside. Enterprising gnomes hollowed out the 'stalk and for a fee, either a small service or a small finger depending on which gnome you meet, a person can travel this road and emerge, almost unscathed, somewhere else in the Grimm Lands.

## The Great and Awful Forest

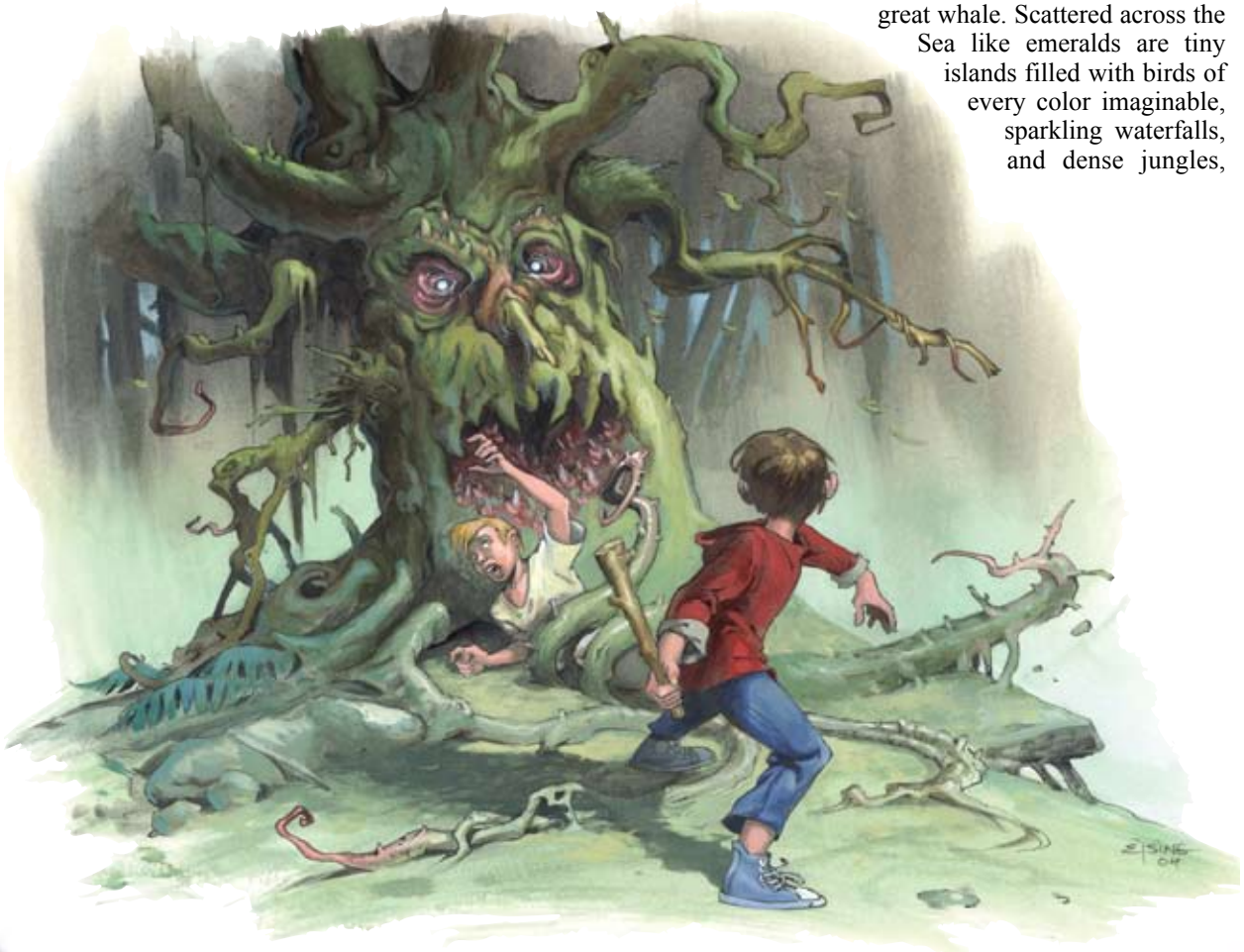
In stark contrast to the idyllic countryside of the Checkerboard Kingdoms is the sprawling Great and Awful Forest. A part of the forest touches pretty much every Checkerboard Kingdom, yet its dark heart is far beyond their borders. It's hard to say how the forest can be found inside every kingdom without dominating the entire landscape, yet there it is. Perhaps the forest is like the Beanstalk, in that once you enter it, it can take you somewhere else. The journey, though, is far less safe. For who can say what lies beneath its tangled boughs? Those who wander between the thick trees and over the gnarled roots have a tendency to disappear. Some claim that the trees are alive and snatch up those travelers who look the most delicious, while others point to the various hags and ogres who hide in its depths. Of course, there's also the home of the Seventeen Dwarfs, who, all smiles and laughs, invite little girls into their house, never to be seen or heard from again.

## The Castle of the Rotten King

The true horror of the forest, and indeed all of the Grimm Lands, is the Rotten King, who holds court in the forest's heart. Attended there by his many changed and mad servants, the shattered egg-like creature once known as Humpty Dumpty passes judgments, makes pronouncements, and infects the land with his deep and abiding hatred. All people of the Grimm Lands fear the Rotten King, for he is a ruthless and insane tyrant, bent on conquering or corrupting all of the Grimm Lands… except on Tuesdays.

## The Sea

Encircling the Grimm Lands is a great ocean of brilliant blue and cresting caps of white. Chatty seagulls wheel through the sky, while the water's surface occasionally breaks with a waterspout from Leviathan, the great whale. Scattered across the Sea like emeralds are tiny islands filled with birds of every color imaginable, sparkling waterfalls, and dense jungles,



forming miniature tropical paradises that hold queer secrets and queerer people. The beauty of the Sea hides many a terrible thing, however, for sailing its extent are black-hearted pirates in decaying galleons, raiding and plundering everything and everyone they meet. In great washtubs sail madmen who fight with one another for the right to sing. Beneath the pristine waters there is even greater danger, for schools of flesh-eating fish weave and dart, following the current wherever it leads. Great sharks prowl the depths, always searching for some succulent morsel on which to dine.

For many of the Grimm Lands, the Sea stands as the final barrier, and only those with unimpeachable courage or utter foolishness would dare to sail beyond sight of the land. The crustiest pirates whisper that the Sea travels on and on until it finally reaches the edge of the world, spilling over into the great yawning void, and carrying with it those who dare to venture too far. Legends of mad stars, falling for eternity, becoming lost in a world of giant, dusty bookshelves, and worse are enough to keep people, humans and talking animals alike, on or near dry land.

### The World's Edge Mountains

The World's Edge Mountains loom large on the horizon, always out of reach, but always there, inviting, calling, alluring, and promising many secrets in their dark defiles and snow-capped peaks. No matter how far you travel, the mountains always seem to crawl a bit farther away, making reaching the range a Herculean task. Part of their elusiveness stems from the fact that the mountains just don't want to be reached, and slide away from anyone searching for them. While it's tricky approaching them, there are a many great and wondrous things to be found here. It's said that the World's Edge Mountains offer the surest and quickest route to the Underworld, where, if the talking birds can be believed, lies the road out of the Grimm Lands. However, such a journey is fraught with peril, for everyone in the Lands knows that the Underworld is the home of the dead.

The World's Edge Mountains hold far more than just a gloomy path beneath the earth. It is here that the Dragon lives, lurking in its fetid cave, belching clouds of acrid, poisonous smoke. The Mountains are also home to dour dwarves, and are rumored to conceal a kingdom of headless folk. Finally, there are the giants, who live above and below the swirling clouds of the mountain caps. There they toss boulders back and forth for sport, hurl lightning bolts at the Lands below, and generally make a great commotion as they go about their business in their nebulous castles or dingy caves.

### The Nature of Grimm

By now, you may be a bit intimidated by the dark and gloomy nature of the Grimm Lands. Good. The Grimm Lands are not for the faint of heart. It is a place of horror, corruption, and decay. It is a place of great wickedness, where the things people are most familiar with from fairy tales and nursery rhymes are utterly wrong. However, it is also a place of hope, of dreams, and of endless possibilities, for the kids the players control are beacons of light in this dark and foreboding land. Through their efforts, the evil of the Grimm Lands can be put to rest, if only for a time. The cleverest and canniest kids might even find a way to escape back to the Real World, living to tell about their adventures here… not that anyone would believe them.

# Roleplaying Games

You may be wondering what all of this stuff about characters, players, and narrators is about. If you've never played a roleplaying or storytelling game before, read on for the answers to your questions.

A roleplaying game is a lot like other games (even video games that share the same moniker) in that it has rules and a little bit of structure. *Grimm* can be played with as few as two people or as many as you like, but probably no more than seven. One player takes the role of the narrator, who serves as the referee and general creator of the story. It's the narrator's job to present the story, describe the scenes, and manage the encounters (which might be fights against bad guys, figuring out puzzles, interacting with minor characters or villains, and the like). The rest of the group are the players, with each taking the role of a character, much as an actor plays a part in a play or movie. The difference, however, is that there are no lines to read and no script to follow. You make up your lines based on how you think your character feels, reacts, and thinks about any given situation. In a way, roleplaying games are a lot like improvisational acting.

## How to Play

The biggest difference between roleplaying games and other types of games is the amount of freedom you have. Whereas video games or board games give your character a specified area in which to travel, and pre-set characters or events to interact with, roleplaying games have no limits other than what the narrator is willing to describe.

However, while you can say and do pretty much whatever you like, this is still a game, and all games have rules. Luckily, *Grimm* is not a difficult game to learn and play, and all the rules for making characters and exploring the Grimm Lands are presented in the following chapters. You don't even have to read the whole book in one sitting. Just read the parts that interest you the most. Ideally, you might start with the first chapter, which describes character creation, so you have an idea about what you need to do to create your special little victim. It would also be beneficial, before you sit down to play with a group, to at least check out **Chapter 4: Action!**

## The Narrator

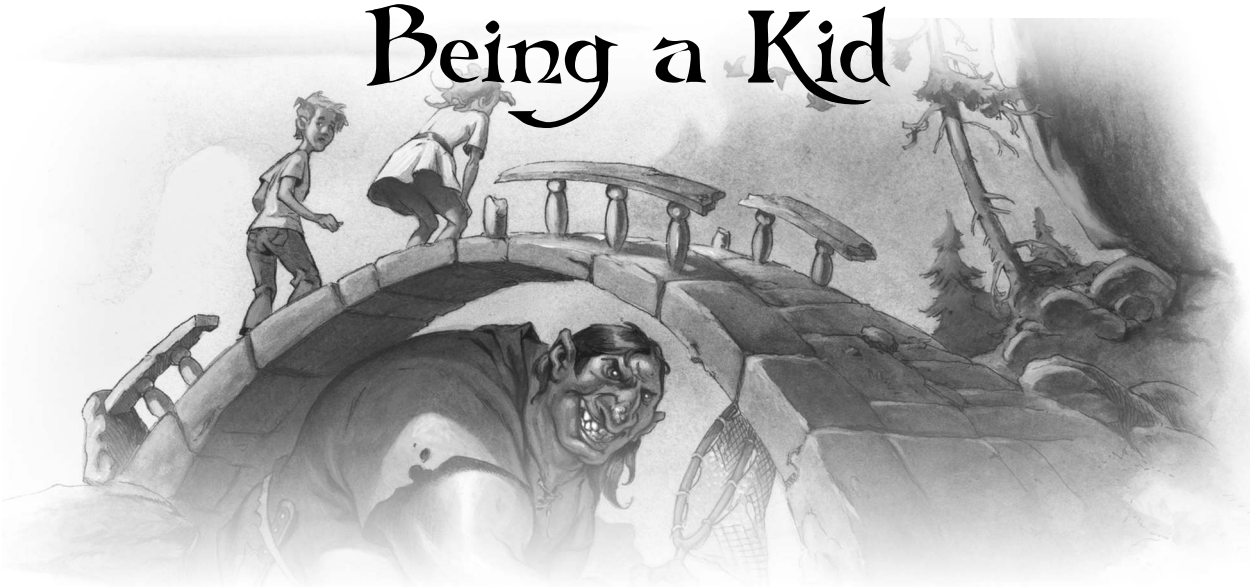
The best job in *Grimm* is to be the narrator. You're the one in charge, the one who guides the story, the one who controls all of the scary monsters and strange people. While you get to have the most fun, your job is not easy. It takes a fair bit of work to pull off. Before you start managing a *Grimm* game, be sure to read the whole book and get a good idea about how the rules work. The players will look to you when they're unsure how to do things, so you need to have answers, or at least know where to look to find them.

## What You Need

To play *Grimm* you need, obviously, this book. You'll also need some paper, pens or pencils, and a few dice. Grimm uses six-sided dice (the familiar cubes with the pips or numbers on them), so you can plunder them from other games or pick them up just about anywhere that sells playing cards. If you're inclined to do so, you can also photocopy the character sheet found at the back of the book–make sure you have enough for all the players! Aside from these essentials, the only other thing you need is your imagination, a sense of humor, and a willingness to embark on the greatest adventures ever! Now, without further ado, here's *Grimm*!

Chapter One

# Being a Kid



If you're reading this chapter, it is the first step toward a hopefully fun experience for you, and a very dire, disturbing, deadly, and difficult experience for your character. This is because the only kinds of characters you can make in this game are kids trapped in a nightmare world. Nearly everyone or everything in this world, called the Grimm Lands, wishes to capture, consume, corrupt, or canonize them, none of which are good for a child's long-term development. But have no fear, for your kid will not be hapless. She has talents and education the likes of which the Grimm Lands have never seen. She can even, if she tries hard enough and believes in herself enough, change reality itself. After all, she is the audience for which the whole land was created.

## Character Creation

Creating a kid to adventure in the Grimm Lands requires five easy steps. We know you're a kid, so you don't need to choose your shape, stature, speed, and other physical features (when the narrator designs characters, he isn't so lucky; he has several options to sort through). Those physical features are described in more detail below.

The second step is choosing your archetype. Archetypes are the classic types of kids, the roles that we adopt or that others impose on us when we're still young. Whether or not we stick to the norms for those archetypes as we mature is up to us. The basic archetypes are: Bully, Dreamer, Jock, Nerd, Normal Kid, Outcast, and Popular Kid. Each archetype has several starting traits and some talents that are unique to that archetype.

The third step is customizing your character's traits and talents. Traits are your basic ability to interact with the world without messing up. The normal things like walking down the street or opening a door don't require trait tests, but fending off a kid-eating carnivorous plant or winning an archery contest do require them. Talents, meanwhile, let you break the game's normal rules in special ways…and who doesn't like breaking the rules?

### Grades in the USA

*Grimm* uses a system of grades to rate a character's ability to perform various types of tasks; since the game was written and published in the United States, the grade system you'll find within follows US educational standards. Kids start in 1st grade when they are about age seven. By 6th grade, at around age 12, the kids are moving from elementary school to middle school, or "junior high school." By 9th grade, at around age 15, kids have entered the top tier of US education, high school. At 12th grade, as 18-year-old young adults, kids graduate. So, in *Grimm*, a character with the lowest level in a skill has 1st grade in it, while a character with the highest level in a skill has 12th grade in it.

Before enrolling in school, young kids may be enrolled in something called "Kindergarten," which is an informal daycare-cum-educational system. And after school, of course, comes University.

## Creating a Character

| Step Number | Step Description |
|---|---|
| Step 1: Physical Features | You're a kid, so this part is decided for you |
| Step 2: Archetype | Choose to be a Bully, Dreamer, Jock, Nerd, Normal Kid, Outcast, or Popular Kid |
| Step 3: Traits and Talents | Customize your starting traits, and choose your talents |
| Step 4: Who Are You? | Flesh out your character's personal details |
| Step 5: How'd You Get Here? | Work with the narrator to figure out how you got into the Grimm Lands |

The fourth step is figuring out the final, little things that make your character who she is. What does she look like, what are her hang-ups, what do her parents pack in her lunchbox, and the like? Does she believe in fairy tales, or is she too grown up for that kind of thing? Does she have any brothers or sisters, and if so, how annoying are they?

The fifth step is determining how, when, and where your kid was stolen away by the Grimm Lands. This matters, not just because of how it affects her mental state when the chronicle begins, but because it helps determines what she was wearing and carrying when she crossed over, or what everyday objects were near her and come along. This is more important than you might think, because mundane objects that cross over into the Grimm Lands sometimes have special significance and Imagination-fueled powers when used by the kid that brought them over.

# Step 1: Physical Features

*Grimm* assumes that the protagonists, the kids controlled by the players, are boys and girls between 9 and 12 years of age. This is because only people with the imagination and sense of wonder unique to those ages can see the hidden entrances to the Grimm Lands…and be seduced by them. The rest of the world, fortunately for them, is safe.

So why not younger kids? For all we know, younger kids know all about the Grimm Lands, but have the sense to stay away. Or, perhaps the Lands themselves don't want younger children because they aren't seasoned enough, haven't experienced as much life, as the older kids. The more of a life a kid has lived before arriving in the Lands, the more pleasurable it is for the denizens there to rip that life away. Think of a kid's time in the mundane world as the marinating process, and think of the kid as a particularly juicy, succulent steak.

## Shape

Shape is a general descriptor about what a creature can do in *Grimm*. It gives the narrator, in a single word, an idea as to how a creature looks, how it moves, and what kind of things it can do. Kids, like adults, giants, witches, and even some fairies, are person-shaped (this is not to be confused with actually being people…many person-shaped beings hardly qualify as people, while a talking animal, though it may not be shaped like a person, would consider itself to be one). Being person-shaped means that you walk on two legs and have at least two arms, along with those dexterous digits, fingers, that allow for fine motor manipulation, wielding weapons, and picking your nose; it also means that you have a head and some combination of eye(s), ear(s), nose(s), and mouth(s); you can probably see, hear, smell, feel, taste, and talk; and hopefully, you wear clothes.

An important note is that any of the above physical features may be removed or altered at some point during a character's time in the Grimm Lands, say, by a slavering slug or a hungry harpy. This does not mean that they are no longer person-shaped. It's how you were shaped when you first popped out, hatched, spontaneously materialized, or whatever, that matters. On the other hand, a kid's shape might be drastically altered by a spell, curse, or coming down with a sudden case of lycanthropy. If that happens, your narrator will tell you how that changes what you can do.

## Stature

"Wait a minute," you may be asking. "You're saying a 10-story-tall giant and a pipsqueak kid are the same shape?!" Why, yes, they are. What's different about them is their stature. Stature affects a lot of things in *Grimm*, from how easy it is to fit somewhere to how hard it is to dodge an attack. Luckily for the kids, the smaller you are, the more

difficult it is to hit you. Also luckily for them, the old adage holds true: the bigger they are, the harder they fall.

Statures in *Grimm* use familiar creatures as scale. The smaller stature levels are mouse-sized, cat-sized, and dog-sized (also "little sibling-sized"); the middle stature levels are kid-sized, adult-sized, and moose-sized; the largest statures are elephant-sized, whale-sized, and dinosaur-sized. Anything smaller than a mouse probably isn't worth worrying about, and anything bigger than a dinosaur doesn't need to have a stature; it's just plain big. Of course, stature is all relative. If the kids foolishly drink a potion just because it says "Drink Me," they may suddenly find themselves quite small, at which point the statures of the creatures around them adjust accordingly.

For more information on stature, narrators may go to page 57.

## Speed

Speed is hard to measure precisely. It depends on a lot of different things, like how rough the ground is, how much you had for lunch, and the size and fearsomeness of the monster chasing you. *Grimm* therefore worries less about precise distances covered and more about a character's speed in relationship to other characters. Speed is usually determined using a combination of your shape (four legs are faster than two) and stature (longer legs means longer strides). If it sounds like kids are going to end up on the short end of the stick, you're right. But that kind of thing is for the narrator to worry about. All a player of a kid needs to know is that a kid's speed is average. The range of speeds in *Grimm* are really slow, slow, average, fast, and really fast.

For more information on speed, narrators may go to page 60.

# Step 2: Archetypes

The kids who get pulled into the Grimm Lands have little in common, other than their terrible luck. Some are dreamers with overactive imaginations, who came to the Lands thinking they would be a place of wonder and delight; others are callous Bullies who are tempted by the Grimm Lands themselves, and rewarded with a fate they richly deserve. Yet, for all their differences, they all seem to fit into bald-faced stereotypes. This might be because the Grimm Lands are comprised of well-known stories and peopled by iconic figures, so only the most iconic victims will do. Or perhaps the transference of a kid into the Grimm Lands streamlines him, makes him somehow into more of a caricature. For that matter, maybe kids unconsciously take on these stereotypical roles to remind themselves where they came from. Regardless, every kid in the Grimm Lands fits into one of these roles, called archetypes.

Archetypes help the narrator and the other players identify what kind of character you are playing. This is not to say that all Jocks are the same, or that two Nerds are equally good at science (some prefer history!). Rather, archetypes act as a kind of general template and jumping-off point for your character. They help the rest of your roleplaying group figure out what you're likely to be good at, as well as your probable attitude. Bullies tend to be large, strong, and intimidating, but not as bright as Nerds; Jocks are athletic and popular, but not as creative as Dreamers. It's up to you to surprise everyone, or perhaps yourself, by defying those norms, should you so choose.

Regardless of how you customize your character, an archetype can never be changed. Choose carefully, using the information provided in **Chapter 2: Archetypes.**

## Spending Your Eight Credits

| Trait Type | Cost to Increase by One |
|---|---|
| Core | 3 |
| Playground | 2 |
| Study | 1 |

# Step 3: Traits and Talents

Having selected your archetype, you should now figure out what your character does best. This includes customizing the traits granted by your base archetype, choosing one trait to be iconic for your character, and selecting one or more talents. Traits are the basic building blocks of characters in *Grimm*; they give an idea as to your physical abilities, social skills, knowledge, and intangibles like your level of creativity or how lucky you are. Talents, on the other hand, are the special tricks that set you apart from other characters, even those of the same archetype.

## Customizing Your Traits

The first part of this step is customizing your character's traits. All starting characters begin with eight free credits, which may be spent to increase your starting trait grades. It costs a different number of credits to increase each type of trait, as shown in the table above, and no trait may be increased to higher than 6th grade at character creation.

***Example:*** *Chloe has decided that her* Grimm *character is going to have hit her growth spurt early, making her bigger and stronger than all of the other kids, but not yet coordinated enough to take advantage of her size and muscle. Embarrassed by her clumsiness, she becomes defensive and mocking of others; in other words, Chloe will be playing a Bully.*

*Bullies start with the following Core trait grades: Cool 2nd, Imagination 1st, Luck 1st, Muscle 4th, and Pluck 1st; with the following Playground trait grades: Hide 1st, Seek 2nd, Scamper 1st, Scrap 4th, and Throw 2nd; and with Study trait grades of Book Learning 1st, Industrial Arts 3rd, and Juvie 2nd.*

*Chloe wants to take advantage of a Bully's strengths, so she increases her Muscle from 4th to 5th grade. As a Core trait, that costs her three credits. With five credits left, she then increases her Scrap from 4th to 5th grade. As a Playground trait, that costs her only two credits. She'd like to pump her Muscle up yet again, but that would use up all of her remaining credits. So she decides instead to increase her character's Seek (for noticing when others are talking about her) for two credits and to give her 1st grade in 4-H (she's a farm girl) for one credit.*

Additionally, you may choose to lower up to one trait of each type by a single grade level. If you do this, you may increase another trait of the same type by one grade level. Be careful that you don't specialize too much, though, or you may find yourself helpless when the story you're in doesn't let you use your one great trait very often.

You may only lower any given trait by a maximum of one, and no trait may be lowered below 1st grade.

***Example:*** *Chloe decides that it would be funny if one of the things that peers made fun of her bully for was that she, appropriately, threw like a girl. So she lowers her Throw to 1st grade, and in exchange increases her Scrap again to 6th grade. That takes care of her Playground traits, and she doesn't want to swap any of her Core traits. She would like her character to have a higher grade in 4-H, though, so she increases it by one grade (to 2nd grade) and lowers another of her Study traits, Industrial Arts, by one grade to (also to 2nd grade).*

## Your Iconic Core Trait

Core traits are important, sure, but are they that much better than Playground traits? When trouble starts, Playground traits are what keep you alive. But Core traits, when used correctly, can keep you from getting into that trouble in the first place. This is particularly true when you make wise use of your iconic Core trait. Each beginning kid may choose a single Core trait that becomes his iconic trait. Unlike other traits, which are fairly static, your iconic trait may fluctuate throughout the game session. By voluntarily expending that trait (lowering it by one or more grade levels), you can do amazing things.

Note that some talents, keepsakes, talismans, and spells may allow a character to expend Core traits other than his iconic trait for various effects.

## Selecting Your Talents

Archetypes and traits aren't the only things that define what you can do in *Grimm*. Talents are those special tricks that let you do what few others can, the abilities that you'll call on to turn the tide of battle. Many talents work best when used by specific archetypes, and some have trait levels or even other talents as prerequisites.

All starting kids may choose one talent, and have the option of selecting a second talent, called an origin talent. Origin talents may only be chosen at character generation,

do not count against the beginning character's talent, and provide a bonus at the cost of inflicting a penalty.

Talents are described in more detail in **Chapter 3: Traits and Talents**.

# Step 4: Who Are You?

Once you've got the basic building blocks of your character determined, and possibly even before then, it's a good idea to devote some mental energy to figuring out a few of her personality traits, hang-ups, motivations, experiences, and the like. Age and gender are essentials, if you haven't figured them out already, and you'll need to pick a name for your character, for instance. A name is a great opportunity to convey an image to the other players; if your character is spoiled and comes from a wealthy family, a snooty-sounding last name like Vanderhausen or a trendy first name like Mercedes can tell everyone a lot about her. On the other hand, if her parents are new-agey hippy types, a name like Moonchild or Summer can let the rest of the kids know what they're in for.

From there, flesh out whatever image the name conjures up for you. Is she tall or short for her age, fit or pudgy, clean or sloppy, stylish or plain? Does she have a favorite outfit, or commonly worn item like shoes or a hat, or a favorite line of clothing, its logos plastered all over her? What color is her hair, her eyes, her skin?

Think about your character's ethnic and racial background, her parents, her house, and whether or not she has any siblings or pets. How does she feel about them, and about her life in general? Is she happy or angst-ridden, accepted or alone? What are her favorite activities, in and out of school? Her least favorite? Little things like her favorite holiday, favorite flavor of ice cream, and favorite color are all good to jot down.

Determine the name of the town she lives in and what school she goes to, if the narrator hasn't determined them for you. Now might be a good time to ask if your character knows any of the other kids, and perhaps has predetermined ideas about them from seeing them around town or in school.

Finally, develop one or two roleplaying aids, "tics" that you can use to make your character stand out. These can be common catchphrases that your character uses when particularly excited, or confused, or scared, or that she just utters whenever she can't think of anything else to say. Or perhaps there's something distinctive about your character's body language, whether it be an irrepressible smile, a constant slouch, or a favorite hand signal.

# Step 5: How'd You Get Here?

This step may be taken over by the narrator, rather than decided by you. Perhaps your character and the other players' all stumbled into the Grimm Lands together while on a field trip to the nature center or the museum. Or maybe you all wandered into different caves in different counties, but ended up being trapped in the same wizard's dungeon.

If the narrator leaves it up to you, though, carefully consider how you'd like your character to begin her journeys in the Grimm Lands. Her motivations and attitude will depend on whether she was "invited" and came willingly, or was tricked and trapped. Does she see it as a cool adventure, an escape from the boring Real World? Or is it the most terrifying thing that's ever happened to her? Or both?

On the other hand, a denizen of the Grimm Lands might have escaped to the Real World, approaching your character for aid. You might even travel to the Grimm Lands to rescue another lost child, to save him

from the belly of the Big Bad Wolf or free him from the slavery of the Three Spinsters. The possibilities are limited only by your own imagination, but regardless of what you or the narrator decide, the game is bound to be memorable.

Depending on your narrator's choices, you may need to decide what your character was carrying when she crossed over. Was she hiking and ready for anything, or did she travel through the dream realms, with nothing but her pajamas and her favorite stuffed animal? Was she on her way to play in the big game or studying for the big test? Some narrators like to have the kids' clothes and belongings transform to fit the medieval realm in which they've arrived, while others prefer the kids to stand out as the strange visitors that they are. Regardless, though, one of the items your character brings over with her, called a keepsake, will take on magical properties. You may not have a choice over what kinds of powers your keepsake will receive (that's up to the narrator), but the powers tend to be thematically related to its form.

# Character Advancement

At the end of each story (a series of thematically linked game sessions that comprise a single adventure), your character will graduate. When a kid graduates, she gains a number of benefits. The first and possibly most important is that her personal grade level goes up by one. This means that she can take one additional wound before being knocked out.

Second, she gains an additional eight free credits, which may be spent to increase traits just as they could during character creation. A character's traits can't be more than three grades higher than his personal grade level.

Third, when she advances to even-numbered grades, she gains an archetype talent of her choice; when she advances to odd-numbered grades, she gains a general talent of her choice.

Presumably, she's also made some new friends and enemies along the way, found some new stuff, and learned some new tidbits and tactics that will help her survive for another grade level in the dangerous world of *Grimm*.

Chapter Two

# Character Archetypes

Your archetype is both who you are and who you are not. It tells you, the other players, and the narrator what you are most likely to be able to accomplish, as well as what is likely to affect you. Each archetype has strengths and weaknesses that are as much story elements and roleplaying hooks as they are game design considerations.

Archetypes are not the final word as to what your character can accomplish in *Grimm*, however. Two Nerds might be incredibly different, and even Bullies can have smart, sensitive, or sneaky sides.

## The Bully

*I'm gonna pound you into next week, shrimp!*

You are the subject of fear and loathing in the eyes of other children. You are the kid who beat up Johnny, you are the maker of wet willies, and you are the figurative troll in the boys' bathroom who makes Nerds pee their pants rather than ask to use the toilet. The cornerstone of your personality is the procurement and retention of power. Everything you do is to ensure your place at the top of the pecking order in your class. You're used to surrounding yourself with sycophants that are motivated by fear and the allure of your power. You employ force only when necessary, relying instead on the threat of pain.

Of course, now that you're stuck in the Grimm Lands, things are different. Now there are real trolls, and they don't only pick on wimps. You keep the other kids around you so the monsters have someone else to snack on, but they don't listen to you half as well as they used to. Sometimes they even tell you what to do. Even the Nerd! But you'll do whatever it takes to stay alive, and get out of here.

### The Bully's Role

While the Bully is used to being a leader, even if only of his small gang of toadies, being sucked into the Grimm Lands changes all that. He may still push others around, cajoling the kids through force, intimidation,

## Starting Bully Traits

The following is a list of a 3rd-grade Bully's starting grade in each trait.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cool 2nd | Pluck 1st | Imagination 1st | Luck 1st | Muscle 4th |
| Hide 1st | Seek 2nd | Scamper 1st | Scrap 4th | Throw 2nd |
| 4-H — | Book Learning 1st | Boy Scouts — | Country Club — | |
| Gaming — | Home Ec — | Industrial Arts 3rd | Juvie 2nd | |

and sometimes even violence. However, when push comes to shove, he's as scared as anyone else and will follow orders if it means surviving. Surprisingly, the Bully can become a stalwart protector of the group. On one hand, such heroism distracts him from his own fear, so no one else can see that he's shaking in his boots. On the other hand, even if that Nerd with the runny nose is the same kid he gave wedgies to on a daily basis, he's his Nerd with the runny nose, and no one but the Bully is going to pick on him without his say-so!

Bullies are strong, and fairly resilient, making them good characters to stand in front and Scrap with attacking monsters of their own size. However, they are at a distinct disadvantage when their foe is bigger than they are, and aren't terribly well equipped intellectually; or socially, or creatively, or in any way at all, really, other than being strong and intimidating. But sometimes, that's enough.

## Specialty, Flaw, and Beginning Archetype Ability

**Specialty:** Bullies are well-practiced in the art of brawling. Bullies always rolls an extra die on the initial roll of their Scrap tests.

**Flaw:** The Bully's key weakness is he is only comfortable when he has the upper hand, hence the classic aphorism that most Bullies back down when you stand up to them. Each time the Bully suffers a wound, he must make a Pluck test with a difficulty of one grade per his total number of wounds (including the just-suffered wound). If he fails, he becomes scared (see page 22), and continues to be scared until the wound has been healed or the source of his injury is neutralized or no longer present.

**Threats:** The Bully is especially adept at pushing around those who are smaller or weaker than him. He may spend a turn making an opposed Cool test against a character within a stone's throw who can see or hear the Bully. The target characters need not understand the Bully's language, so long as he is intelligent enough to read the Bully's body language or tone of voice. Additionally, the target character must fulfill at least one of the following three requirements:

1. Has a lower personal grade than the Bully
2. Has a lower Muscle trait than the Bully
3. Is of a smaller stature than the Bully

If the Bully wins an opposed test, he receives an advantage on his Scrap tests against the target for this scene. The advantage is equal to +1 for each grade by which the Bully wins the test.

***Example:*** *Bubba, the Bully, wants to beat up Georgie, the Nerd who keeps challenging his authority. In the first action round, Bubba spends his turn making a Cool test. Bubba has Cool 3rd grade, but his Intimidating ability gives him an effective grade of 5th for this test, since he's threatening violence. He rolls the dice and gets a 3, for a result of Cool 5th grade. Georgie now makes a Pluck test to oppose Bubba's intimidation. Georgie has Pluck 3rd grade and rolls a 5, for a result of Pluck 3rd grade. Bubba wins the opposed test by two grades, so his Scrap tests against Georgie will receive an advantage of +2.*

## Archetype Abilities

Each time a Bully advances to an even-numbered personal grade beyond 3rd, he may choose one of the abilities below. Each ability may only be taken once.

**Gang Up:** Characters ordinarily receive +1 die when others use teamwork to help them on Scrap tests. Bullies are used to having toadies to back them up, though, so Bullies with this ability gain +2 dice per character using teamwork to help him on Scrap tests.

**Intimidating:** Bullies are accomplished at playing nice, kissing ass, and outright lying when they need to get out of trouble. But their social skills are most impressive when they are using violence or the threat of violence to persuade or manipulate others. In these situations, a Bully gains a +2 advantage to Cool.

**Pile-on:** Headlocks and wedgies are part of a Bully's daily dialogue with his peers. When wrestling with foes who are his stature or smaller, the Bully is considered to be one stature level larger for the purposes of determining his and his opponents' penalties and movement limitations.

**Protector:** Some Bullies, once forced to trust and rely on their peers, realize that their true purpose is not to terrorize those who are smaller than they are, but to protect them. When an adjacent ally is the target of an attack, the Bully may interpose himself and take the target's place. This must be decided before the attack test is made. The attack is resolved normally but is made against the Bully rather than the original target.

**Threats, Advanced:** Only a Bully with the Threats ability may select this ability. If the Bully wishes to cause an Advanced Threats result, he must declare this before making the opposed test, and only succeeds at causing any result at all if he wins the opposed test by three or more grades. Alternatively, immediately upon causing a Threats result, the Bully may expend one grade of Imagination to elevate the result.

If the Bully causes an Advanced Threats result, then in addition to the Bully receiving an advantage against the target on Scrap tests, the target refuses to attack the Bully in melee.

**Threats, Master (8th grade or higher):** Only a Bully with the Advanced Threats ability may select this ability. If the Bully wishes to cause a Master Threats result, he must declare this before making the opposed test, and only succeeds at causing any result at all if he wins the opposed test by six or more grades. Alternatively, immediately upon causing an Advanced Threats result, the Bully may expend two grades of Imagination to elevate the result.

If the Bully causes a Master Threats result, the Bully receives an advantage against the target on Scrap tests and the target refusing to attack the Bully in melee; additionally, the target is terrified of the Bully, doing his best to flee from him each turn.

# The Dreamer

*There, in the sky…do you see that cloud? It looks like a phoenix rising from its own ashes!*

You find the world outside the classroom to be much more interesting than the dry stuff of Mrs. Applegate's lectures. You like to read about fantastic stuff like dragons, unicorns, and knights, or maybe you dream of being a ball player in the major leagues. Someday, it'll all come true.

It's hard to be a Dreamer. Your mother nags you about paying more attention. Your teachers have special meetings with your parents. The teachers always shoot you dirty looks down their long and crooked noses. Some of the other kids pick on you, but you've learned to overcome it. You know things they'll never know: special places, windows into other worlds. When you look off into the distance, and before a sharp word brings you back, you see yourself as a brave hero saving the day, or yourself at bat for the big team about to hit a home run.

Now that you're in the Grimm Lands, you finally have a chance to really be that hero. But somehow, you never thought about the fact that being a hero is dangerous—really dangerous. And now that you realize that, the boring old regular world doesn't seem so bad, after all.

## The Dreamer's Role

The Dreamer is the kid who spends more time in her head than in the world with other children. She is so distracted and preoccupied with flights of fancy, she often gets into trouble for it. Now that she's in the Grimm Lands, all those supposedly wasted hours are paying off. While her fellow kids are stumbling around trying to understand their new powers, the Dreamer has a natural

## Starting Dreamer Traits

The following is a list of a 3rd-grade Dreamer's starting grade in each trait.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cool 1st | Pluck 1st | Imagination 4th | Luck 2nd | Muscle 1st |
| Hide 2nd | Seek 4th | Scamper 2nd | Scrap 1st | Throw 2nd |
| 4-H 1st | Book Learning 2nd | Boy Scouts 1st | Country Club — | |
| Gaming 3rd | Home Ec 1st | Industrial Arts — | Juvie — | |

control over her imagination. While the rest of the group is desperately trying to remember what it takes to pacify a troll, the Dreamer is intimately familiar with the world they are trapped in. In small groups, she sometimes rises to a position of leadership, as she, and she alone, truly understands the world of *Grimm*.

## Specialty, Flaw, and Beginning Archetype Ability

**Specialty:** A Dreamer's flightiness in the Real World is inversely proportional to her ability to understand, embrace, and even manipulate the Grimm Lands. Dreamers always roll an extra die on the initial roll of Imagination tests.

**Flaw:** Dreamers tend to lose themselves in their thoughts and imaginings…and their nightmares. Dreamers are therefore more susceptible to illusions and charms than other characters. The Dreamer suffers a -1 to all tests made against charm spells, illusions, and similar abilities that toy with the mind.

**I Think I Can:** By believing in herself, the Dreamer can accomplish nearly anything. Dreamers may choose two iconic Core traits, one of which is automatically Imagination. Alternatively, if a Dreamer wishes, she may choose Imagination as her only iconic Core trait. For each single Imagination that such a Dreamer expends, she may generate an imagining as if she had expended two Imagination (see "Imaginings," page 71).

## Archetype Abilities

Each time a Dreamer advances to an even-numbered personal grade beyond 3rd, she may choose one of the abilities below. Each ability may only be taken once.

**Bonus Keepsake:** The Dreamer's Imagination imbues a mundane item with power, manifesting as a new keepsake (see page 66), designed by the Dreamer's player and the narrator.

**Happy Thoughts:** To a Dreamer, anything can be fixed with the power of belief, even dire wounds. When a Dreamer heals her own wounds by expending Imagination, she heals two wounds for every 1 Imagination expended. When she heals others' wounds by expending Imagination, she heals one wound for every 1 Imagination expended.

**Observant:** Dreamers are so in touch with the stuff that makes up the Grimm Lands that they have almost superhuman awareness of their surroundings. A Dreamer may expend 1 Imagination to ignore any environmental or conditional penalties to visibility, hearing, etc., for the rest of the scene. The Dreamer can use this ability, for example, to more easily spot a monster lurking in the dark or hear a whisper in the midst of a cacophony.

**Rapid Recovery:** Imagination is the cornerstone of the Dreamer, and as such she may recover spent Imagination more rapidly than normal. Once per story, by spending half an hour doing nothing but enjoying idle daydreaming, the Dreamer may recover half of her expended Imagination (round down).

**Spontaneous Spellslinger:** While most kids must be taught magic spells in order to use them, the Dreamer seems to have an inherent ability to manipulate arcane energies by harnessing them with the power of her Imagination. By expending Imagination equal to the magic spell's circle level, she may spontaneously recreate the effect of any magic spell she has witnessed during this story. She does not suffer any estrangement or weakening (see page 76), but she is not considered to have learned the spell, either.

**True Hero (8th grade or higher):** When her need is great and a true hero is called for, the Dreamer can become the hero she always imagined herself to be. By spending her turn and expending half (round up) of her maximum Imagination, she may transform into a shining figure of power and grace, such as a knight, a hunter, or a guardian angel. The effect lasts for one scene, and may only be called upon during appropriately dramatic circumstances, as decided by the narrator. The Dreamer gains a special ability appropriate for her avatar, as designed by the narrator:
An angel might be able to fly,

a hunter might be able to track and fire his bow in any terrain or weather, and a knight might be able to strike true (ignoring any protection) against any foe who had no honor in his heart. The Dreamer also gains the following benefits:

1. Increase stature by one level

2. Increase speed by one level

3. +2 grades to any three of the following traits: Muscle, Pluck, Scamper, Scrap, Seek, Throw

# The Jock

*Come on guys, we're only down by four—if we pull together we can cream 'em!*

You're the best at what matters most: sports. Even before you played organized sports, you could carry more, run faster, jump higher, climb better, and throw farther than anyone else in your class. Everyone looks up to you, and you try not to let it go to your head. But it's hard not to. You're a winner.

Or at least, you were. But you can't quite figure out the rules to the Grimm Lands, and the people here are playing for keeps. At least you still have a team, and even if none of them are much good at throwing or running, they can do some pretty amazing stuff here. It makes you glad that you didn't pick on the Nerd too much back in the Real World. You didn't, did you?

## The Jock's Role

Jocks played at least one team sport in the Real World; most played a wide variety of sports year-round, and at this young age, they were more likely to be co-ed rather than split into gender-based teams. Now that they've been sucked into the Grimm Lands, that experience serves them well. They can get along well with everyone, understand the value of working together, and refuse to give up. Jocks usually have more physical prowess than Bullies do, but they seldom use their strength and speed to hurt others. The downside of their extra-curricular activities is that they never had much time for academics, reading, or flights of fancy, so whereas the other kids may be at least somewhat familiar with the terrors this world brings, Jocks are often clueless. Of course, around here, there are times that simple ignorance is all that keeps you from melting into a pool of gibbering horror.

## Specialty, Flaw, and Beginning Archetype Ability

**Specialty:** Jocks may choose their specialty from among Scamper, Muscle, or Throw, depending on their sports of choice. Jocks with a specialty in Scamper, for instance, were probably track and field stars or soccer players. Those with a specialty on Muscle were probably wrestlers or defensive backs in the midget football league, and those with a specialty in Throw were probably pitchers on the softball team or quarterbacks for the football team. Whichever trait the Jock chooses as his specialty, he always rolls an extra die on the initial roll when testing in that trait.

**Flaw:** While cool in other kids' eyes, Jocks pursue physical prowess to the exclusion of intellectual and social activities. Jocks may only focus on, or step up on, or receive teamwork bonus dice on Scamper, Muscle, and Throw tests. If the Jock's iconic Core trait is Luck, he may also only expend Luck on the above tests.

**The Winning Play:** By calling on some hidden reserve, the Jock can push himself past his normal limits. Once per scene, without spending his turn, the Jock may gain +1 grade to Scamper, Throw, and Muscle tests for the rest of the scene. Thereafter, the Jock's Muscle trait is expended by one grade.

## Archetype Abilities

Each time a Jock advances to an even-numbered personal grade beyond 3rd, he may choose one of the abilities below. Except for the **Bonus Talent** ability, each ability may only be taken once.

## Starting Jock Traits

The following is a list of a 3rd-grade Jock's starting grade in each trait.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cool 2nd | Pluck 2nd | Imagination 1st | Luck 1st | Muscle 3rd |
| Hide 1st | Seek 1st | Scamper 4th | Scrap 2nd | Throw 4th |
| 4-H — | Book Learning 1st | Boy Scouts — | Country Club — | |
| Gaming — | Home Ec — | Industrial Arts — | Juvie — | |

**Bonus Talent:** Jocks have what is these days called "physical intelligence." That means that they're good at anything involving using their bodies, and can pick things up pretty quickly. The Jock may select any talent that has either a Playground trait or Muscle as a requirement; he must still meet all of the talent's requirements.

**Competitive:** Some Jocks thrive on spectators and proving that they're the best there is at what they do. Whenever performing opposed tests while in a contest, and particularly while in front of a group of watchers who are doing nothing but watching the contest between the Jock and the other character, the Jock receives +2 grades on all Playground tests and on Muscle tests. This advantage cannot be applied to attack or defense tests, unless the Jock is in a gladiatorial combat or the like.

**Fearless:** Jocks are tough, focused, and not very smart. They're either too brave or too dumb to be worried about the danger a monster represents, or maybe have so much confidence in their abilities that they don't think it matters. In any case, once an action scene starts (including during an ambush round), the Jock receives +2 grades on all Pluck tests.

**Sport Specialization:** When using a single piece of equipment appropriate for one of his favorite sports, the Jock gains a special benefit. If the equipment could be used as a weapon (like a Louisville slugger or a discus), the Jock inflicts +1 wound when wielding it. If the equipment is protective, like a helmet, shoulder pads, or shin guards, the Jock gains protection 1. If the equipment is something else, the narrator may develop a physical benefit as appropriate. Running shoes might increase the Jock's speed by one level, for instance.

**Team Spirit:** The Jock, being a team player, benefits when working with others. His friendly intentions also encourage others to do their best. Even when he spends his turn doing something other than providing teamwork, the Jock may grant a bonus teamwork die to a character within a cricket's hop, so long as that character is spending his turn doing the same thing as the Jock.

**Winner's Mindset (8th grade or higher):** Successful Jocks not only perform on a physical level, they also constantly apply their minds to the situation at hand. They can mentally psych themselves up to an upcoming task, run scenarios through their heads, and so on. Each turn during an action scene, a Jock may focus on a Playground trait in addition to spending his turn in other ways. He may focus on different traits as he wishes, switching back and forth, but as soon as he makes a test in a focused-on trait, it resets to its normal boost range.

# The Nerd

*Actually, it is quite possible that the rules of our world do not apply to this one…allow me to make a few calculations…*

Some call you a prodigy. Some call you a geek. Some don't call you anything at all, because they forget that you're there. You can name the first 50 elements on the periodic table, you're good at algebra, geography, history, civics, and…sports? Well no, you don't play any, really. But you do like games! You've read the *Traps & Trolls* handbook more times than you can count, and you're a shoo-in for the pro tour of *Sorcery: The Assemblage*, as soon as you're old enough.

Now that you're in the Grimm Lands, your so-called "book learning" has come in quite useful. You've managed to astound everyone from the simple peasant who wants to keep his well from freezing, to the grand duke and his simpleton of a sage. Of course, half of the people here accuse you of witchcraft when you're just using the basic tenets of science, or of reading their minds just because you've memorized Table 3-7: Random Non-Player Motivations from the *Traps & Trolls* narrator's guide. And unfortunately for you, these people have mastered the art of building fires and tying people to posts just fine.

# The Nerd's Role

The Nerd is one of the most iconic characters in the schoolyard. As one of the first archetypes to emerge in youth, he studies hard, lacks all fashion sense, is socially inept, and has unpopular hobbies. Most of these guys and girls focus on math and the sciences, and a few find interest in the outdoors (either so they can get that Boy Scout badge, or the better to complete their insect collection). Nerds tend to be chatty and more than a little pedantic. As kids seldom like a condescending tone, especially from a peer, Nerds often find themselves the targets of Bullies and the occasional Jock. On the other hand, Nerds possess the knowledge and intellect to help a lost group of kids find their way through the weird world of *Grimm*. They overlap with the Dreamer somewhat in terms of their knowledge of the fantastic, but they bolster that with advanced abilities in all Classroom traits.

# Specialty, Flaw, and Beginning Archetype Ability

**Specialty:** Nerds have great memories, and actually enjoy learning things from books. Nerds always roll an extra die on the initial roll of all Study traits.

**Flaw:** Nerds are physically underdeveloped, socially hopeless, and poor fighters. Nerds may never focus on, or step up on, or receive teamwork bonus dice on Cool, Muscle, or Scrap tests. If the Nerd's iconic Core trait is Luck, he may not expend Luck on the above tests.

**Studious:** Nerds, unlike most of their peers, actually have attention spans. They are used to committing to their interests, and they are quick learners. At character creation and again each time a Nerd increases in personal grade, two of his Study traits increase by one grade each, at no credit cost.

# Archetype Abilities

Each time a Nerd advances to an even-numbered personal grade beyond 3rd, he may choose one of the abilities below. Each ability may only be taken once.

**Astounding Intellect:** The Grimm Lands are replete with bizarre devices, enchanted items, and weird puzzles, all of which Nerds are better at figuring out than their fellow kids. Nerds gain a +2 advantage on Imagination tests to solve puzzles or any other test involving riddles, conundrums, or problem-solving.

**Geek Celebrity:** Whenever the Nerd is interacting with individuals who are similarly brainy, be they the king's advisors, wizards, or a sphinx, he may use his Book Learning in place of Cool for the purposes of making a good impression. In addition, by expending 1 Imagination and succeeding at an opposed Book Learning test, the Nerd may cause such listeners to be fascinated with him (as per the enchanter magical spell **Fascinate**; see page 81).

**Insight:** Sometimes inspiration comes like a bolt of lightning, just when needed. Insight simulates those ineffable moments of epiphany. Whether because of the Nerd's amazing powers of deduction or the fact that he has read every *Traps & Trolls* adventure module ever published, he may know the answer. Once per scene, by spending his turn and expending one Imagination, the Nerd may ask the narrator a question she must answer, although she can be tricky or circumspect. The knowledge gained may be anything the player can imagine, from a villain's true motivations to his likely plan of attack against the kids, from a creature's soft spot to its most dangerous ability, from a detail of a previous adventure to an advanced scientific theory that the child would normally not comprehend. The answer should be helpful, but may take the form of a hint or cryptic reply.

**Quick Study:** In school, being a quick study helped a Nerd understand lessons easily. In the Grimm Lands, it means the Nerd can learn a magical spell via apprenticeship or study in half the time (see "Magic," page 73).

**Skeptic:** The enchanting magic of the Grimm Lands neither frightens nor bothers the Nerd anymore, and he has honed his emotions to a Vulcan-like void.

## Starting Nerd Traits

The following is a list of a 3rd-grade Nerd's starting grade in each trait.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cool 1st | Pluck 2nd | Imagination 2nd | Luck 1st | Muscle 1st |
| Hide 3rd | Seek 4th | Scamper 1st | Scrap 1st | Throw 1st |
| 4-H 1st | Book Learning 4th | Boy Scouts 1st | Country Club — | |
| Gaming 4th | Home Ec — | Industrial Arts — | Juvie — | |

The Nerd gains +2 grades on tests against temptation, despair, and effects that would affect his emotions.

**That's Illogical! (8th grade or higher):** If a Nerd believes in anything, it's logic. By expending half of his maximum Imagination (round up), the Nerd can force a target creature within a stone's throw to attempt a Pluck test opposed by the Nerd's Book Learning. Should the creature fail the opposed test, it loses access to any powers or abilities that can't be explained by modern science (such as most magical spells or supernatural powers). This effect lasts for as long as the Nerd continues to spend his turn explaining to everyone present (though none are likely to bother listening) why those abilities just can't work.

# The Normal Kid

*Yeah, we know each other. I sit in the back of the class. And you came to my birthday party. Remember?*

You're not too popular, but at least you're not a Nerd or an Outcast. You play sports, but you're not the star of the team. You get Bs in all your classes, but you'd rather be playing or hanging out than stuck in class. Sure, you have friends, just not as many as the Popular Kid. All in all, you're just you, an ordinary, everyday kid who does his homework (most of the time), plays street hockey (when you're not grounded), and has a secret crush on Cindy (even though she doesn't know who you are).

Now that you're in the Grimm Lands, though, you're pretty sure everyone will remember you. They'd better, after you helped the Jock save them from those strangling vines, and crawled behind the witch just before the Bully pushed her into her own oven, and protected the Nerd while he finished his spell, and…oh, never mind.

## The Normal Kid's Role

The Normal Kid might be a blank slate, someone who doesn't fit into one of the archetypes presented here. In that case, the Normal Kid is whatever the player makes of her, with whatever strengths and weaknesses seem appropriate, though she'll never be as good as the other archetypes are at their specialties.

On the other hand, some Normal Kids are so average, so well-rounded, and so kid-ish that everything they do seems generic. This can be great for the gang, as the Normal Kid can fill in any roll in a pinch. It can be disappointing for the Normal Kid, though,

Not every kid fits into the stereotypes presented as the archetypes. Some are just average, Normal Kids. The Normal Kid is really a blank slate for players to create the kind of kid they want. In the Grimm Lands, Normal Kids are a dime a dozen, caught in the teeth of Jack's giant, or baked in a pie by the old witch in the forest. They are the kids to which awful stuff happens. Of course, not all die horrible deaths. Really.

## Specialty, Flaw, and Beginning Archetype Ability

**Specialty:** A Normal Kid may choose any one trait as his specialty. When making a test in this trait, the Normal Kid always rolls an extra die on his initial roll.

**Flaw:** Normal Kids are generic, which has two effects. First of all, the Normal Kid cannot have a trait that exceeds any other trait of its type by more than one grade, as they rarely specialize in any particular area. For instance, if a kid has Muscle 3rd grade and 2nd grade in his other Core traits, he must advance all of his other Core traits to 3rd grade before he can advance Muscle to 4th grade.

Second, a Normal Kid who embraces his own generic nature is for some reason especially tasty to the monsters and villains of the Grimm Lands. He is the person in the story that the bad stuff

happens to: the red shirt, the nameless extra, the hero's expendable best friend.

When presented with several equally tasty targets at any point in a combat (i.e., whenever the narrator would randomly determine a creature's target from among several adjacent kids), an opponent always chooses to attack the Normal Kid. Additionally, in situations where a harmful effect, such as a spell or a widespread attack, could just as easily not include the Normal Kid as include him, the attack is always includes him, even if it means fewer nearby kids are included.

**Bonus Talent:** The Normal Kid needs all the help he can get. A Normal Kid may select one additional talent during character creation.

## Archetype Abilities

Each time a Normal Kid advances to an even-numbered personal grade beyond 3rd, he may choose one of the abilities below. Except for the **Bonus Talent** ability, each ability may only be taken once.

**Bonus Talent:** The Normal Kid can select a talent for which he qualifies.

**I'm Special, Too!:** In defiance of the general perception that others have of Normal Kids, they can be special…or at least, their traits can be. The Normal Kid can expend a single grade in a Core trait other than his iconic Core trait, with benefits as described under that trait in **Chapter 3: Traits and Talents**. A Normal Kid may do this once per story per Core trait.

**Social Chameleon:** Normal Kids, having not much personality of their own, tend to blend in with the crowd. Their predisposition to this kind of behavior has an unusual result in the Grimm Lands. Once per scene, the Normal Kid temporarily gains the beginning archetype ability of any other archetype. So for instance, he might imitate the Bully's **Threats** ability, the Jock's **Winning Play** ability, or even temporarily receive an increase to his Study traits (two +1 increases per personal grade beyond 3rd, divided evenly among all of his Study traits) in emulation of the Nerd's **Studious** ability.

**Survivor:** Say what you will about the Normal Kid, but he's resilient. A Normal Kid's health is one higher than his personal grade.

**Understudy:** Some Normal Kids are always wishing they could be the ones in the spotlight. Others couldn't care less, but spend so little time specializing in any one thing that they accidentally pick up and learn what others are doing. And when someone is hurt, it's time to show the world what a Normal Kid can do. Any time one of the Normal Kid's fellow children is knocked out, the Normal Kid can choose one of that kid's traits, talents, archetype abilities, or known spells. Until the child wakes up, the Normal Kid can use that aspect of the kid in his stead.

**Unusual Heritage (8th grade or higher):** Not all Normal Kids are destined to remain bland forever. Some discover, upon adventuring for a time in the Grimm Lands, that they have a heritage that is far from normal. The exact effects of this ability are decided by the narrator, but several examples are presented below. Each heritage should be unique.

### Sample Unusual Heritages

*Descended from Kings:* As a child, you wandered from your parents' royal garden and into the mundane world. Now, through accident or fate, you have found your way back into the Grimm Lands. After many adventures and several strange clues, you've finally learned the truth about your birthright, unlocking all of the responsibility it entails. You are accepted back into the loving arms of your true family, and become the heir to one of the Checkerboard Kingdoms. This means that you have access to troops, wealth, and a safe haven. It also means, however, that you have new responsibilities, potentially restrictive parents, and of course, the special attention of anyone who wishes to harm or conquer your kingdom, such as the Rotten King.

*Fairy Kin:* Unbeknownst to you, you were a changeling, a fairy infant left in place of a stolen mundane baby. Now that you have returned to a place much closer to the fay lands, your latent blood has awakened.

## Starting Normal Kid Traits

The following is a list of a 3rd-grade Normal Kid's starting grade in each trait.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cool 2nd | Pluck 2nd | Imagination 2nd | Luck 2nd | Muscle 2nd |
| Hide 2nd | Seek 2nd | Scamper 2nd | Scrap 2nd | Throw 2nd |
| 4-H — | Book Learning 2nd | Boy Scouts — | Country Club — | |
| Gaming — | Home Ec — | Industrial Arts — | Juvie — | |

Perhaps you are recognized by all fairies as one of their nobility, and are given special treatment and subtle aid throughout your travels. Or it may be a profound change: You disappear into a chrysalis one night, and emerge as a cat-sized elfin kid with butterfly or dragonfly wings sprouting from your back, which give you a speed of fast when flying. You gain the ability to fly at your normal speed and instantly learn three 1st-circle magical spells from among the artisan, enchanter, and guardian lists. You may now use magical powers without fear of weakening or estrangement. However, by becoming a fairy, you forsake the Real World and may never leave the Grimm Lands.

*Moonstruck:* You've always had disturbing dreams of hunting down prey and rending it with your teeth; now you know why. You are a wolf in kid's clothing, banished from the Grimm Lands by the Big Bad Wolf for challenging his dominance. Half of the wolves, dogs, and other canines you encounter will roll over for you automatically, accepting your dominance of the pack; the other half maintain their allegiance to the Big Bad Wolf, and are automatically antagonistic towards you (the narrator will determine which side a canine takes by rolling randomly or deciding based on the story needs).

Additionally, you manifest your heritage. You become obsessed with the moon, have a tendency to growl and even bark at those who alarm you, and you gain a dog's Sniffer ability. Finally, every morning you must decide whether you'd like to spend the day as a wolf or as a human. If you choose to be a wolf, you gain all of a wolf's physical features (its teeth, protective hide, speed, and scent). You can't speak any human languages while in wolf form, but whether in wolf or human form you can communicate with canines.

# The Outcast

*You don't know me! You don't know what it's like to be me…*

Your life sucks. Your family hates you, when they bother to notice you. No one understands you, so you don't bother trying to explain. Besides, you don't need friends. You like not fitting in. You wear whatever clothes you want to, listen to music they've never heard of, and spend as much time as far away from everyone else as possible, unmissed and unnoticed. You like it that way, really.

Now that you're stuck in this place, maybe your parents and everyone else will finally miss you. But that doesn't much matter, now. You're stuck with a bunch of norms, and they're all "Go team!" or "Somebody save me!" Nothing's changed. You still don't need them, and they still don't know who you are. At least your luck seems to have improved…or maybe it's just that everyone else's luck has gotten so much worse.

## The Outcast's Role

Outcasts are depressed children who believe, in some cases correctly, that no one cares for them. Their desperate lives have left them little room to develop their imaginations or believe in much

## Starting Outcast Traits

The following is a list of a 3rd-grade Outcast's starting grade in each trait.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cool 1st | Pluck 1st | Imagination 2nd | Luck 2nd | Muscle 1st |
| Hide 4th | Seek 2nd | Scamper 2nd | Scrap 1st | Throw 2nd |
| 4-H — | Book Learning 2nd | Boy Scouts — | Country Club — | |
| Gaming — | Home Ec 1st | Industrial Arts — | Juvie 4th | |

of anything. Thanks to their isolated existence, however, they have developed strong coping skills that make them excellent survivors in the Grimm Lands. Since no one notices them anyway, they find that it is easier for them to sneak around and go to forbidden places. Most Outcasts are good at stealing, having learned that it gets them attention in the Real World. In the Grimm Lands, the Outcast's ability to pick a pocket may mean the difference between all of the kids getting out of a dungeon alive, and all of them having the flesh flayed from their bones. Outcasts that save the day in *Grimm* may end up being appreciated and accepted, after all. The tricky part is getting them to believe it.

## Specialty, Flaw, and Beginning Archetype Ability

**Specialty:** Outcasts, often out of necessity, tend to be liars, cheats, sneaks, and thieves. Outcasts may choose to specialize in either Hide or Juvie. Whichever is chosen, the Outcast always rolls an extra die on the initial roll for the chosen test.

**Flaw:** Outcasts are pathologically shy, and have a difficult time speaking to anyone who isn't a kid. Whenever an Outcast attempts to speak to anyone other than a kid, say anything in public, or even draw a monster's attention away from his friends, the Outcast must make a Pluck test with a difficulty equal to the primary listener's or watcher's Cool grade. If he fails, he is unable to do so; he instead reverts to his normal state of self-isolation, his eyes downcast and bitter words being muttered beneath his breath.

The Outcast receives a –1 disadvantage on the test if the person or creature he is trying to address is one of authority, considerable power, or great presence (the mayor of a town, a dragon, a knight, a king, a teacher, etc.). If speaking in public to no one in particular, the difficulty of the test is 1st grade, plus 1 grade per 5 non-kid listeners or watchers nearby.

**Forgettable:** No one notices the Outcast. Whenever the gang is attacked in an action scene, the Outcast is the last person in the gang to be targeted by foes on the first round. For instance, if the gang is ambushed by a pack of pirate slavers with nets, only after every other gang member is wrapped in a net will the Outcast be attacked.

Additionally, when presented with several equally tasty targets at any other point in a combat (i.e., whenever the narrator would randomly determine a creature's target from among several adjacent kids), a creature never chooses to attack the Outcast.

Finally, in situations where a harmful effect like a spell or a widespread attack could just as easily include the Outcast in its area as not include him, the attack does not include him.

## Advanced Archetype Abilities

Each time an Outcast advances to an even-numbered personal grade beyond 3rd, he may choose one of the abilities below. Each ability may only be taken once.

**Cheap Shot:** Because most people barely notice Outcasts, much less perceive them as threats, the Outcast can often catch opponents by surprise and strike them in especially sensitive spots. The Outcast must either be behind his target, or concealed from the target in some way (he must be hiding, or must be disguised as a non-combatant, and so on). When an Outcast lands a cheap shot, he inflicts +1 wound.

**Compulsive Liar:** Outcasts can swear oaths and not really mean it. The Outcast suffers no ill effects from breaking an oath or failing to complete a quest (see page 103). In addition, the Outcast gains a +2 advantage on Cool tests made to lie, fast-talk, or otherwise deceive, as well as to notice such tactics being used against them.

**Inscrutable:** The Outcast hides behind a wall of hair or smudges of dark makeup. Who can say what his hands are doing in those long sleeves, or what he's hiding beneath that bulky coat? The Outcast need not declare his intended actions at the beginning of the round, instead waiting until his turn to decide what to do.

**Quick:** Outcasts are used to avoiding blows from drunken parents or irritated cops. When the Outcast spends his turn evading, he gains an additional +1 grade to his defense trait.

**Shoplifter:** In addition to spending his turn in other ways during an action scene, the Outcast can pick up and conceal any cat-sized or smaller unattended object that he passes during his turn. Characters who might notice the act may make Seek tests opposed by the Outcast's Juvie.

**Vanish (8th grade or higher):** An Outcast is so forgettable that he can just drift out of someone's notice. Once per scene, the Outcast may spend his turn and expend 1 Imagination to make a Hide test (opposed by Seek) even while being observed and with nothing to hide behind. If the Outcast attempts this during an action scene, he must either have something to hide behind or must not be observed at the moment that he's trying to hide. If he succeeds, everyone else in the scene not only loses sight of him, they essentially forget that he was ever there.

The Outcast may remain hidden for the rest of the scene, if he likes, so long as he does nothing during his turns but hide and, if he desires, move at half speed. The Outcast can remain hidden even after moving out from behind cover.

# The Popular Kid

*Oh, hi (giggle)…and you are…?*

Everyone knows your name and everyone likes you. You're the most Popular Kid in school, and that carries a certain level of responsibility. You and your friends determine fashion, who is in and who is out. If someone doesn't like it, well, that's just because they're jealous. You probably come from a well-off family, and your parents have great plans for you. You do well in school, but unlike the Nerd, you spend time in the cool clubs, like the swim team, cheerleading, and key club. Everyone looks to you for the social rules of the school, and you're more than happy to oblige.

You have to admit, you were a little worried when you first got to this "Grimm Lands" place. But so far, you've managed to convince a lot of the people here just how cool you are, and the kids still look up to you, most of the time. As long as you have people to tell what to do, you'll be fine. You hope.

## The Popular Kid's Role

The Popular Kid has a lot going for her in the Real World: plenty of friends, lots of support, maybe even rich parents to buy her all sorts of goodies. She knows how to get along with everyone, even adults. When put into the rather unlikely position of finding herself in a fairy tale world, she relies on those natural strengths. She is a social character who works best as part of a team, providing inspiration and support to her friends. With much of her support network gone, she becomes a little nervous, causing her baser natures to emerge. Being used to getting whatever she wants is a character trait that can get her into trouble if she is not careful.

## Specialty, Flaw, and Beginning Archetype Ability

**Specialty:** Popular Kids are, well, popular. They are socially adept and highly skilled at getting others to do what they want. A Popular Kid always rolls an extra die on the initial roll of Cool tests.

**Flaw:** Popular Kids are not always rich kids (though it helps), and not all Popular Kids are materialistic. However, they all desperately want certain things from the world: love, attention, friendship, clothes, and anything considered cool. They're also used to getting those things. As a result, Popular Kids have a hard time refusing temptations and resisting despair. Popular kids suffer a –2 disadvantage on any attempt to resist despair and temptations (see pages 102 and 106). The narrator can also call for the Popular Kid to make a Pluck test (difficulty varies) whenever confronted with the opportunity to take something without immediate, obvious consequences. It's not that the Popular Kid steals per se, but if something happens to be lying around and she really wants it, it's hard for her to say no.

**Ridicule:** Popular Kids have an uncanny ability to undermine others' confidence. This ability only works against characters within a stone's throw who can hear the Popular Kid. They must understand at least the basics of the Popular Kid's language and be intelligent enough to feel self-doubt. To use this ability, the Popular Kid must spend her turn and make an opposed Cool test against the target, mocking its abilities, ideas, or even its appearance. If she wins the test, her target begins to think that perhaps its evil plan is stupid, after all. The target suffers a –1 disadvantage on all trait tests for a number of rounds equal to the number of grades by which the Popular Kid won the test. An opponent may only be affected by this ability once per scene.

## Advanced Archetype Abilities

Each time a Popular Kid advances to an even-numbered personal grade beyond 3rd, she may choose one of the abilities below. Each ability may only be taken once.

**Cheerleader:** Popular Kids are natural leaders. A word of inspiration from the Popular Kid goes a long way towards inspiring even the most anti-social Outcast to greater things. Any time a Popular Kid would provide a bonus die due to teamwork, she instead provides +1 grade to the ally.

# Starting Popular Kid Traits

The following is a list of a 3rd-grade Popular Kid's starting grade in each trait.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cool 4th | Pluck 1st | Imagination 1st | Luck 1st | Muscle 1st |
| Hide 1st | Seek 1st | Scamper 2nd | Scrap 1st | Throw 1st |
| 4-H — | Book Learning 3rd | Boy Scouts — | Country Club 4th | |
| Gaming — | Home Ec 1st | Industrial Arts — | Juvie — | |

**Confidence:** The Popular Kid wouldn't stay that way if she didn't have the confidence to succeed. She may re-roll one die any time she rolls one or more 1s.

**Fascinate:** Popular Kids are great at winning over crowds and fascinating others. Each creature to be fascinated must be within a stone's throw of the Popular Kid, able to see and hear her, and able to pay attention to her. The Popular Kid must also be able to see each creature. The distraction of a nearby combat, or other dangers, prevents the ability from working.

To use the ability, the Popular Kid makes a Cool test (or a 4-H test if the target is an animal); viewers may make an opposed Pluck test. Creatures who fail the test sit quietly and listen to the Popular Kid talk (or watch her dance, or listen to her sing, etc.), taking no other actions for as long as the Popular Kid continues. While fascinated, a target suffers a –2 disadvantage on Seek and Cool tests. Any potential threat requires the Popular Kid to make another Cool test and allows the creatures new Pluck tests. Any obvious threat, such as someone drawing or aiming a weapon or casting a spell, automatically breaks the effect.

**Go With:** The most coveted position in school is to be the boyfriend or girlfriend of a Popular Kid. "Going with" is a kind of platonic girlfriend/boyfriend relationship children use once they get over the revulsion of the opposite gender, but before the complications of puberty fully sink in. The Popular Kid can select one other child (a player character or a story character) to go with. The selected child's Imagination temporarily increases by 1, and he receives +1 grade on all Pluck tests while the Popular Kid is present. However, the Popular Kid may rely on her boyfriend to save her if she's in trouble. Any time the Popular Kid takes wounds, she may cause the wounds to be inflicted on the kid she's going with instead. To do so, she must expend one Imagination per wound she wishes to transfer.

The Popular Kid may end this relationship at any time, dumping her boyfriend with such worldly phrases as "I need someone more mature," "I need some time to myself," and "we don't have anything in common anymore." The Popular Kid may then immediately pick another kid to go with, provided the kid is even less mature, more clingy, has less in common with her, etc. A kid who has been dumped receives a –1 disadvantage to all tests for one day, but also retains the increase to his Imagination for that day (as he imagines his life is over). In any case, kids are resilient and not terribly emotionally vested at this young age, so the dumped kid returns to normal after one day.

**Ridicule, Advanced:** If the Popular Kid wishes to cause an advanced ridicule result, she must declare this before making the opposed test, and only succeeds at causing any result at all if she wins the opposed test by 3 or more grades. Alternatively, immediately upon causing a ridicule result, the Popular Kid may expend one Imagination to elevate the result.

If the Popular Kid achieves an advanced ridicule result, then in addition to suffering the disadvantage on all trait tests, the target feels the urge to change what it's doing for that round, even if its current actions seem to be successful. So if the target was attacking one kid with a weapon, it may switch to attacking another one with magic; if the target was successfully bashing down a door, it may decide to try to find another way into the house.

**Ridicule, Master (8th grade or higher):** Only a Popular Kid with the Advanced Ridicule ability may select this ability. If the Popular Kid wishes to cause a master ridicule result, she must declare this before making the opposed test, and only succeeds at causing any result at all if she wins the opposed test by six or more grades. Alternatively, immediately upon causing an advanced ridicule result, the Popular Kid may expend two Imagination to elevate the result.

If the Popular Kid achieves a master ridicule result, then in addition to suffering the disadvantage on all trait tests and changing what it's doing for that round, the target becomes so uncertain as a result of the Popular Kid's mockery that it does nothing but stand still in confusion and doubt during its next turn.

Chapter Three

# Traits and Talents

Traits are the basic building blocks of *Grimm*. All major characters have them, and so do most minor characters; at least, those who want to eat, dismember, or otherwise make life unpleasant for the kids do. They might be thought of as a character's skills, strengths, and hobbies, or maybe her social, physical, and mental capabilities.

Talents, on the other hand, are special tricks that not everyone has. They can represent a character's specialization in a trait, or his particular capabilities in a certain situation, or a unique way of looking at the world.

## Traits

Traits in *Grimm* tell the narrator and the players how well a character can perform at any task she wants to perform. Whether characters are major or minor, they all have parts to play, and traits tell us not only how hard they have to try to accomplish their goals, but how hard others have to try when they're working against them. Of course, many tasks a character wants to accomplish will be automatic. If you want to walk somewhere, you do it. If a witch wants to open the door of her gingerbread hut, she does. Traits come into play when it matters how well or how fast someone needs to accomplish something, or when the action is so difficult that there's a question of whether or not she can pull it off at all.

The dice-rolling and action involved with traits is explained in **Chapter 4: Action!** What this chapter aims to do is tell you what kinds of things a trait will allow you to do in terms of the story, and which traits your character will need to resort to in order to stay alive.

There are three kinds of traits in *Grimm*: Core, Playground, and Study. Note that they're presented not only in alphabetical order, but in order of importance, as well! Everyone knows that what a kid learns on the playground, how he deals with the social struggles in the hallway between classes, and even the daydreams that occupy his mind during class all shape him more than what he learns and forgets from a bunch of books.

### Trait Levels

Although adults may not care about a few years of age difference between themselves and their peers, kids care a lot. When you're still growing, and your brain is absorbing information at the speed of light, each year makes a big difference in what you know, what you can do, and who you are. Kids in higher grades are idols to be worshipped or tyrants to be feared; kids in lower grades are targets to be manipulated, wannabes to be brushed off, or worst of all, annoying younger siblings to be despised. Adults are a whole other story altogether; they're more than like an alien species.

Thus, traits in *Grimm* are not measured by some arbitrary numbering system or cumbersome percentages, but by grade. Someone with barely any competence in a trait has 1st grade in it, while a character with 12th grade would be one of the most skilled in all the land at that particular activity. A character with 5th grade or 6th grade in a trait would, correspondingly, be average. A character needn't actually be of the appropriate age range for that grade in the mundane world; after all, even werewolves and warlocks in the Grimm Lands have grades in traits. And as you'll see, some kids can achieve results in their hobbies or specialties far beyond that of their "real" grade level.

So, is a trait is measured by what a very skilled or very talented kid of that grade could accomplish? It's difficult to say, because these rules only apply in the Grimm Lands, not in our mundane world. It's hard to believe that a brave knight, veteran of countless battles, would be no more skilled at swordplay than a varsity fencer; likewise, could a royal

engineer be only as knowledgeable as a high school senior when it comes to castle construction? Perhaps. On the one hand, the Grimm Lands exist in large part for and because of the kids, so it may very well measure its own rules based on their capabilities and potential. On the other hand, the mundane world's educational system is far more advanced than that of the medieval fantasy world of the Grimm Lands, so our young heroes have a head start on everyone else, don't they?

Most characters in *Grimm* have at least 1st grade in all Core and Playground traits. If a character has less than 1st grade in a trait, that's represented by a dash, like this: —. This is referred to as the character having **Kindergarten** level in the trait, and means that he automatically fails any tests made in that trait. No characters may have higher than 12th grade in any trait, although they may be able to score higher than 12th grade on trait tests. When this occurs, the results of the trait test are considered to be **University** level, and for simplicity are counted as 13th grade, 14th grade, and so on. For more information on resolving trait tests, see **Chapter 4: Action**!

## What Grade Are You?

In addition to traits having grades, all characters in *Grimm* have personal grade levels, too. These personal grade levels affect, most importantly, a character's health: the number of wounds she can suffer before she is knocked out. Kids increase in personal grade level after each story.

The personal grade level of a story character also gives the narrator an idea of whether it is appropriate to pit that character against the kids. Kids in most games start out as 3rd graders, and as such should spend their earlier adventurers facing characters of a similar grade or lower.

## Starting Grades

A kid's starting trait grades vary depending on which archetype she chooses (see **Chapter 2: Archetypes**) and how she spends her eight free credits. As she graduates to higher personal grade levels, she gains eight more credits each time to improve her trait grades, as well.

# Core Traits

These are the traits that everyone has before he walks through the doors of the school in first grade. Even before you learn to play the basic schoolyard games, before you figure out what classes and skills you have a natural inclination towards, these Core traits are present.

Core traits work somewhat differently for major characters than other traits. Each major character, including the kid characters, select an **iconic** Core trait that can be **expended** for amazing effects, temporarily lowering their values. Your iconic Core trait is therefore more transient than other traits, so you should keep a record of not only your normal grade in the Core trait, but also your current grade in that trait. A Core trait can be expended all the way below 1st to something called Kindergarten level. When this happens, a single long dash is placed in the trait's score box, showing that the character effectively has no level in that trait. If she is asked to test in that trait, she automatically fails. On the bright side, she knows she can't go any lower!

Expending an iconic Core trait does not use up your character's turn during an action scene. Core traits reset to their normal grades at the end of each story.

Some special abilities or items allow other Core traits to be expended, like items that are activated by the expenditure of Imagination or talents that are powered by the expenditure of Cool. These traits also reset to their normal grades at the end of each story.

Minor characters cannot choose an iconic Core trait.

## Narrator Note: Traits

The traits in *Grimm* use names appropriate for the genre. This is because, regardless of the terrifying monsters and potentially gruesome fates of these kids, it's still a story told through their eyes. So you'll have "Scrap" instead of "Melee," and "Cool" instead of "Socialize," and "Boy Scouts" instead of "Wilderness Survival." You don't have to be a kid in *Grimm* to have kid-sounding traits, though; everyone has the same ones. So even the helpful old villager has Industrial Arts, and even the hungry troll has Scamper. They might not like it, but remember: this isn't their story. It's the kids' story, period. The same applies for the levels of ability of the traits (grades).

If the names still don't work for you, use generic names or even villainous names for the traits. You can apply the generic names to minor characters' traits and the villainous names to villains' traits, if you think you can do it without getting confused; you could even just apply the generic names to everyone's traits, heroes and villains and innocent bystanders alike, if you want to. Just be careful that in so doing, you don't remove a fun piece of flavor that the group might enjoy.

# Cool

The Popular Kids would have you believe that it's no accident that this trait is listed first. Cool is how good you are at saying and doing the right things. It's how good you are at making others like you, and how practiced you are at figuring out what it takes to make that happen. Being popular (and staying that way) requires a special combination of sensitivity, chutzpah, confidence, and paranoia, so Cool is used whenever any kind of social test must be made. Whether you're manipulating a household of dwarfs into doing your chores for you, cheering up one of your fellow trapped kids, convincing the local monster hunter to protect a helpless village, or figuring out if others are trying to manipulate *you*, Cool is the trait to use.

**Opposed?:** An opposed Cool test might be called for if one character is trying to intimidate another into backing down, or two characters are trying to embarrass one another in public. Cool is usually opposed by the other character's Cool trait, or his Pluck trait if you're using intimidation, a dare, or the like.

## Sample Cool Difficulties

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st Grade | Getting a free apple from the local fruit vendor |
| 3rd Grade | Convincing someone to carry your books for you |
| 6th Grade | Seeing through an evil prince's lies |
| 9th Grade | Rousing timid villagers to fight for their survival |
| 12th Grade | Tricking the Rotten King into letting you borrow his crown and scepter |

## Protecting Your Rep

If you choose Cool as your iconic trait, you have a special option, called **Protecting Your Rep**. Even when your courage fails, or your reflexes let you down, the fear of looking stupid in front of your peers can be an excellent motivator. Once per scene when making a test in a trait that is lower than your Cool, you may use your Cool trait instead of the appropriate trait, plus whatever advantages or disadvantages would be normal for the test. After doing so, your Cool is expended by one grade.

This option can only be used if your Cool is 1st grade or higher.

# Pluck

Sometimes it doesn't matter how popular you are, or how tough you are, or how much creativity you have. What matters is whether you're willing to risk everything to help your friends, or do what's right, or to show a Bully (or an evil king) that not everyone will back down. That's when Pluck comes into play. A character's grade in Pluck determines whether he runs away from the horrible monster or stands and fights, whether he cowers in the corner or comes out fighting.

Pluck tests are usually reactive, such as when a creature scares the bejeezus out of you or a witch tries to hypnotize you. If you succeed at the Pluck test, you can act normally. If you fail at the Pluck test, you have to do whatever a scared little kid would do, or whatever the villain wants you to do if she's trying to mind-control you. Sometimes the narrator will tell you what your character must do, depending on the effect that caused you to make a test. Often, you are free to choose to respond however seems most appropriate for your character and the situation, but you generally can't do anything productive.

Pluck tests may also be called for when you want to do something is dangerous, or just seems dangerous, such as walking across a swinging rope bridge that sways over a bottomless chasm, or climbing the tendril of a giant beanstalk that heads up towards the clouds. If you succeed at the Pluck test, you can make the attempt. If you fail, you cannot make the attempt…yet. Maybe it's time to be brave (see next page).

## Sample Pluck Difficulties

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st Grade | Knocking on the door of a scary house |
| 4th Grade | Crossing the River Styx on a slippery log |
| 8th Grade | Keeping your head about you when you're jumped by an 8th-grade werewolf |
| 12th Grade | Facing the Dragon |

### Being Brave

If you choose Pluck as your iconic trait, you have a special option, called **Being Brave**. Once per scene before making a Pluck test, you may expend one Pluck grade to automatically succeed at the test.

Alternatively, you may choose to act even though you're shaking in your shoes or under someone else's control. Once per scene after failing a Pluck test, you may expend one Pluck grade to act somewhat normally. You still suffer a disadvantage on all trait tests for the scene equal to the number of grades by which you failed the original Pluck test, but at least you can *try* to help your friends. And sometimes, trying is what matters.

Either option can only be used if your Pluck is 1st grade or higher.

# Imagination

Imagination is the ability to see the unlikely, to think of the unusual, to be empathetic, and to be creative. Imagination tests may be called for in order to see something through another's eyes, or to behold fairies that are invisible to adults, or to answer riddles.

## Sample Imagination Difficulties

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st Grade | Telling a funny story |
| 3rd Grade | Making a passable sketch with charcoal |
| 6th Grade | Seeing the entrance to a fairy realm |
| 9th Grade | Coming up with a clue that helps to solve a sphinx's riddle |
| 12th Grade | Chiselling a life-size statue of the Rotten King out of marble |

### Using Your Imagination

If you choose Imagination as your iconic trait, it becomes your secret weapon against the many terrible forces arrayed against you in the Grimm Lands. It allows you to do the impossible, to grant yourself amazing powers, and to cause something to happen simply because you believe in it so much. It is the power to shape reality…and as such, it deserves its own chapter. See "Imaginings" in **Chapter 5: Tools of the Trade**, for more details.

Many archetype abilities, keepsakes, talents, and talismans may also require the expenditure of Imagination to perform one kind of special effect, even if it is not the character's iconic Core trait.

# Luck

Who cares how much Imagination you have, or how courageous you are, if the first ogre's club that comes swinging your way manages to squash you flat? Luck is the only thing that'll save you in such a case.

If the narrator is asked what happens and it's not a scripted event, and no other trait seems to apply, a Luck test is appropriate. Maybe the witch chooses that exact moment to come home, or maybe she doesn't. Maybe the giant wakes up just as the kids are sneaking out of their cages, or maybe he continues to slumber. Luck tests are called for whenever nothing but random chance is involved…or at least, *supposedly* random chance. What kids and gamblers alike know is that Luck is anything but random. It lives in pennies and charms, and collects in certain places like dew collects in the morning, and can disappear just as quickly. A lucky character always keeps an eye out for lucky things and places, and works hard at staying lucky, because staying lucky is the best way to stay alive.

## Sample Luck Difficulties

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st Grade | Finding a patch of strawberries when you're feeling a little peckish |
| 5th Grade | Crossing the Big Bad Wolf's favorite hunting path…when he's on his lunch break |
| 10th Grade | The witch running out of her favorite spice just before making a stew out of you |

### Calling on Luck

If you choose Luck as your iconic trait, you gain a special option called **Calling on Luck**. You should save this for when your chips are down and everything looks hopeless. If you are asked to make a non-Core trait test that you can't possibly make, even with creativity and teamwork, you can call on luck to raise your grade in the trait for that single test. Your current Luck is expended by a number of grades equal to the advantage you give to the other trait. Thus, against all odds, you could hit the center of the bullseye with the arrow (by raising your Throw), or duck into a hole just as the giant is about to squash you flat (by raising your Scamper), and so on.

You can only expend a number of grades equal to half your personal grade level, rounded down; so a 4th-grade kid could expend at most two grades of Luck to raise his grade for a single test, a 7th-grade kid could expend at most three grades of Luck on a single test, and so on.

This option can only be used if your current Luck is 1st grade or higher, and it must be used before you roll the dice.

## Muscle

The shrimps will tell you that you can do anything with enough Imagination, or that being brave is more important than being strong. Bull. It's all about Muscle, and here's why: When the monster finally gets a hold of you and stuffs you in his mouth, it's Muscle that lets you bust your way out.

Muscle is also useful for forcing open that door, carrying your wounded companion, or winning arm wrestling matches.

**Muscle in Combat:** Muscle plays an important role during wrestling.

### Sample Muscle Difficulties

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st Grade | Giving a younger kid a short piggyback ride |
| 3rd Grade | Carrying half of your body weight for a full day |
| 6th Grade | Lifting something your own weight over your head |
| 9th Grade | Pushing a rock as big as you off the edge of a cliff |
| 12th Grade | Holding up a collapsing cave entrance while your friends crawl out between your legs |

### Shake It Off

If you choose Muscle as your iconic trait, you gain a special option called **Shake It Off**. Usually, whenever you suffer from wounds, you suffer a –1 disadvantage per wound to all of your tests. But if you shake it off by expending one Muscle grade, you can ignore those wounds for the rest of the scene.

# Playground Traits

Playground traits are the skills you would use to navigate everyday life outside of the classroom. How you walk, how you talk, how good you are at throwing a ball or playing a game—those are all Playground traits. They're nearly as important as Core traits, but are less essential to who you are as a person. They can be learned a little more easily, and they're tested a little more often.

Most characters have at least 1st grade in all Playground traits. But, some creatures' shapes don't allow for Throwing, and some **hazards** (see page 102), which are threats that are not full-fledged characters, may only list the relevant traits.

## Hide

This one's pretty self-explanatory. Hide is half of the earliest game kids learn to play (see "Seek," below, for the other half), and it's something a monster practices, too, if he wants to take his prey by surprise. Hide isn't just about concealing yourself behind things or fitting into small objects, though. It's also about sneaking around quietly and remaining unnoticed. Some would say that the Popular Kids are even better at this trait than they are at Cool, because they're always hiding their true natures…but if they are, they're so good at it that they seem like they're not.

**Opposed?:** Hide is opposed by the other character's Seek.

### Sample Hide Difficulties

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st Grade | Getting past a snoring guard without waking him |
| 3rd Grade | Remaining unseen in dense foliage |
| 6th Grade | Weaving through a crowded ballroom without being noticed |
| 9th Grade | Sneaking up to a wary encampment guard during daylight hours |
| 12th Grade | Standing on your friends' shoulders and disguising yourself as an ogre |

## Seek

Seek is the other half of the classic game, and it's a trait that is enthusiastically perfected by predators throughout the Grimm Lands. Whether by sight, scent, hearing, or hunches, Seek is the trait that is tested whenever you want to try to find something.

**Opposed?:** Seek is usually opposed by a character's Hide. An opposed Seek test against another character's Seek might be called for if the two characters are each trying to find something before the other does, such as in a scavenger hunt.

### Sample Seek Difficulties

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st Grade | Finding the pencil you stuck behind your ear |
| 3rd Grade | Noticing the scent of freshly baked bread coming from a nearby hut |
| 6th Grade | Spotting the tiny armored elf riding aback a passing dragonfly |
| 9th Grade | Hearing the Big Bad Wolf creeping up on you |
| 12th Grade | Finding a brownie's sewing needle in a giant's haystack |

## Scamper

Kids and critters alike use Scamper all the time. It is the trait you use to get from point A to point B in an interesting and timely manner. Taking the sidewalk or walking down the stairs one step at a time doesn't require a Scamper test, but taking a shortcut through several backyards to catch the bus on time, leaping down three or four steps at a time on Christmas morning, or ducking out of the way of your big brother's wild swing could all require Scamper tests. Scampering is climbing, jumping, swimming, dodging, rolling, or straight-out running. Luckily for the kids trapped in the Grimm Lands, it's something they tend to be quite good at.

**Opposed?:** Opposed Scamper tests are called for during races, chases, and other athletic scenarios. See **Chapter 4: Action!** for details on how such situations are handled.

**Scamper in Combat:** You may use Scamper as your defense trait; the smaller you are than your attacker, the harder you will be to hit.

### Sample Scamper Difficulties

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st Grade | Jumping over a fire hydrant |
| 3rd Grade | Climbing a tree whose lowest branches are above your head |
| 6th Grade | Riding your bike off a ramp and jumping over your little brother, your dog, and your mom's favorite vase all at once |
| 9th Grade | Outrunning an avalanche in the World's Edge Mountains |
| 12th Grade | Swimming up the worst rapids of the Rioting River |

## Scrap

Scrapping is something that good kids never learn to do well, and that parents don't want to hear about. In the mundane world, it is the tussling, the pushing, the shoving, and the noogies that Bullies live for and Nerds live in fear of. In the Grimm Lands, it is the skill that knights use to spar with one another, that monsters use to try to eat children, and that Bullies still use to give Nerds noogies.

Scrap tests are almost always called for as opposed tests, often in combat.

**Opposed?:** An opposed Scrap test might be called for if two characters are tussling, get in a shoving match with no actual intention of hurting one another, or are both fumbling for the magic gem that the clockwork bird dropped on the path.

**Scrap in Combat:** If you're attacking someone, you make an opposed Scrap test against him to see if you hit him and, if so, how hard. He might oppose you with his own Scrap or his Scamper.

### Sample Scrap Difficulties

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st Grade | Kicking an adult in the shins |
| 3rd Grade | Giving a Jock a run for his money in a fight |
| 6th Grade | Holding your own against a pack of goblins |
| 9th Grade | Fending off the Big Bad Wolf |
| 12th Grade | Giving a giant a black eye |

## Throw

Scientists and sports coaches alike are baffled by the phenomenon, but the same stuff that makes a good runner, climber, swimmer, or dancer, is completely different from what makes a great thrower. Even the lonely, uncool kid in his back yard, with no friends to speak of, might be a wiz at chucking a baseball…if he has a dad to play fetch with or one of those nets that bounces the ball back to him. And, in a world where getting within arm's reach of a monster is as good as jumping into his maw, a strong arm can count for a lot.

Throw is also used whenever aim is needed, such as with a bow and arrow.

**Opposed?:** Throw might be opposed by another character's Throw if the two are in a contest to see who can lob a rock the farthest, or hit the closest to the bullseye.

**Throw in Combat:** Throw is opposed by a target's Scamper. The larger the target is than the Thrower, the harder it is for him to dodge the attack.

### Sample Throw Difficulties

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st Grade | Tossing a ball to someone 10 paces away |
| 3rd Grade | Hitting a giant with a longbow |
| 6th Grade | Hitting an adult with a slingshot |
| 9th Grade | Hitting a gnome with a knife |
| 12th Grade | Hitting a fairy with a pebble |

# Study Traits

While even children and mindless beasts can have high grade levels in Core and Playground traits, Study traits are generally only learned by skilled, intelligent, committed tradesfolk and craftspeople. Study traits include the sorts of things that a kid would learn either in classes or during his "productive time" after school. Some kids, like theater geeks and boy scouts, channel their energy productively during this time. Others, like hoodlums and snobs, spend their time learning what are considered to be less ideal skills. Once you're in the Grimm Lands, though, you'll find that others look up to you for your previously inappropriate abilities. Everything has its place, here—it's just a matter of how you use it.

Study traits come into play less often than Core and Playground traits, unless you pursue a career path that focuses on a particular trait (the village doctor would make pretty common use of 4-H, for instance, and a hunter or woodsman would need Boy Scout every time he stepped into the woods). Characters don't automatically have grades above Kindergarten in all Study traits, even if their shapes would allow for it.

## 4-H

4-H is your ability to interact with the natural world in a friendly way. Tests involving agriculture, raising or befriending animals, and even taking care of the sick or injured, are all covered by the 4-H trait. 4-H is also used for a modern concept called "sustainable living;" in other words, in the Grimm Lands, normal existence. This includes finding nuts and berries to supplement your normal diet, collecting wood and leaves to make your home or furnishings, and even predicting the weather for the season. While these may seem like a disparate set of skills, they all rely on an intuition for how plants and animals and other natural systems work, and being able to "speak their language." Note that the Boy Scouts trait covers many similar activities; in this case, it's the method that matters, not the end result. 4-H is generally used by characters who seek to befriend or co-exist with nature in the long term, while Boy Scouts is used by those who seek to fight it or survive it in the here and now. Boy Scouts is the "hunt" part of the equation while 4-H is the "gather" part.

**Special Uses:** 4-H can be used for **medical care** (see page 61).

### Sample 4-H Difficulties

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st Grade | Leading a cow to pasture |
| 6th Grade | Doubling a farm's yield for the season |
| 12th Grade | Saving a friend from an incurable disease |

## Book Learning

What seem like the most boring things to kids in the Real World are actually some of the most coveted knowledges among the residents of the Grimm Lands. Most characters from the Grimm Lands, even talking ones, have no grades in Book Learning, except perhaps members of royalty and the extremely well-educated. Even then, having only 1st grade in this trait is considered quite an achievement. This makes the kids quite a phenomenon, given that most have around 3rd grade in this trait when their chronicle begins. Some Grimm Landers will love the kids for their precocious skills, and some will turn green with envy…the kids had best make good use of their educations, but be careful not to flaunt it in the wrong places.

Book learning includes skills in the following subjects:

**Grammar:** Allows a character to read and write, decipher scripts and ciphers, and muddle through complex or boring texts (such as history books, genealogy treatises, and other dusty tomes).

**Math:** Most Grimm Lands residents can't properly count beyond their number of fingers and, if they're very creative, toes. Geometry, algebra, trigonometry, and other advanced mathematical concepts are as alien to them as Amsterdam.

**Science:** The Grimm Lands operates via its own set of laws, at times. However, in the absence of magic and Imagination, some aspects of chemistry, biology, and physics have managed to sneak in. Kids can use this to their advantage, as they wow court sages with their knowledge of the strange magic called "gravity," perform experiments with the hidden spirit referred to as "momentum," and perhaps even smite their enemies with the power of the storm (in other words, getting a fully armored black knight to stand atop a hill in a lightning storm).

**Social Studies:** Social Studies is a vague accumulation of knowledge referring to Real World history, government, economics, and culture. While the history aspect might have limited value in the Grimm Lands, it can be used to help predict the outcome of certain military or social actions undertaken by the Grimm Lands'

leaders, or as fodder for storytelling. The other aspects of Social Studies are immensely valuable to anyone who wishes to lead people, as they help a character understand the methods available to her to do so.

### Sample Book Learning Difficulties

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st Grade | Reading and writing at a 1st-grade level |
| 2nd Grade | Basic addition and subtraction with numbers greater than 10 |
| 3rd Grade | Showing that water can be solid, liquid, or gas |
| 4th Grade | Describing the basic systems of government |
| 5th Grade | Multiplication, long division, and basic algebra |
| 6th Grade | Making sense out of an old encoded diary |
| 7th Grade | Demonstrating the concepts of mass, gravity, and momentum |
| 8th Grade | Describing the basic concepts of economics |
| 9th Grade | Geometry and basic trigonometry |
| 10th Grade | Making a simple battery or an acidic compound |
| 11th Grade | Calculus |
| 12th Grade | Predicting the year of the downfall of a Grimm Lands monarchy |

## Boy Scouts

As mentioned under 4-H, Boy Scouts is the trait used by those who want to survive nature in the short term without worrying about it in the long term. Boy Scouts is used for first aid, surviving wilderness hazards, finding your way and reading maps, starting fires, and tracking.

**Special Uses:** Boy Scouts can be used to perform **first aid** (see page 60).

### Sample Boy Scouts Difficulties

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st Grade | Reading an amusement park map |
| 6th Grade | Making a tourniquet for someone who just lost an arm |
| 12th Grade | Finding shelter for the night in a blizzard |

## Country Club

Country Club is tested whenever a character attempts an activity that is reserved for the upper class or, in the Grimm Lands, the nobility. Riding a horse, dancing a waltz, playing a piano, speaking appropriately at court, or sailing a fancy boat are all Country Club activities.

**Special Uses:** When a test calls for Country Club skills but the character's level of artistic talent or social skills are still of concern, such as during a courtly music contest or the introduction of a court emissary, the character must use the average of her Country Club and, for instance, her Imagination or Cool grades.

### Sample Country Club Difficulties

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st Grade | Mounting a horse |
| 6th Grade | Tacking against the wind |
| 12th Grade | Flawlessly playing a classical sonata |

## Gaming

Gaming is one of those hobbies that sets apart true Nerds from other boys and girls. Lots of kids like fairy tales, novels and movies about wizard schools, and the occasional board game. But as a kid delves deeper and deeper into these hobbies, he finds a strange and unexpected world. This world includes things like narrative

video games, fantasy card and board games, and the infamous roleplaying game *Traps & Trolls*. This latter is the mark of death for any kid's social life, and is likely to be looked at askance by parents and teachers as well as by peers. However, upon his entry into the Grimm Lands, any gaming pariah is vindicated, for it is the Gaming trait that allows him to harness magic.

A kid needn't play *Traps & Trolls* to have a high grade in Gaming; Dreamers tend to know a lot about fairy tales and to read fantasy series targeted at children and adults alike, and even Normal Kids dabble in card games like *Pickleman* or *Sorcery: The Assemblage.* Gaming tests a character's ability at and knowledge of all of these.

**Special Uses:** Gaming can be used to learn and cast magical spells (see page 73), and to recognize familiar fairy tale settings and characters, and their soft spots (see page 182).

### Sample Gaming Difficulties

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st Grade | Remembering the rules for checkers |
| 6th Grade | Using a magic wand |
| 12th Grade | Transforming a witch into a frog |

## Home Ec

Home Ec covers one of the most boring things imaginable to a kid: chores. It seems that most characters in the Grimm Lands feel the same way about chores as kids, because captured, indentured, and cursed kids are tasked with using their Home Ec skills more often than any other trait. This is probably because so many fairy tales focus on the timely and effective completion of things like cleaning, cooking, sewing, and other boring but essential daily activities.

A character's ability in Home Ec is not determined solely by skill, but also by stick-to-it-iveness, focus, and care. When a character's ability to deal with tedium is at issue, such as when he is forced to dig a ditch, paint a fence, or work all night, Home Ec should be tested to determine the quality of the character's work and the length of time that he can keep going.

**Special Uses:** Most characters in the Grimm Lands use Home Ec for its intended, entirely unexciting purpose. With Imagination, however, kids can accomplish some pretty amazing things via Home Ec, like spinning straw into gold, knitting a magic hat, or cleaning an uncleanable place (see "Imaginings," page 71).

When a test calls for Home Ec skills but the character's level of artistic talent is still of concern, such as when knitting a decorative item, the character must use the average of his Home Ec and Imagination grades.

### Sample Home Ec Difficulties

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st Grade | Sweeping a front porch |
| 6th Grade | Cooking for seven hungry dwarfs |
| 12th Grade | Cleaning a giant's stables |

## Industrial Arts

Industrial Arts is tested whenever a character attempts to build or use machinery, to create structures, or to craft something that is functional. Metalworking and blacksmithing are both Industrial Arts activities, as are woodworking, irrigation, and architecture.

**Special Uses:** Industrial Arts is used to create and undo booby traps (see "Hazards," page 102).

### Sample Industrial Arts Difficulties

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st Grade | Building a fence |
| 6th Grade | Making a suit of knight's armor |
| 12th Grade | Overseeing a castle's construction |

## Juvie

Juvie skills tend to be learned by characters who don't have other extracurricular activities to keep them out of trouble. Much of Juvie is technical knowledge, which allows a character to pick locks, forge signatures, and hide contraband. Some of this trait's uses are more physical, such as picking pockets, concealing weapons, or preparing disguises. Regardless, whenever a character attempts something that is against the rules and is neither purely physical (such as when using Hide) nor purely social (such as when using Cool), Juvie is used.

### Sample Juvie Difficulties

| | |
|---|---|
| 1st Grade | Hiding a stolen apple in your baggy pants |
| 6th Grade | Picking an average lock |
| 12th Grade | Forging the Rotten King's seal and signature |

# Talents

Most talents may be taken by any character, though they may be more beneficial for specific character types. Talents that improve a kid's combat prowess, for instance, are obviously of more use in the hands of a Bully or Jock than they are in the hands of a Nerd. However, creative players may come up with ways to combine talents and other game abilities that will surprise everyone.

A beginning kid starts with one talent, and may select an origin talent as well, if she wishes. Origin talents give a character a higher value in a Study trait at the cost of other traits, as well as providing a bit of a roleplaying hook for the character.

Each time a kid graduates to the next grade level, she gains her choice of an additional talent or archetype ability.

## Origin Talents

Origin talents can only be taken at character creation, and are taken in addition to a character's normal starting talent. Origin talents always come at a cost, however, which is why some of them have trait requirements.

### Art Student

You attended a charter or magnet school that focused on creative expression over rote learning. Your Imagination increases by one grade, and you gain a +1 advantage on any Cool tests that involve storytelling or open, non-confrontational emotional empathy. However, you suffer a –2 disadvantage on all Book Learning tests.

### City Kid

Most of your life has been spent in the bustling city, so you feel confident and capable in urban environments. Outside of them, however, you're out of your element, and it shows. Whenever you're in a village, town, or large and fairly civilized structure like a castle, you receive +2 grades to all Cool and Pluck tests. Whenever you're anywhere else (such as in the woods, a dungeon, a cave, or even on a path outside of town), you suffer a –1 disadvantage on all Cool and Pluck tests.

### Exchange Student

*Requirement:* Cannot have the Popular Kid archetype

You only recently moved to a school in a western country from a home far away. In your home culture, self-discipline and respect were more prevalent than in the decadent West. Your Home Ec and Industrial Arts each increase by one grade. However, you suffer a –1 disadvantage on all Cool tests.

# General Talent Summaries

| Talent | Requirements | Summary |
|---|---|---|
| **Against the Odds** | Scrap 4th, no Bullies | Combat bonuses against higher-grade opponents |
| **Animal Friend** | 4-H 6th | You may gain an animal sidekick |
| **Dr. Doolittle** | 4-H 8th, **Animal Friend** | You may gain an additional animal sidekick |
| **Kid's Best Friend** | 4-H 8th, **Animal Friend** | Your animal sidekicks don't leave after the story |
| **Pack Beta** | 4-H 8th, **Animal Friend** | Your animal sidekicks gain bonuses |
| **Pack Alpha** | 4-H 10th, **Pack Beta** | Your animal sidekicks gain additional bonuses |
| **Big Kid** | Muscle 4th | You are considered adult-sized for some tests |
| **Full-grown** | Muscle 8th, **Big Kid** | You become adult-statured |
| **Strong Back** | Muscle 6th, **Big Kid** | You are considered adult-sized for more tests |
| **Crack Shot** | Throw 4th | Improved boost range on Throw tests |
| **Sniper** | Throw 10th, **Crack Shot** | You may ignore some of your target's protection |
| **Cute as a Button** | Cool 6th | Minor characters have a hard time hurting you |
| **David and Goliath** | — | Combat bonuses against larger opponents |
| **Dirty Fighter** | Juvie 4th, Scrap 4th | Combat bonuses against ambushed opponents |
| **In the Nards!** | Scrap 8th, **Dirty Fighter** or Outcast's **Cheap Shot** | Targets suffer increased wound penalties from your sneaky hits |
| **Earnest Apprentice** | Gaming 6th | Bonuses to learn progressive spells, and your spells are harder to resist |
| **Journeyman Wizard** | Gaming 8th, **Earnest Apprentice** | Bonuses in duels and quicker spells |
| **Favorite Weapon** | Scrap 4th | Improved boost range on Scrap tests with a specific type of weapon |
| **Named Weapon** | Scrap 8th, **Favorite Weapon** | Bonuses when using a specific weapon |
| **First Responder** | 4-H 4th, Boy Scouts 4th | Your first aid can heal up to two wounds |
| **Fleet-footed** | Scamper 3rd | Your speed increases when all you do is move |
| **Speed Demon** | Scamper 8th, **Fleet-footed** | Your speed increases by one level |
| **Furious Deflection** | Scrap 6th, Seek 6th | You may use Scrap to defend against Throw attacks |
| **Grip on Reality** | Seek 4th | You can see past illusions and resist tempting spells |
| **Hawk-eyed** | Seek 3rd | Bonuses to spot small or hidden things |
| **Haymaker** | Scrap 6th | Improved boost range on all Scrap tests |
| **Healer** | — | Bonuses on all tests made to heal others |
| **Curative Nature** | 4-H 10th, **Healer** | Your patients heal at twice the normal rate |
| **Heavy-handed** | Muscle 6th | Combat bonuses when unarmed |
| **Flying Fists** | Scrap 10th, **Heavy-handed** | You may make multiple attacks when unarmed |

# General Talent Summaries

| Talent | Requirements | Summary |
|---|---|---|
| **Hyper** | Scamper 8th | Expend Muscle to take two actions |
| **I Don't Want to Grow Up!** | Personal grade 6th or less | Improve Playground traits, but suffer penalties when resisting temptation or despair |
| **I'm the Best!** | 10th in any trait | You may achieve miraculous successes in one trait |
| **Iconic to the Extreme** | 8th in your iconic trait | You may regain grades in an expended iconic trait |
| **Karate Kid** | Scrap 6th | When facing larger opponents, you can use Scrap as if it were Scamper |
| **Judo Throw** | Scrap 8th, **Karate Kid** | Throw opponents who attack you and miss |
| **Kid Magician** | Gaming 6th | You are resistant to the negative effects of magic use |
| **Tween Thaumaturge** | Gaming 8th, **Kid Magician** | You may perform magic without tools and without weakening |
| **Monkey Bar Master** | — | Bonuses to Scamper tests on climbing, swinging, etc. |
| **Nobody's Fool** | Cool 8th, Seek 8th | You have a sixth sense about those who mean you ill |
| **Paranoid** | Scamper 4th | You may act before ambushers |
| **Cat-like Reflexes** | Scamper 8th, Seek 8th, **Paranoid** | You get a bonus action at the beginning of each action scene |
| **Put It All on the Line** | Scamper 6th, Scrap 6th, Throw 6th | Increase your boost range at a cost of greater risk of failure |
| **Rebound** | Personal grade 10th, Muscle as iconic trait | You may get back up after being knocked out |
| **Specialist** | 6th grade in chosen trait | You roll an extra die on the second roll of your specialized trait tests, in addition to the initial roll |
| **Spoiled** | — | You may gain bonuses after failing a test |
| **Spoiled Brat** | Personal grade 6th, **Spoiled** | Improved protection when in a tantrum |
| **Spoiled Rotten** | Personal grade 9th, Spoiled Brat | Improved bonuses when in a tantrum |
| **Taunter** | Cool 6th, Bully's **Threat** or Popular Kid's **Undermine** | You may force opponents to focus on you |
| **Taunter, Advanced** | Cool 8th, **Taunter** | You may force opponents to attack you foolishly |
| **Taunter, Master** | Cool 10th, **Advanced Taunter** | You may force opponents to attack you mindlessly |
| **Wild Swing** | Muscle 4th, Scrap 4th | You may reduce your chances of hitting in order to hit harder |
| **Pummel** | Muscle 10th, Scrap 10th, **Wild Swing** | You may keep attacking until you miss |

### Farm Kid

You grew up in the country, with a life of hard work and hard play, both of them in the outdoors. Your 4-H, Boy Scouts, and Muscle each increase by one grade, but you suffer a –2 disadvantage on all Cool tests.

### Home Schooled

You were educated at home by your mom, dad, or a private tutor. This gives you a breadth of knowledge that other kids lack, but it also means that some of the basic social and physical skills of your youth were stunted. You may increase any four Study traits by one grade level, but you suffer a –1 disadvantage on all Scamper and Throw tests.

### Orphan

You never knew your parents, and your entire childhood has been spent bouncing between orphanages, foster homes, and the street. It has made you self-reliant and skittish, but has stomped down your sense of wonder. Your Juvie increases by one grade, and you receive +1 grade to Seek tests made to detect ambushes and Scamper tests made when turn order is being contested. However, you suffer a –1 disadvantage on all Imagination and Gaming tests.

### Shrimp

You've always been small for your age. Some think of you like a little sibling who must be protected, while others are more than happy to take advantage of your stature. You've learned to make the most of it. Although your stature is kid-sized, you are considered dog-sized for the purposes of using Scamper as a defense trait and when using Throw as an attack trait. However, you suffer a –2 disadvantage on all Muscle tests.

## General Talents

General talents may be taken any time the character graduates to a new personal grade level. Some have trait requirements, while others may only be taken if the character has one or more other specific talents.

A graduating character chooses his talent as his final graduation step, meaning he can select a talent during the same graduation that he qualifies for it.

***Example:*** *Simael the exchange student, an Outcast, has just graduated to 5th grade. He increases his Scrap to 3rd grade, and since he now qualifies for it, he may immediately take* ***Against the Odds****.*

### Against the Odds

*Requirement:* May not be a Bully, Scrap 4th

When battling a superior foe, you stand strong and fight as though your enemy were nothing more than a kindergarten punk. Whenever facing an opponent whose personal grade level is higher than yours, you gain a +1 advantage on Scrap tests against that opponent.

*Special:* You may expend one Muscle without spending your turn to increase the wounds you inflict against one higher-grade opponent by +1. This bonus lasts for the rest of the turn.

### Animal Friend

*Requirement:* 4-H 6th

Some kids are good with people. You're good with animals. Once per story when you encounter a non-talking animal, you may attempt to befriend it. To do so, you must be able to peacefully interact with the animal without any time pressure (over several minutes at a minimum). You must make a 4-H test against the animal's personal grade level +3. If you succeed, the animal will accompany you on your current quest and protect or aid you to the best of its ability, so long as it is well-treated. An animal friend will not sacrifice itself for you, nor does it gain any capabilities or communication skills beyond those of a normal animal.

*Special:* You may spend your turn and expend one Cool to call for a nearby animal to come to your aid when you are in need of help, being attacked, and the like. You must make the 4-H test as normal, but do not need the several minutes of peaceful interaction to do so.

### Big Kid

*Requirement:* Muscle 4th

Either you've always been big for your age, or you just hit a growth spurt. Although your stature is kid-sized, you are considered adult-sized for the purposes of using Scrap as a defense trait (but not as an attack trait) and when making opposed Muscle tests, including when wrestling.

*Special:* When it really counts, you can be as tough as any grownup. You may spend your turn and expend one Muscle to improve your stature protection by +1 for the duration of the scene. This ability may only be used during an action scene.

### Cat-like Reflexes

*Requirement:* **Paranoid**, Scamper 8th, Seek 8th

Your body acts before even your mind can process the situation. At the beginning of each action scene, you may spend a single turn before anyone else, and in addition to your normal turn. If another character has a similar ability, whoever wins an opposed Scamper test may act first.

This ability may not be used in conjunction with Flying Fists, Hyper, or any other ability that grants you additional actions.

## Crack Shot

*Requirement:* Throw 4th

Your aim is precise and deadly, and becomes even more so if you spend time aiming. On your initial roll for all Throw tests, you boost to the next grade on a roll of 5 or 6 instead of only 6. Subsequent rolls have a target range of 6, as normal.

If you focus on a Throw test, the boost range increases to 4–6 for the first turn spent focusing, to 3–6 for the second turn, and so on.

*Special:* After focusing on Throw and before making a Throw test, you may expend one or more Luck. If you do so, your increased target number range carries over to one subsequent roll per Luck expended. For each subsequent roll after the first, however, your increased target number range decreases by one.

***Example:*** *Brad the Outcast has Crack Shot and his trusty slingshot, and he wants to take a shot at a dwarf that his friends are trying to bluff their way past. He spends two turns focusing before letting fly, which gives him a boost range of 3–6, and decides to spend some Luck to keep the boost range for subsequent rolls. He rolls a 4 on his initial roll, and so boosts his test by one grade and rolls again. On the second roll, his boost range remains a 3–6, so when he rolls a 3, his test is boosted by another grade level and he can roll a third time. Finally, by now, his boost range drops to 4–6, then would drop to 5–6 on his fourth roll, and finally to the norm of 6 on his fifth roll, if he got that high.*

## Curative Nature

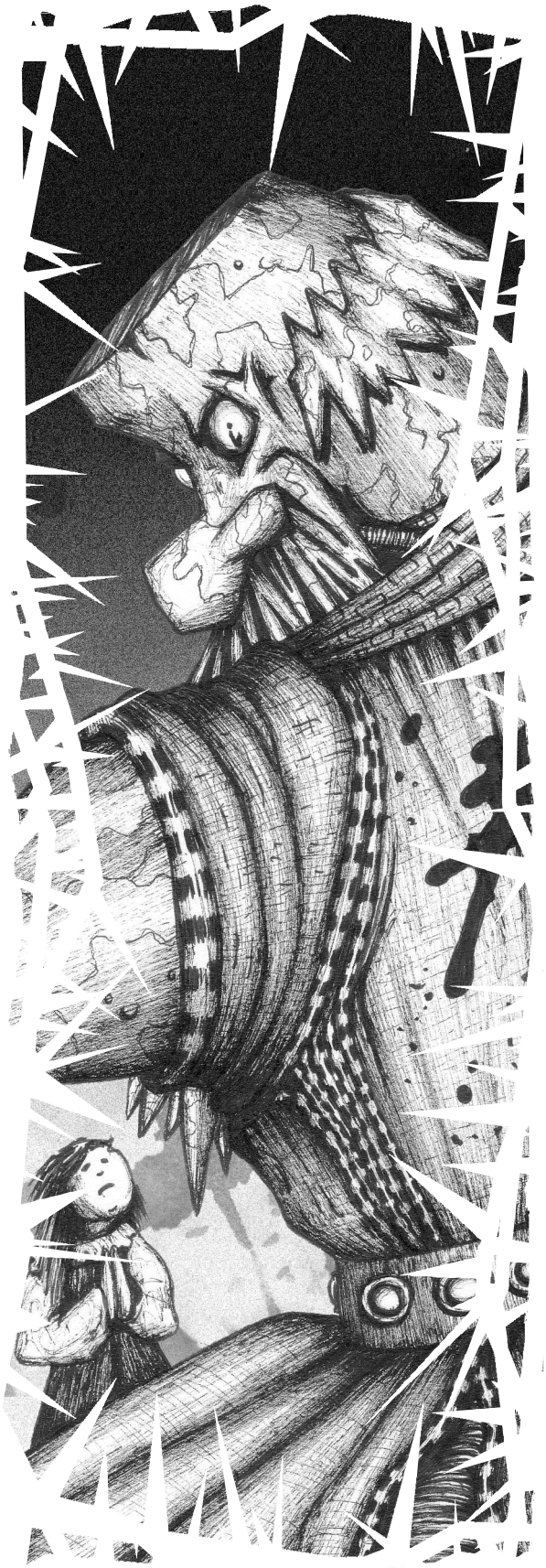
*Requirement:* **Healer**, 4-H 10th

Over time, your healing hands have become naturally adept at bringing health to the sick and weak. When nursing the sick, your patients benefit at four times the normal rate.

## Cute as a Button

*Requirement:* Cool 6th

You are such a cute little kid, even the roughest and meanest monsters out there can't help but be filled with feelings of euphoria at the mere sight of you. Before any actions are taken at the start of any social or action scene, one minor character of your choice within a cricket's hop must make a Cool test opposed by your Cool. If you win during a social scene, the character must gaze in wonder and listen to you speak, without interrupting or taking any actions, for around ten seconds per grade by which you won the test. If you win during an action scene, the character may act normally, but refuses to attack you (and does its best not to include you in any area affects) until you do something against its wishes (like attack



it, try to get past it to its favorite treasure, or try to run away).

*Special:* Before making the Cool test, you may expend one Imagination to target a number of additional minor characters with this ability equal to your personal grade level.

## David and Goliath

Whenever facing an opponent whose stature is larger than yours, you gain a +1 advantage on attack tests against that opponent.

*Special:* If you succeed at the attack test against a larger opponent, you may expend one Pluck to also inflict +1 wound.

## Dirty Fighter

*Requirement:* Juvie 4th, Scrap 4th

If you see an opening, you use it. If you attempt a Scrap attack against an opponent that you've ambushed, you gain +1 grade to your test.

*Special:* If you succeed at the Scrap test against an ambushed opponent, you may expend one Muscle to also inflict +1 wound.

## Doctor Doolittle

*Requirement:* **Animal Friend**, 4-H 8th

Your very aura instills a sense of power and protective nature in the animals who follow you around. You may acquire two animal friends per story.

## Earnest Apprentice

*Requirement:* Gaming 6th

You gain a +1 advantage on Gaming tests made to learn progressive powers whose base power you already know. Also, when you use magic against others, your targets suffer a –1 disadvantage on their tests to resist the effects.

## Favorite Weapon

*Requirement:* Scrap 4th

You've trained long and hard with a specific type of hand weapon, and it has become your favorite. On your initial roll for Scrap tests using that type of weapon, you boost to the next grade on a roll of 5 or 6 instead of only 6. Subsequent rolls have a target range of 6, as normal.

If you focus on a Scrap test while using that type of weapon, the boost range increases to 4–6 for the first turn spent focusing, to 3–6 for the second turn, and so on.

When choosing your favorite weapon, you must be more specific than simply "light hand weapon" or "heavy medium weapon," so you might pick light hand knives, or medium wood axes, heavy swords. However, you don't need to choose a single precise weapon to gain the benefit. For example, if you choose knives as your favorite weapon, you don't need to always use the exact same pocket knife to gain the benefit.

*Special:* After focusing on Scrap, but before making a Scrap test with your favorite weapon, you may expend one or more Muscle. If you do so, your increased boost range carries over to one subsequent roll per Muscle expended. For each subsequent roll after the first, however, your increased boost range decreases by one. For an example, see "Crack Shot," page 33.

## First Responder

*Requirement:* 4-H 4th, Boy Scouts 4th

When you succeed at a first aid test, you may heal up to 2 recently suffered wounds.

## Fleet-footed

*Requirement:* Scamper 3rd

You're a natural sprinter. When you do nothing but move, your speed is one step faster than normal.

*Special:* You can summon up extra speed even when doing other things. By expending one Muscle, your speed for the scene is one step faster than normal, even for the half-speed distance that you may travel in addition to other activities performed during your turn.

## Flying Fists

*Requirement:* **Heavy-Handed**, Scrap 10th

Who needs weapons? When you spend your turn attacking and are holding no weapons, you may make an additional attack on your turn. This talent may not be used in conjunction with Hyper, or any other ability that grants you additional actions.

## Full-grown

*Requirement:* **Big Kid**, Muscle 8th

The clean air and simple foods of the Grimm Lands have caused you to really fill out! You become adult-sized.

*Special:* If you have the **Strong Back** talent, you may now expend 1 Imagination and 1 Muscle to become moose-sized during an action scene, rather than expend 1 Imagination to become adult-sized.

## Furious Deflection

*Requirement:* Scrap 6th, Seek 6th

You have fantastic reflexes and a strong sense of self-preservation. You may use Scrap as a defense trait against Throw tests. If you choose to spend your turn defending another character, you may defend the target against Throw tests just as easily as you can against Scrap tests (so, if you succeed at the defense test, you deflect the Throw attack rather than having to suffer its effects).

## Grip on Reality

*Requirement:* Seek 4th

The Grimm Lands are a strange and foreign place compared to home, but you can see it for what it is: smoke and mirrors. You gain +1 grade on tests to see past illusions and disguises, as well as +1 grade on tests to resist powers or magical spells that would cloud your judgement.

## Hawk-eyed

*Requirement:* Seek 3rd

Whether because you worked on model airplanes or you've had to scrounge for loose change, you have an eye for detail. You gain a +2 advantage on Seek tests made to notice or find small or hidden things, whether up-close or at a distance. This advantage does not apply to tests made to detect ambushes.

## Haymaker

*Requirement:* Scrap 6th

When you hit a foe, he feels it. On the first set of dice that you roll on a Scrap test, you boost to the next grade level on a roll of 5 or 6 instead of only 6. Subsequent rolls have a target of 6, as normal.

If you focus on a Scrap test, the boost range increases to 4–6 for the first turn spent focusing, to 3–6 for the second turn, and so on.

The increased boost range from this feat does not stack with that provided by **Favorite Weapon** or other abilities.

*Imagination:* After Focusing on Scrap and before making a Scrap test, you may expend one or more Imagination grade. If you do so, your increased target number range carries over to one subsequent roll per Imagination expended. For each subsequent roll, however, your increased target number range decreases by one.

## Healer

Your wisdom and intuition guides your hand in helping others overcome their many ailments. Whenever performing tests to heal others, whether via medical care or first aid, you gain a +2 advantage.

## Heavy-handed

*Requirement:* Muscle 6th

When you punch or kick someone, they feel it. When you make a successful Scrap attack and aren't holding a weapon, you inflict +1 wound.

## Hyper

*Requirement:* Scamper 8th

You couldn't sit still if you tried. By expending one Muscle, you can spend your turn doing two things in a single round. You may only use this ability once per turn, and it may not be used in conjunction with Flying Fists or any other ability that grants you additional actions.

## I Don't Want to Grow Up!

*Requirement:* Personal grade level 6th or less

You see adulthood on the horizon, and you don't like it. You may immediately improve two Playground traits by one grade each. However, you hereafter suffer a –2 disadvantage on tests against temptation or despair.

## I'm the Best!

*Requirement:* 10th grade in a trait

Choose one trait in which you have 10th grade or higher. If you succeed on a test in that trait and score above 12th grade, you succeed miraculously. A minor character that you hit might be knocked out with one blow, you may recite an entire treatise from memory, or you may master a spell that no wizard has been able to learn in a millennia.

## Iconic to the Extreme

*Requirement:* 8th grade in your iconic Core trait

If you make a successful test in your iconic Core trait that the narrator deems to be extremely dramatic, heroic, or amazing, you regain one expended grade in that trait.

## In the Nards!

*Requirement:* **Dirty Fighter** or Outcast **Cheap Shot** ability, Scrap 8th

You have practiced your dirty tricks to the point that they are an art form. If you successfully use your **Dirty Fighter** or **Cheap Shot** ability, your target suffers double the normal disadvantage from the wounds you inflicted on it (–2 per wound instead of –1 per wound). If the target is a major character, this effect lasts until your next turn; if the target is a minor character, it lasts for the rest of the scene.

## Journeyman Wizard

*Requirement:* **Earnest Apprentice**, Gaming 8th

You gain a +1 advantage on Gaming tests made as part of a magical duel. Additionally, you may advance directly to the 2nd circle on the first turn that you begin to perform magic, though doing so increases the spell's final Gaming difficulty by 1 grade.

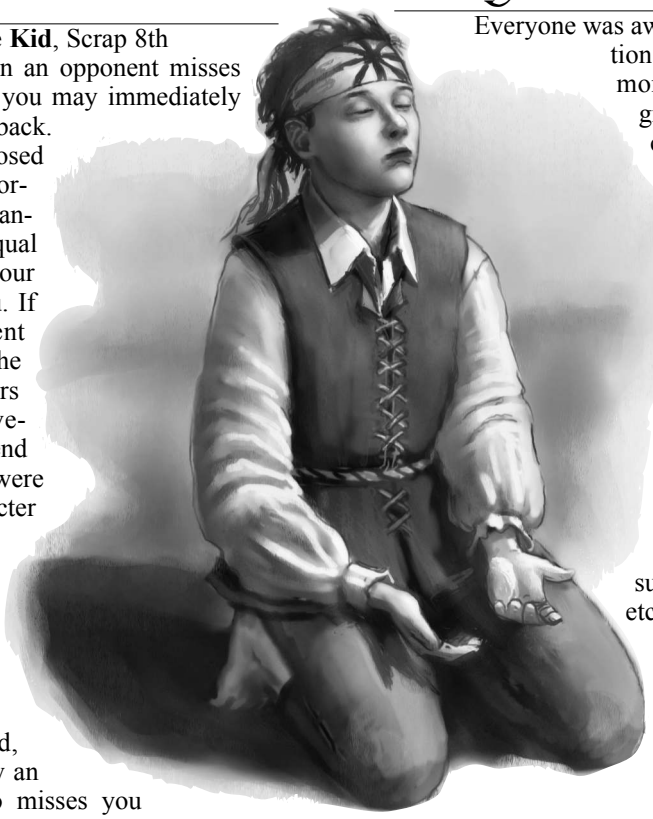
## Judo Throw

*Requirement:* **Karate Kid**, Scrap 8th

Once per round when an opponent misses you with a Scrap attack, you may immediately try to throw it onto its back. Make a Scrap attack opposed by its defense trait as normal, but you gain an advantage to your Scrap test equal to the amount by which your opponent just missed you. If you win, your opponent lands on its backside on the other side of you. It suffers disadvantages and movement reduction until the end of its next turn as if it were being wrestled by a character of its own stature.

Use of this talent uses up your next turn, which can be spent doing nothing but moving half your normal speed.

*Special:* For each Imagination you expend, you may attempt to throw an additional opponent who misses you during the round. If you expend 2 Muscle, you may throw your opponent a cricket's hop away instead of merely on the other side of you.



## Karate Kid

*Requirement:* Scrap 6th

At some point in your young life, your parents thought it prudent to have you schooled in the ancient school of martial arts; now that training has come into its own. When you use Scrap as a defense trait, you may treat it as Scamper for the purposes of stature. This means that, regardless of whether you defend with Scrap or Scamper, you always gain an advantage on defense rolls against larger opponents.

## Kid's Best Friend

*Requirement:* **Animal Friend**, 4-H 8th

At the end of the story, assuming you've treated him well, one of your animal friends will happily stay with you. You begin the next story with that animal friend.

## Kid Magician

*Requirement:* Gaming 6th

You can manipulate magic without letting get it to you. You gain a +1 advantage on all estrangement tests, and all weakening disadvantages from magic are reduced by one (to a minimum of –1 per spell).

## Monkey Bar Master

Everyone was awed by the speed and perfection in which you traversed the monkey bars on the playground. Whenever swinging, climbing, or otherwise using your arms as much as your feet to get around, you gain a +2 advantage to Scamper.

*Special:* You have learned how to fuel your climbing ability with Imagination to defy even gravity! Once per scene by expending Imagination, you may climb as though there was no gravity (climbing on ceilings, on slick vertical surfaces with no handholds, etc.) for a number of minutes equal to the Imagination expended.

## Named Weapon

*Requirement:* **Favorite Weapon**, Scrap 8th

Not only have you trained with a specific type of weapon, you've also carried the same one around with you for so long that it has become famous. Either you've given it a pet name, or the local storytellers have. When wielding your named weapon, you inflict +1 wound on a successful attack.

If your saga uses the advanced weaponry rules, you instead gain 1 extra combat move per turn when wielding your named weapon.

If your named weapon is ever permanently destroyed or lost, you suffer a –1 disadvantage on all tests during the next story. Thereafter, you gain a new named weapon.

*Special:* By expending 1 Imagination, you may determine the direction and approximate distance (within ten miles, or portion thereof if it's closer than that) of your named weapon.

## Nobody's Fool

*Requirement:* Cool 8th, Seek 8th

Your time in the Grimm Lands has made you skeptical of the varied peoples who call the place home. With a mere glance at someone, you can tell whether they mean well or wish to do you hand your friends harm.

## Pack Alpha

*Requirement:* **Pack Beta**, 4-H 10th

You are the undisputed leader of the animals who follow you around. Your animal friends' Muscle, Pluck, Scrap, and personal grade levels all increase by +2 when you are within eyesight. These bonuses supercede (do not stack with) the bonuses from **Pack Beta**.

## Pack Beta

*Requirement:* **Animal Friend**, 4-H 8th

Your very aura instills a sense of power and protective nature in the animals that follow you. Your animal friends' Muscle, Pluck, Scrap, and personal grade levels all increase by +1 when you are within eyesight.

## Paranoid

*Requirement:* Scamper 4th

When you are ambushed, you may still act before your ambusher on the first round.

## Put It All on the Line

*Requirement:* Scamper 6th, Scrap 6th, Throw 6th

Growing up in a sports environment, you have always participated in local competitions and events. You shine when the pressure is on and pull off amazing feats when you put it all on the line. You may elect to put it all on the line before rolling a Scamper, Scrap, or Throw test. Before you roll any dice, declare your intent to use this ability. Your boost range for the test increases by one, as if you had focused (from 6 to 5–6, or from 5–6 to 4–6, and so on). However, if you do not succeed at boosting the roll to the next grade, you automatically fail the test.

## Pummel

*Requirement:* **Wild Swing**, Muscle 10th, Scrap 10th

Once you land an attack, you keep going, weapons flailing until your enemy collapses. When you spend your turn making a Scrap attack and are successful, you may make an additional attack at a –2 disadvantage. If you succeed at that attack, you may make another attack at –4 disadvantage, and so on until you miss.

This ability cannot be used in conjunction with Flying Fists, Hyper, or other abilities that grant you multiple actions during a single turn. Additionally, the effects of focusing only apply to your first attack during your turn.

## Rebound

*Requirement:* Personal grade level 10th, Muscle iconic trait

You take your lumps and ask for more. If you are ever knocked out, record the number of wounds you would have taken in excess of being knocked out. You fall to the ground and do nothing on your next turn. At the beginning of the turn thereafter, however, you may make a Muscle test (including your wound penalties, which should be equal to your personal grade level) with a difficulty equal to the number of wounds you would have taken in excess of being knocked out. If you score at least 1st grade on the test, you wake up, albeit being one wound away from being knocked out again.

Each time you use this talent in the same scene, the difficulty of the Muscle test increases by 1 grade.

## Sniper

*Requirement:* Crack Shot, Throw 10th

For each turn that you spend focusing on Throw before you make a Throw attack, you may ignore one level of your target's protection if you hit. This applies regardless of whether the protection is based on equipment, size, or other abilities.

## Specialist

*Requirement:* 6th grade in your archetype's specialty trait

Whenever you test in your archetype's specialty trait, you roll an extra die on the second roll of the test, in addition to the initial roll.

## Speed Demon

*Requirement:* **Fleet-Footed**, Scamper 8th

Your speed increases by one level.

## Spoiled

If things are going poorly for you and your friends, and you fail a test that would have significantly improved your situation, you can immediately go into a tantrum. While in the tantrum, you gain a +1 advantage on Muscle, Pluck, and Scrap tests for a number of rounds equal to the amount by which you failed the test, or until the narrator deems that things are once more going well for you and your friends. During the tantrum, you suffer a –2 disadvantage on all tests other than Muscle, Pluck, and Scrap; after the tantrum, you suffer a –2 disadvantage on all tests until the end of the scene.

## Spoiled Brat

*Requirement:* Spoiled, personal grade level 6th

When you go into a tantrum, your protection increases by +2.

## Spoiled Rotten

*Requirement:* Spoiled Brat, personal grade level 9th

When you go into a tantrum, you gain an advantage of +2 to Muscle, Pluck, and Scrap, and your protection increases by +3. These bonuses supercede (do not stack with) the bonuses from **Spoiled Brat** and **Spoiled.**

## Strong Back

*Requirement:* **Big Kid**, Muscle 6th

The long hours and days of carrying your friends' equipment around has made you stronger. In addition to the effects of Big Kid, you are now considered adult-sized when your opponent uses Scrap as a defense trait, and for the purposes of determining what size weapons and armor you can use.

*Special:* When it really counts, you can be as tall as you feel. You may spend your turn and expend one Imagination to actually become adult-sized for the

duration of the scene. This ability may only be used during an action scene.

## Taunter

*Requirement:* Bully **Threat** ability or Popular Kid **Undermine** ability, Cool 6th

You know how to get under your opponents' skins. You may spend a turn attempting to taunt an opponent within a stone's throw. The foe must be able to see or hear you clearly, and must either understand your language or be able to figure out that your gestures are distinctly insulting. Having suffered a torrent of jibes, insults, and abuse, the foe must make a Cool test opposed by your Cool test.

If the target succeeds, it ignores your taunting and remains unaffected by any further attempts for the duration of the encounter. If the target fails, and it makes any kind of attack on its next turn, it must include you in the attack. The target can simply choose not to attack this turn, however, and need not endanger itself to move to a position to attack you.

## Taunter, Advanced

*Requirement:* Taunter, Cool 8th

If you wish to cause an advanced taunt result when taunting an opponent, you must declare this before making the opposed test, and only succeed at causing any result at all if you win the opposed test by three or more grades. Alternatively, immediately upon successfully taunting a foe, you may expend one Cool to elevate the result.

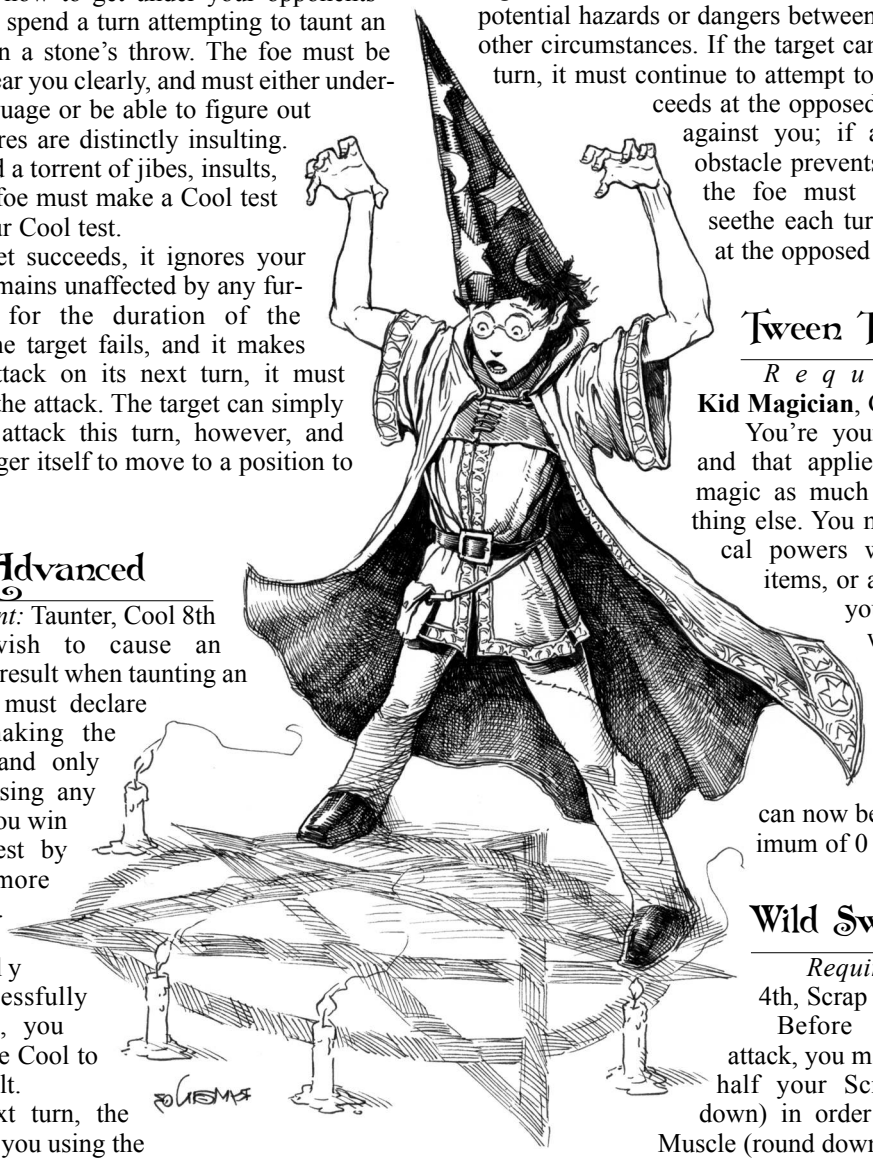
On its next turn, the foe must attack you using the most powerful effect or attack that it has at its disposal, even if it means ignoring other targets, escaping, or performing more strategic actions.

## Taunter, Master

*Requirement:* **Advanced Taunter**, Cool 10th

If you wish to cause a master taunt result when taunting an opponent, you must declare this before making the opposed test, and only succeed at causing any result at all if you win the opposed test by six or more grade levels. Alternatively, immediately upon successfully taunting a foe with an advanced taunt result, you may expend two Cool to elevate the result.

On its next turn, the foe is overcome with a terrible rage, and must try to maul you with its bare hands, regardless of the ineffectiveness of such a tactic, the potential hazards or dangers between it and you, or any other circumstances. If the target cannot reach you this turn, it must continue to attempt to do so until it succeeds at the opposed test or lands a hit against you; if an insurmountable obstacle prevents it from doing so, the foe must simply stand and seethe each turn until it succeeds at the opposed test.



## Tween Thaumaturge

*Requirement:* **Kid Magician**, Gaming 8th

You're young and adaptable, and that applies to your use of magic as much as it does everything else. You may perform magical powers without the tools, items, or actions required by your methods, albeit with a –1 disadvantage on your Gaming test. Additionally, all weakening penalties from magic can now be reduced to a minimum of 0 per spell.

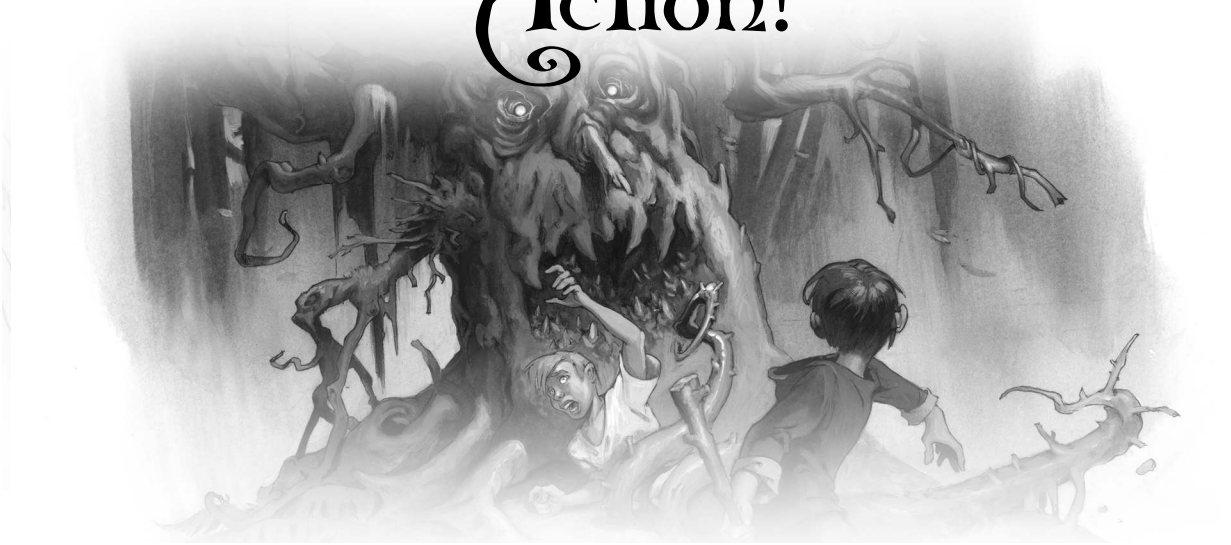
## Wild Swing

*Requirement:* Muscle 4th, Scrap 4th

Before making a Scrap attack, you may choose to test at half your Scrap grade (round down) in order to add half your Muscle (round down) to the number of wounds inflicted. You may still end up performing at better than half your Scrap grade, depending on the dice results. Regardless of whether you hit or miss, you must spend your next turn recovering from the swing.

Chapter Four

# Action!



Many of the tasks you will undertake in the Grimm Lands will be automatic. Any kid can pick a few berries, climb a small tree, or sweep out a barn. Even more difficult things, like digging a big ditch or walking a dozen miles needn't call for dice-rolling. The only time dice come into play is when time is of the essence or there is a consequence for failure. When that happens, a kid has the chance to truly shine, or to truly mess up. That's when *Grimm*'s task resolution system, called the Linear D6 system, comes into play. It will determine not only success or failure, but also the degree of success or failure as well.

## The Linear D6 System

*Grimm* is a storytelling game of high adventure, intense imagination, and dark fantasy. The focus should always be on the story, on the quest, and what it will take to succeed at it…not on tedious dice-rolling. That's why the Linear D6 system focuses on allowing the players to make interesting decisions and manage their resources to accomplish what they need to do, rather than relying on the whims of chance.

The underlying principle behind the Linear D6 system is that characters most often perform *at their level of ability*. This may strike you as common sense, but many games attempt to introduce greater drama and uncertainty into the game by incorporating a high degree of random chance in task resolution. Thus, in these games, an Olympic weightlifter may be able to lift a certain weight on one attempt, and fail to lift even half that weight on the next. In *Grimm*, your trait level describes those tasks that you will usually be able to complete successfully; sometimes you'll do a little worse, sometimes you'll do a little better, and on rare occasions a real disaster or miracle will occur. Most often, though, you'll perform at your level of ability.

### Trait Tests

Whenever you attempt an action with an uncertain outcome and consequences for failure, the narrator will ask you to make a trait test with a certain difficulty. The difficulty is the grade that your character needs to meet or exceed. An average difficulty in the Grimm Lands is 3rd or 4th grade. Most kids will be able to accomplish most 3rd- or 4th-grade tests, most of the time.

In order to find out if you succeed at a trait test, roll one six-sided die (d6). If the result is a 2 through 5, you perform at your listed level of ability.

***Example:*** *Billy is attempting to lift a large rock that, having been hurled by a giant, landed atop his friend Tom. Billy has Muscle 4th grade, and the narrator determines that the difficulty of the test is 4th grade. The player rolls a d6 and gets a 4. Billy's result is 4th grade, and he is able to lift the rock.*

Obviously, odds are good that most of the time (every 2 out of 3 times, to be precise) you'll perform at your listed level of ability. As impetuous as kids are, this means they should probably only try things with difficulties at or below their trait levels, unless they can figure out some way to improve their traits for the test. More on those options will be explained below.

#### Performing Above Your Grade

Normally, if you roll a 6 on the trait test, you **boost** your trait, meaning that you perform at least on grade level higher than your trait. Further, you roll again. If the result of the second roll is 1–5, you stop there; you have succeeded at one grade level higher than your trait.

If you roll a 6 on this second roll, you perform at least two grade levels higher your trait, and roll a third time. If the third roll is a 6, you perform at least three grade levels higher than your trait, roll again, and so on. In this way, as long as you can continue to roll 6s, you can keep moving up in grade levels. In principle, therefore, it's possible for a character with 1st grade in a trait to get a 12th-grade outcome—it's just very unlikely.

The 6 is referred to as your **boost range**, meaning that it is the number you need to roll to boost your trait by one grade. Talents and other options may increase your boost range from 6 to 5–6, or 4–6, and so on.

***Example:*** *Having lifted the rock off of Tom, Billy sees that the poor kid's leg is badly broken. Billy decides he'll fashion a crude splint, putting his 5th grade in Boy Scouts to good use. The narrator sets the difficulty for the test at 6th grade. The player rolls the die and gets a 6. He moves up to 6th grade and rolls again. The second roll is a 3, so Billy performs the test at 6th grade. Had he scored a 6 on the second roll, he'd have moved up to 7th grade and kept rolling.*

## Performing Below Your Grade

Of course, it's not all about unexpected success. There's always the other side of the coin: unexpected failure. If you roll a 1 on a test, you **botch** your trait, meaning that you move down one grade from your trait, and you must roll again. If the result of the second roll is another 1, you move down a second grade and roll again, and so on. In this way, even a prodigy with 12th grade in a trait can suffer a 1st-grade outcome—again, it's just very, very unlikely.

The 1 is referred to as your **botch range**, meaning that it is the number you need to roll to perform below your normal grade. Curses and other effects may increase your botch range from 1 to 1–2, or from 1 to 1–3, and so on.

## Multiple Dice

There are a few things that allow characters to roll multiple dice on a test, the most common of which are the characters' specialties (determined by their archetypes) and teamwork (see page 44). When multiple dice are rolled, only those that score within a character's boost range are rolled on the second roll. For instance, if a player rolled three dice on a Scamper test, two of which were 6s, he would perform one grade higher and roll again, but would only roll two dice on the second roll.

On the other hand, multiple dice make it less unlikely that you'll perform below your normal grade. Only if all of the dice rolled are 1s do you perform at one grade lower and roll again; as with dice that scored within your boost range, you roll all of the dice that scored within your failure range and, once again, they must all come up 1s (or whatever your failure range is) in order to lower your grade again.

# Opposed Trait Tests

The preceding rules apply to unopposed tests, and these are some of the most common tests in *Grimm*. There is another kind of test, however—the opposed test. Opposed tests are in all ways just like unopposed tests, with one difference. In an opposed test, two characters are making the test against each other, rather than against a difficulty level set by the narrator. Whenever

## 1s and 6s

Note that your grade never moves first one direction and then another based on your dice rolls. If you roll a 6, then roll a 1 on the second roll, you still perform one grade above your listed trait; you do not move back down based on the second roll. The same is true if you roll a 1, followed by a 6.

***Example:*** *Now that Tom is freed from the rock and his leg is splinted, the two kids start traveling in case the giant comes back. Before they get far, though, they come across a locked gate. Tom, not liking the idea of climbing over it with his broken leg, cracks his fingers and starts to pick the lock with his 5th grade Juvie. The narrator sets the lock's difficulty at 5th grade, so it shouldn't be too much of a problem…but when Tom rolls, he gets a 1. He only performs at 4th grade, and must roll again to see if he goes even lower. This time he rolls a 6. Unfortunately, this doesn't boost him back up to 5th grade; once you roll your first 1, there's no going up. Fortunately, he doesn't descend even lower. The narrator decides that, since he almost meets the lock's difficulty, Tom hears the click of one of the tumblers, and realizes that he's halfway there. But then he hears the "Fee Fi Fo Fum!" of the giant heading their way!*

possible, the characters controlled by the narrator should test first, setting the difficulty. The kids then have to use their skill, ingenuity, and resources to try to meet that test.

If the kid gets below the difficulty, he fails. If he exceeds the difficulty, he succeeds. If he meets the difficulty, he either succeeds or ties the other character, depending on the situation. Ties should only occur during contests, races, and that sort of thing. Otherwise, err on the side of the kid succeeding if he meets the difficulty set by the narrator's character.

***Example:*** *Far across the land from Billy and Tom, Sarah is attempting to sneak past one of the Rotten King's guards. The narrator makes a Seek test for the guard, getting a 3rd-grade result. This means that Sarah needs to score 3rd grade or better on a Hide test to successfully skulk past the inattentive buffoon without attracting his notice.*

***Example:*** *As ill fortune would have it, Sarah is spotted. She decides that the best course of action is a mad dash for the door. The guard sees what she is up to, and immediately runs for the door to block her escape. He makes a Scamper test, and gets 5th grade…he's pretty spry for a guard! Sarah makes a Scamper test and gets the same result. They have the same speed, so they get to the door at the same time.*

Opposed tests during combat work slightly differently, to keep things moving quickly. More on combat is explained later in this chapter.

# Increasing Your Chances

The system above can be used to quickly and easily resolve any situation that comes up in *Grimm*. Just pick the trait to which the test most closely corresponds, determine the difficulty, and roll a d6. If the outcome is equal to or better than the difficulty, the character succeeds. If not, the character fails.

The odds are pretty easy to figure: Two out of three times, characters will perform at their listed level of ability. That's nice and reliable. Only one out of six times will a character perform above his level of ability—and in five out of six of such cases, it'll be only one level above his listed ability. It can therefore be very challenging for characters to succeed at tasks that are above their level of ability.

Fortunately, characters may increase their chances in several ways. Other than boosting your trait, you can also use advantages, focus, step up, or use teamwork. These are all described in more detail below.

## Advantages

**Advantages** give your character a temporary increase of one or more grades to a trait for a specific test.

Many abilities and talents grant advantages. For example, the Nerd's **Astounding Intellect** ability gives him a +2 advantage on Imagination tests when he is solving puzzles. This means that if a Nerd with 5th grade in Imagination is making an Imagination test to solve a puzzle, he is treated as having 7th grade in Imagination.

One of the easiest ways to gain an advantage is to use a tool appropriate for the job. Tools usually increase your trait for a given test by 1 grade level. Need to climb a 6th-grade wall, but only have 5th grade in Scamper? Use a rope and grappling hook. Don't feel safe with your 3rd-grade Hide trait? Use a dark cloak to increase it to 4th grade. Perhaps the most common example of gaining advantage via tools is using weapons; every manufactured weapon, in addition to its other effects, grants a character +1 grade to her Scrap or Throw test when using it.

***Example:*** *Returning to the boys at the gate, let's say that Billy hands Tom a set of lockpicks that he found. This increases Tom's 5th grade Juvie to 6th grade. This time when he rolls, he gets a 3, and the lock opens easily. The boys slip through and hide behind the low rock wall just as the giant tops the nearest hill and begins scanning the landscape for them.*

You might also gain an advantage by tackling the problem from a new direction, using positioning or your environment, or simply being creative. In essence, if you can convince your narrator that you deserve it, you can receive a +1 advantage on the test…but wise players don't abuse this power. Those who do should pay heed to the story of the boy who cried "advantage" a few times too often and then, when he really needed it, could not convince the narrator to give him one.

Incredibly rarely, when a character comes up with a particularly creative way to accomplish something, the narrator may give him an advantage of +2 grades.

***Example:*** *In the example above, let's say that Billy can't find those lockpicks, but he does remember that they have a shrinking potion. One of them could become quite small, and hide from the giant…but the other one would be doomed! Then Tom realizes that if he could actually get inside the lock and move the tumblers around, it would be much easier. He takes a swig, and Billy places his miniaturized form gently inside the keyhole. The narrator decides that this use of the shrinking potion is quite ingenious, so he gives Tom an advantage of +2 grades to his Juvie for picking the lock.*

## Focusing

**Focusing** allows you to slowly but surely increase your boost range. To focus, you do nothing for a whole turn but plan out your next move, position yourself better, steel your nerves, or whatever else might increase your chances of performing above your normal grade level. By doing so, you increase your boost range by one per turn spent focusing. Most commonly, this means that your boost range increases from "6" to "5–6," then to "4–6," "3–6," and so on.

Take a look at the character sheet provided in the back of this book, and you'll notice that there are small, d6-sized squares next to each trait. Those are there for focusing. After spending one of your turns focusing, you may place your primary d6 in the box next to that trait with the 5 side facing up. This means that, if you make the trait test on the next round, your boost range is 5 and up. Each round that you do nothing but focus, you move the upward-facing side of the die to the next-lowest number. So after two turns of focusing, the die would read 4, and your boost range would be 4 and up. You can even focus for five turns, meaning that even if you rolled a 1, you'd perform at the next highest grade level and could roll again.

Unfortunately, focusing will only get you so far. After the focus die is rolled for the first initial roll on the test, it "resets" to a target number of 6 for any subsequent rolls for that test.

***Example:*** *Now that they're on the other side of the gate, Billy hunkers down low so that the giant can't see him…but he's coming closer. Desperate, he stuffs the now shrunken Tom into his pocket and begins to focus on hiding, collecting as many branches as he can and trying to find the best spot possible before the giant comes within view again. Billy's player places his d6 in the box next to his Hide trait, with the 5 side facing up. The narrator judges that it takes three more turns for the giant to get close enough to peek over the wall and look for them, so Billy's die will have the 2 side facing up when that happens, for a boost range of*

### Narrator Note: To Roll or Not to Roll

The rules on testing don't come right out and say it, but there's no reason that the narrator needs to roll for his minor characters. It can go much faster, and make the players feel much more like the heroes of the story, if they are the ones who roll the dice. Minor characters can simply perform at their listed level ability, such that when a foe attacks, for instance, the kids always know that they're just trying to meet his grade level in Scrap in order avoid being hit, rather than waiting to see what the narrator rolls.

The exception, of course, are major characters such as heroes or villains. These always roll, and can even expend grade levels in their iconic Core traits.

*2–6. The giant makes a Seek test and gets a 7th-grade result. Billy's player picks up the die and rolls a 2! Close one! Because he focused, he was able to improve his 5th-grade Hide to a 6th-grade…but now he has to roll again to try to get to 7th grade, or the giant will spot him. And this time, he needs a 6 to improve his grade level, because focus only affects his initial roll's boost range.*

## Hand Over Those Dice!

It may seem strange to give someone your character's die when you're using teamwork to aid him. Why not just let them scoop up a bunch of dice from in front of them and roll them? There are a few reasons we recommend actually giving your die to your friends when providing teamwork.

First of all, it makes the process much more interactive and visceral. Not only are you saying "Sure, I'll help"; you're actively handing over your character's die, physically giving something to the other player in a show of support.

Second, dice superstitions run rampant among roleplayers, and it can be a significant sign of trust to let someone else grab hold of, much less roll, your "lucky" die.

Third, if each of the dice being rolled represent a character, their results help the narrator and players visualize the events that transpire, turning it into a story rather than just saying "you succeed" or "you fail." Let's say the kids are helping the Popular Kid pull one over on a bunch of villagers, and the Jock's die comes up with a 1, while the Nerd's comes up with a 6. Maybe this means that the Jock almost gave the whole thing away by saying something dumb, while the Nerd showed an usual level of social poise.

Finally, during action scenes, handing dice over for teamwork is a great way to remember who is doing what. For instance, let's say that you pass your die over to your ally at the beginning of the round, because you intend to help her pass a Scrap test. Then, when it comes to your turn, you won't accidentally try to start focusing on your next Muscle test, cast a spell with a Gaming test, and so on, because your die is gone! You'll still have your bonus dice (the plain little dice that the narrator provides) to make reactive rolls during your turn, like when someone tries to attack you or cast a spell on you, but your primary die will be otherwise in use.

## Stepping Up

Some tasks are routine. This is not to say they're easy—they may be difficult and tedious. However, with no time constraints and no immediate dangers associated with the task, a character can take his time and finish the job right. Picking a lock is a useful and time-honored example. Picking a lock isn't necessarily easy, but if the character takes his time and does it right, he'll eventually get it open, as long as it's within his ability to do so.

In these situations, characters can **step up**. When a character steps up, no dice are rolled. The character simply performs one level above his listed ability. Imagine that he is rolling over and over until he gets a 6 on the die, or perhaps he's focusing for 5 turns in a row, until he would improve his grade even if he rolled a 1. Assuming the difficulty of the task is no higher than the character's grade in the trait +1, the character succeeds and you can get on with the more interesting parts of the game. Stepping up can even be used for things that test a character's knowledge, like Study trait tests: If the character has time to wrack his brain and dig through his memories, he has a better chance of remembering something relevant. However, keep in mind that characters cannot step up in situations where there are time constraints, or there are risks or dangers associated with the task or with failing the task.

***Example:*** *Using Billy and Tom in the examples above, if there hadn't been a giant chasing them, Tom could have simply decided to step up on his Juvie test, performing at 6th grade instead of 5th grade, and not having to roll the die.*

## Teamwork

**Teamwork** won't increase your grade, but it does allow you to roll more d6s. When one or more characters want to help another on any task, they must first decide upon a leader—usually the character with the highest grade in the appropriate trait. Every character that is assisting can give their primary die to the leader. These dice work just like the normal d6 rolled during a trait test, with the following changes:

1. If the leader rolls any number of 6s, he performs at one grade level higher and rolls again. However, the second time he rolls, he only rolls dice that came up 6 the first time. This process continues until he rolls no 6s.

2. Even if the leader rolls a 1, he only performs at one grade level lower if *all* of the dice are 1s.

Teamwork therefore not only increases the chances that you will roll a 6, performing above your grade level; it also decreases the chances that you will suffer a failure.

***Example:*** *Having narrowly escaped the giant's keen eyes and nose, Billy and Tom head across the countryside in search of somewhere to rest. Along the way, they are intercepted by a*

*gaggle of goblins. The kids have seen this group before, and know that the goblins are skittish and easily intimidated. Tom then pulls out one of his prize possessions: a firecracker that he brought with him from the Real World. He lights it and holds it with a grim smile, telling them that he's going to blow up everyone with this magical "dynamite," including himself, if they don't run for their lives! Billy tells the narrator that he's going to help with the trick by looking scared and backing away from Tom. The narrator tells Tom to go ahead and make a Cool test. Billy's aid allows Tom to roll 2d6 instead of 1d6 on the test. He rolls a 1 and a 4, so he doesn't perform above his Cool grade of 4th; however, because only one of the two dice were 1s, he doesn't perform lower, either.*

The narrator should place limits on who and how many can lend aid. First of all, characters should be within two grades of the leader in the trait in question in order to assist. Second, the number of characters who can assist should depend on circumstances and, in some cases, how good at organizing the leader is; a good rule of thumb is a character can never roll more d6s than half his grade in a trait, no matter how many characters assist him.

## Teamwork Restrictions

Narrators are encouraged not to impose these restrictions unnecessarily—even if someone has barely any 4-H or Boy Scouts grade levels, for example, they can help with medical care by measuring out adhesive bandages and cutting them, getting clean water, keeping the patient distracted, and so on. Likewise, if the players develop a detailed plan that describes the specific roles of each character assisting in the operation, the narrator should allow them all to help. The goal is to provide the players with an incentive for description, creativity, inventiveness, and cooperation. The narrator shouldn't give them anything for free, but he shouldn't arbitrarily overrule good teamwork and cooperation that grant big bonuses, either. Kids in the Grimm Lands will have plenty of opportunities for failure—by working together and being clever, they can fight the odds that are stacked decidedly against them.

# Action Scenes

Now that you've got the basics on how you'll face the various challenges of the Grimm Lands, it's time to bring it up a notch. Sometimes, not only will you be in a hurry, where every second matters, and not only will you be making opposed rolls against other characters, you'll be doing all of this in situations where someone is trying to hurt you! Sure, they may say something like "I want to freeze you in time and place you on my collection shelf to remain young and beautiful forever," but you can probably guess that that kind of thing won't be any fun for your character.

So, when somebody wants to eat you, capture you, or stuff you and put you on his mantelpiece, and you *don't* want that to happen, it's time to enter an action scene. Your kid won't always be on the defensive, of course. Sometimes, you'll be the one ambushing the bad guys, or swarming past them to rescue your captive friends, or bravely facing them down in order to win glory and treasure…but those are the exceptions, not the rule.

## Action Scene Steps

All action scenes follow the same basic steps. The first thing that happens is a **dramatic moment**. Technically, this moment occurs outside of the action scene; it's what sets the scene off, like a fuse on a firecracker being lit. It's a time for the monster to jump out and scare the kids, for the villain to rhapsodize about just how he's going to munch on the kids' toes, or for the gang's leader to rally them around her and issue the command to "Charge!" When the dramatic moment ends, the firecracker goes off, and the action begins.

At this point, the narrator may present special rules for the action scene, depending on what kind of dramatic moment set the scene off. One of the most common dramatic moments, unfortunately for the kids, is an **ambush**. Other possible dramatic moments include

**rallies**, **soliloquies**, **scares**, **surprises**, and any other situation the narrator and kids can imagine. Many of these are described below, along with suggested effects for the action scene.

Once the rules for the scene are set, the narrator will tell you in what order everyone acts. Usually, given that the monsters and villains betray their intentions during the dramatic moment, the kids will have a chance to act before their foes. If the kids are ambushed, on the other hand, their foes will get to act first. In any case, the kids usually all act at the same time. After a few action scenes in which the various members of the gang are using teamwork, supporting one another, and the like, it will become clear why this is preferable to the more common roleplaying game method of having everyone roll for turn order.

After the narrator determines turn order, everyone (including any story characters in the scene, as voiced by the narrator) declares their actions. The character who will go last must declare his action first, then the second-to-last character, all the way up the line to the first character. This means that those with the best reflexes and the quickest response times will be able to see what the slower folks are trying to do, and may respond appropriately. Since the kids usually act all together, this is also a great opportunity for them to quickly discuss their tactics and figure out how best to overcome their foes…or how best to escape with their lives!

Now that everyone's actions have been declared, they attempt to perform them in order from first to last. This called spending your turn. Turns can be spent to do a variety of things, and usually allow you to move a short distance as well (see "Spending Your Turn," below). Kids that are using teamwork all "act" at the same time, while those who act independently perform their tests, if any, in whatever order the kids like. Bad guys, who rarely use teamwork, will probably roll their tests in an order based on their Scamper grade levels, their Seek grade levels, or just their positioning relative to the focus of the action, as the narrator prefers.

Finally, once everyone has spent their turn, the round ends. If the narrator determines that time is still of the essence, and there's still dramatic action to be sorted out, the action scene continues and everyone gets ready for the next round. As you've probably guessed, action scenes take place in a series of rounds, which last for a few seconds each. The exact amount of time taken up during a round is fluid, and not really important; what is important is the level of action and drama. In general, everyone will be able to attempt one dramatic action during a single round. In some cases, a character may only be able to accomplish part of a dramatic action, such as when working on a combination lock, piecing together a magic puzzle, or completing a spell.

## Dramatic Moments

As the kids investigate the (supposedly) abandoned hut, the door behind them slams shut, revealing the withered old hag who was hiding in wait. The wolf leaps out of the trees in front of the hapless gang, giving a terrifying howl and licking his chops in anticipation. The king's corrupt brother has the kids brought before him, and, cackling with glee, orders his guards to chop their heads off. The brave young prince squares his shoulders, pull out his practice sword, and gives a rousing speech to his ragtag band of followers before charging into the fray.

These are just a few examples of the infinite possibilities for dramatic moments in *Grimm*. They are the catalysts that begin action scenes, the powerful pieces of tension before everything seems to explode at once, the backdrop that sets the tone and flavor of the action to come.

Dramatic moments are as much narrative tools as they are game tools. Most importantly, they give the narrator a chance to explain his villains' motivations, without which an action scene can be a senseless jumble of violence. Secondly, they give the players a chance to grab the spotlight and perhaps give a quick speech about sticking together, facing down the darkness, and staying best friends forever, no matter what. Sure, a hard-core group of soldiers might scoff at all of this talking and tone-setting, but these are megalomaniacal villains and uncertain kids, and this is more than just a battle in a war…it's a scene in a story, and it deserves as much dramatic attention as the narrator and the players wish to give it. So, don't bother trying to activate special archetype abilities or focus on your traits or any of that stuff during a dramatic moment. It's a transitional period between scenes, so anything that you do that lasts for one scene, for instance, would wear off as soon as the action scene started. This moment is about the storytelling, not about the "buffing."

### Steps in an Action Scene

1. **Dramatic Moment**
2. **Determine Turn Order**
3. **Declare Actions**
4. **Perform Actions**
5. **Another Round?**

### Using Dramatic Moments

At the narrator's discretion, a dramatic moment may cause rules to be put in place for the scene. The dramatic moment can affect turn order, allow characters to use their traits in unusual ways, provide bonuses or inflict penalties on certain trait tests, and more. A few sample dramatic moments are presented on the next page, along

with suggested rules effects. Remember that these are only examples. The narrator should not feel constrained by them, and players should not be surprised when a completely new and unusual dramatic moment, with its own special rules, is described to them. Keeping the players on their toes and constantly reinventing the Grimm Lands for them is one of the narrator's jobs.

## Ambushes

Among the most unfortunate dramatic moments, for the kids least, is the ambush. This occurs when the kids are caught unawares, and must suffer their enemies' attentions before they can act. In this case, the special rule for the scene is that the ambushers get to act first, as opposed to the usual rule of the kids getting to go first. On the other hand, if the kids manage to pull off an ambush, they get to take two turns each before their opponents can respond! Some characters, such as those with the **Dirty Fighting** talent or similar abilities, also gain special benefits when they ambush someone.

## Rallies

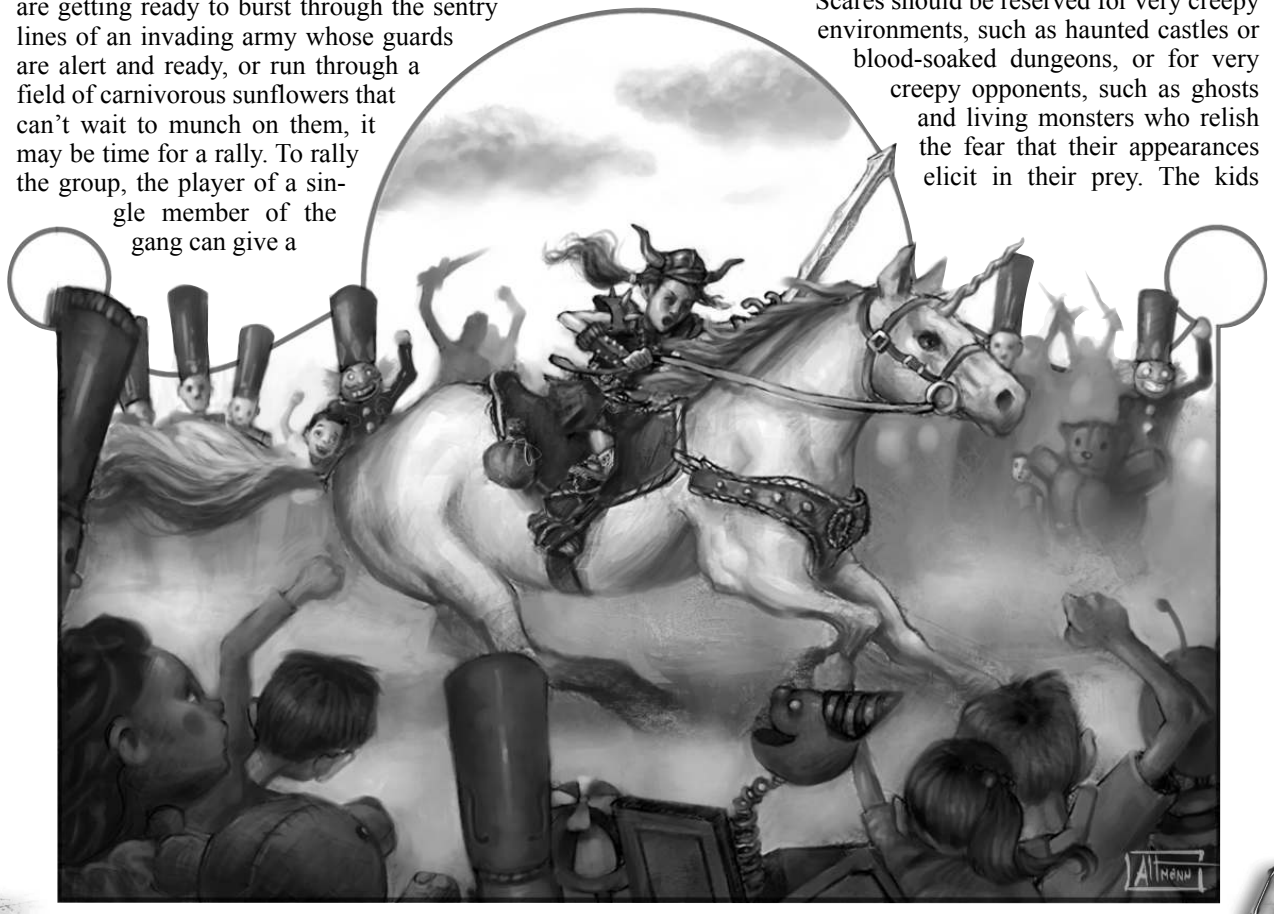
Rallies take place when the kids have the time or inclination for a rousing speech. It's not quite as good as everybody focusing on their combat-oriented traits just before leaping into an action scene, or the Popular Kid starting her cheerleader ability (that's not allowed until the action scene begins), but it's similar. If the kids are getting ready to burst through the sentry lines of an invading army whose guards are alert and ready, or run through a field of carnivorous sunflowers that can't wait to munch on them, it may be time for a rally. To rally the group, the player of a single member of the gang can give a speech, and his character makes a Cool test. Depending on how good the player's speech is, and how well the character does on her Cool test, the narrator may give everyone in the gang a +1 advantage in a specific trait for one or more rounds. Exceptional speeches or Cool tests may merit giving advantages to multiple traits or extending the duration of the advantage(s) to the entire scene.

Allowing advantages greater than +1 is discouraged, as is allowing teamwork on the rallying Cool test. After all, everyone's looking to the rallying character for leadership, not trying to figure out how to help her convince them to help themselves.

## Scares

Not quite as bad for the kids as an ambush, a scare can still be pretty rough on the home team. A scare happens when a monster, or something equally scary (sometimes people who are really old, really weird, or really mean are just as terrifying as a monster), doesn't necessarily take the kids by surprise, but is so horrific that the kids have to make Pluck tests or be scared (as described on page 22). The difficulty for the Pluck test is usually equal to the scary character's personal grade level, but it can vary. On the positive side, after making their Pluck tests, the kids then get to act before the opponent can do anything *really* bad to them. Sometimes, being forced to run away is the best possible thing for squishy, hapless kids in the Grimm Lands.

Scares should be reserved for very creepy environments, such as haunted castles or blood-soaked dungeons, or for very creepy opponents, such as ghosts and living monsters who relish the fear that their appearances elicit in their prey. The kids



needn't be surprised by the monster to be scared; often, the rustling of leaves before the Big Bad Wolf leaps out and howls, or the creaking of the door before the gruesome witch appears, only heightens the sense of doom and fear present in the air.

## Scene-setting

A scene-setting dramatic moment gives the narrator the opportunity to truly bring an environment or mood alive for the players. If the gang is exploring Bluebeard's dungeon and are attacked by his dozens of dead wives, it might be time to describe the gruesome chamber in detail, as well as mention that the floors, slippery with blood, cause everyone to suffer a –1 disadvantage on their Scamper tests. If the action scene is begun when a kid falls into a patch of quicksand, the narrator should take the opportunity to explain that someone caught in quicksand can't spend his turn to move, and can't move at half speed when spending his turn to do something else, for that matter.

Other scenes might be even stranger. In a fairy realm, perhaps all characters need to make Imagination tests whenever they would normally make Seek tests; after all, with fairies, believing is seeing, rather than the other way around! Or perhaps a scene isn't about fighting at all, but about racing across a row of posts to be the first one to reach a magic amulet, or convincing miniature armies to move about on a battlefield by making opposed Cool tests.

Unlike other dramatic moments, scene-setting isn't exclusive to starting off action scenes. It can also be used as a transition to a new narrative scene, such as when the kids move from one environment to another, or begin a journey to undo a recently-bestowed curse that affects their abilities, and so on. However, even in these situations, sometimes the best time to bring up the game rules for an environment or effect are when the action starts. Even though the kids may have been journeying in the strange and scary twilight realm for several hours, for instance, it's not until they start trying to dodge and run that they realize that their Pluck grades affect how quickly they can move through the inky, soul-sapping darkness. There's nothing like a life-threatening, adrenaline-pumping moment of drama to bring your surroundings into clear focus.

## Soliloquies

One of the most common dramatic moments is the soliloquy, which occurs when the villain feels the need to gloat about how he has cleverly trapped the kids, or explain in gruesome detail what he will do with their bones and other body parts. Sometimes this speech even includes important things about the best way for the kids to defeat the villain, such as when he declares "I am unstoppable so long as I hold the Scepter of Doom! Bwah ha ha!" The kids always get to go before the villain or his minions in these scenes; the bad guys, as is their wont, have given up the initiative for the chance to gloat and cackle.

A soliloquy needn't be a long, articulate speech. Some monsters' soliloquies are simple roars, or deep grumbly chuckles, the intent of which cannot be misconstrued. If no other dramatic moment seems appropriate for the situation, the narrator should probably choose a soliloquy or something like it as the dramatic moment that kicks off the scene. This means that, more often than not, the kids will get to act before their enemies. This is a good thing, as they'll probably need the advantage!

## Surprises

Surprises happen when both sides are equally shocked to encounter one another. A surprise moment would be appropriate when a kid looks into a magic mirror at the same time as her alternate universe doppelganger (who wants to kill her and take her place, of course). It might also be called for if the kids are exploring a fort that appears to have been abandoned for a few hundred years, and the military regiment assigned to it suddenly returns to find unexpected visitors.

Surprises are often comedic moments where both sides stumble over themselves and one another, trying to ready defenses or organize their friends or even just close their mouths (which are gaping open in surprise). They are also times when the particularly quick and skittish get to shine. When a surprise dramatic moment occurs, every character in the scene should make a Seek test to see if the hairs on the back of her neck prick up, or she hears something just faintly, or she catches movement out of the corner of her eye. Ties can be broken with a straight roll-off of a d6. The highest-scoring character, whichever side she's on, gets to spend a turn for this round; everyone else is stuck, standing stock still and dumbfounded, just as if they were ambushed.

Some talents and abilities allow a character to act during surprise moments. Characters with such options should roll their Seek tests along with everyone else. If only one such character is present in a scene, and she scores the highest on her Seek test, she is still the only one who can act during the first round. If multiple characters with these options are present in the scene, they may all act in order from the highest scorer on the Seek test to the lowest.

## Determining Turn Order

As explained above, odds are good that the kids will act first in an action scene. If they're ambushed, their opponents will act first. Either way, the kids all act together, and here's why: teamwork. Much of what the kids attempt to accomplish during their adventures in the Grimm Lands can't possibly be done alone, and many of the foes they must face are more than a match for them individually. A complicated system of turn order that simulates everyone acting at different times is not only unrealistic, it can also bog the game down. So instead, turn order in *Grimm* comes down to this: Either the players and any of their story-character allies act first, and then their opponents act, or vice-versa.

On the rare occasions when two players disagree over who should go first, or their characters want to compete with one another for some reason, they may make opposed Scamper tests to see who moves more quickly, with ties broken by straight d6 roll-offs. These tests are reserved for two or more players whose characters are under their control, rather than those who are ensorcelled or compelled in some way. In the all-too-common case of a kid being hypnotized by some malevolent monster, the non-controlled characters should always get to act before their mind-controlled buddy stumbles forward into the creature's embrace, or stabs his best friend, or whatever he is compelled to do. This means that, even when the kids are ambushed, they should almost always have a chance to snap their ensorcelled friends out of the daze, dog-pile on them to keep them from walking forward into certain doom, and so on. Once turn order is established, it should remain the same throughout the action scene.

## Declaring Actions

Once it is clear in what order everyone will be acting, it's time for all of the participants in the action scene to declare their actions. As discussed previously, all characters declare their actions in order from those who will go last to those who will go first. Usually this simply means that the narrator describes what the kids' opponents are going to try to do, and the kids can then decide all together what they're going to do in response. Occasionally, such as when the kids are ambushed, the kids will have to declare their actions without knowing what their opponents intend.

Either way, just how much a character needs to reveal is up to the narrator. If a terrible tentacled terror is lashing out with its appendages, for instance, the narrator doesn't need to tell the players who it's going to attack; for all they know, it might be able to try to hit them all at once! On the other hand, if a minotaur starts scuffing its feet in preparation for a charge straight at the gang, the kids can probably figure out who it's aiming for, and can plan appropriately. In the case of the tentacled terror, the kids could agree to use teamwork to help with the weakest kid's Scamper, in the hopes that he won't get snatched up by the monster…but their efforts might be wasted, if the monster wasn't going to attack that kid anyway. In the latter case, the kids can help whoever seems the most endangered by the minotaur's

### When Order Is of the Essence

Contests are one of the highlights of *Grimm*, whether it be an archery contest, riddling duel, or fencing display. Of all contests, footraces may be the most common. After all, running is something that kids not only love to do, but are good at, and many stories give them a chance to make the most of that happy coincidence. Getting past the portcullis before the monster does so you can drop it on him, beating the evil sorcerer to the scepter that was knocked out of his hand, and running down the escaping villain who has the answers you need, are all examples of footraces.

When a footrace is called for, or any other critical event in which victory or defeat comes down to who can get somewhere first, the normal rules regarding turn order go out the window. Assume that everyone trying to get to the "finish line," whatever it happens to be, is going at the same time. The one who gets there first is the one who travels the fastest and farthest via his Scamper test (see page 57).

## Narrator Note: Table Talk

Whether to allow in-depth strategizing outside of the game's action, called "table talk," is a decision for the narrator to make. On the one hand, it can seem pretty unrealistic and calculated to let the characters compare their grade totals, explain everything they know about a particular monster, and hash out the pros and cons of various actions. On the other hand, that's exactly what the kids will need to do to survive, and such discussions strongly encourage teamwork and creative support, which is key to success in *Grimm*.

The best bet is to encourage something between tons of table talk and none at all. You might limit each player to a few sentences when he declares his actions, though this method doesn't allow for much back-and-forth. You could give the players as much time as they need, so long as they remain in-character with everything they discuss, even when declaring their actions and discussing who is best at what. The most fun idea, and the one that stays truest to *Grimm*'s intentions is to activate an egg timer or flip an hourglass once everyone understands what's happening. Until time runs out, all of the players can yell and shout and come up with strategy, while you run down the turn order and ask each player what his character is doing, going so far as to interrupt strategic discussions that are in-progress. When the timer's alarm goes off or the hourglass runs out, it's time to start the action!

upcoming charge, and heroic kids might even try to intercept the monster, push the potential victim out of the way, try to trip up the attacker, and so on.

As a player, however, you shouldn't be too trusting of what the narrator describes the bad guys as doing. Some creatures may have special abilities that let them declare one thing, then do another. Some monsters are so sneaky that you need to make a test just to figure out what they're planning to do. On the other hand, some kids are pretty sneaky that way, too.

## Performing Actions

This step is where all the careful planning, creative ideas, and heroic teamwork comes together…or doesn't. Sometimes, it comes down to the luck of the dice, but more often than not it's simply a matter of how much of their resources the kids are willing to spend to overcome the challenge.

Players spend their turns in order from the first to go, moving down to the last, so the quickest character gets to attempt his action as soon as he finishes declaring what he's going to do. The declare-then-perform system is somewhat like a meter that counts all the way up to the "highest" place in the order, then counts back down.

More often than not, this system is distilled down into one side performing their actions, and then the other doing the same. If the Jock is trying to wrestle a goblin into submission, for instance, and all the other kids are aiding him, the kids are all acting at the same time. Then, the goblin and his allies get to attempt their actions. On the other hand, if the Jock is trying to wrestle one goblin while the Outcast is trying to jump over the pit trap it had set up, the narrator would tell the players in which order they should attempt their actions. The order could depend on dramatic importance of the action attempted (the most important event saved for last), or likelihood of success (the foregone tests or actions without any rolling necessary are completed first, building up to the more dramatic ones where nobody knows if the character will succeed), or could simply be the same as everyone's order in the last turn. For that matter, one tried-and-true method is to simply go around the table, starting with the player to the narrator's left and moving clockwise. While giving the narrator less control over the dramatic action of the scene, this method ensures that everyone gets to spend his turn and nobody feels like their characters' actions are being tacked on to the end of the round.

This step is the heart of the action scene, and options abound for what your character may do in these few precious seconds. Essentially, anything you can imagine your character doing can be attempted. It's up to your creativity, your friends, your character's traits and talents, your narrator's judgement, and of course the dice, as to whether or not you succeed and, if so, to what extent.

More details on some of the most common ways to spend a turn, and the best ways to resolve those actions, are presented below under **Spending Your Turn**.

## Another Round?

Finally, once all of the characters have spent their turns, the narrator should take stock of the situation. If the action is still going, the kids are still in danger, or a dramatic aspect of the scene has not yet resolved, the next round begins.

If the action has wound down, and it is clear who is going to win or lose, or the climactic event around which the action scene has been completed, the narrator should by all means declare the action scene to be over. Even if there's a chance of someone being seriously hurt by a fluke event, or of an important resource being used up, the narrator should ask herself if the action scene is appropriate for that kind of expenditure or result. If it's a minor scene and you would rather save everyone's creative energy or in-game resources for the much

more dramatic, exciting climax coming up, then it's a good idea to bring the action scene to an end.

If the action scene ends, it's time for everyone to take stock of the results, for the narrator to describe the outcome, and for the wounded to be helped back to their feet, thrown over someone's shoulder for later revival, or swept up into an appropriate vessel for a tearful scattering of ashes. Any abilities, talents, or other effects that last for the duration of a scene wear off at this point.

# Spending Your Turn

When a character's turn comes up during an action scene, she can attempt pretty much anything her player can think of. Even something that seems impossible can be tried, given the right expenditure of Imagination! But just as in real life, a few actions are likely to be more common in your game than any other. To help players understand the sorts of things they can do, and to help narrators determine how to respond to those actions, we've listed a few here. They are all referred to as types of **attempts**. So a character might attempt to Scrap, attempt to Throw, attempt to evade, and so on.

Unless otherwise noted, a character can travel about half her speed in addition to whatever she spends her turn doing. She can move before, after, or both before and after she performs her other action, so long as she doesn't go farther than about half her normal speed.

Indeed, many climactic sword fights between heroes and villains involve just this sort of dance. This convention isn't in place to bog the game down with debates over a character's position, however, or to force players to figure out exactly where they go every turn. Its purpose is the opposite: It assumes that you can get to somewhere close and still do something fun, dangerous, exciting, or interesting, without needing to spend a whole turn doing nothing but moving.

## Without Spending Your Turn

Two common game phrases in *Grimm* are "spend your turn" and "without spending your turn." They both refer to actions, talents, abilities, and other things your character might try to use or do during the game. The first kind of action, which requires "spending your turn," follows the rules described above; the phrase means that the action requires one round of action, or one turn, in order to attempt. The second kind of action, which can be done "without spending your turn," is just what it sounds like: something that can be done in no time at all, and can be completed at the same time that your character attempts to do something else. Even these actions should generally be "activated" or attempted during your turn, however, even if they don't take up that turn.

There will be exceptions. Sometimes moving around isn't practical, such as when your character is trying to figure out a puzzle lock while your friends fend off the gargoyles; all moving away from it is going to do is slow you down. Other times, it just isn't possible to travel while spending your turn, such as when you need to spend several turns pushing on something to get it to budge. Moving somewhere can even require you to make other tests, such as Scamper tests when the terrain is uneven or slippery. Finally, while you may have the ability to move, you may not have the room to do so…such as when an opponent has intercepted you, or when the place you really want to go is through a doorway, but something big and scary and unwilling to move is standing in the way.

# Spending Your Turn Fighting

Fighting, whether you are hoping to subdue an opponent or just protect yourself from those who are want to harm you, is the most common and possibly the most complicated activity to undertake during an action scene. The various ways to fight and defend yourself are described below.

Because there are several ways to attack and defend in *Grimm*, two new terms will be used in this section: **attack trait** and **defense trait**. In general, attack trait refers to either Scrap or Throw, and defense trait refers to either Scrap or Scamper. Which trait is best used depends on the circumstances of the battle, the relative sizes of the combatants, and of course, their distance from one another (it's hard to Scrap with someone who's an arrow's flight away!).

## Evade

When you evade, you focus on defending yourself to the exclusion of all else, including harming your attackers. Characters often spend their turn evading when help is on the way and they need to hold a foe off for a few rounds, or they have distracted a monster from their friends and want to give them as much time as possible to accomplish something else. An evading character gains an advantage of +1 grade to all defense tests for the round, even before his turn to act.

## Guard

Spending your turn to guard means that you are neither attempting to hurt your opponent nor attempting to avoid harm yourself; instead, your focus is in keeping someone else from being hurt. When you declare your action, simply tell the narrator whom you wish to guard. To guard someone, you must stand between him and his attackers; in some cases, you may not be able to guard someone against every enemy who attacks him in a round.

If someone makes a Scrap attempt at the character you are guarding, you may automatically interpose yourself, and make a defense test in place of the character. However, your defense trait in this case must be Scrap, not Scamper, since you are not trying to get out of the attacker's way, but rather are trying to get *in* his way and block his attack. If you fail the roll, you suffer the effects of the attack, as normal.

On the other hand, if someone makes a Throw attempt at the character you are guarding, you may oppose the Throw test with a Scamper test to try to get in the way of the attack. If you fail, the target must make his own Scamper test to try to avoid the attack. If you succeed, the target is safe, but you are hit by the attack instead, as if you had failed the defense test by one grade.

## Scrap

Scrapping is simply trying to punch, stab, bludgeon, or otherwise hit and harm your opponent in hand-to-hand combat. To attempt to scrap, you must simply be within reach of your opponent. You make a Scrap test, opposed by the target's defense trait. If you tie or win, you (the attacker) hit your target and may inflict **wounds**. The wounds inflicted depend on your stature, weapons, and other effects. For every three grades by which you win the Scrap test, you inflict +1 wound.

After the wounds you inflict have been determined, your opponent probably negates some of those wounds thanks to his **protection**. Protection can be thanks to stature, armor, magical powers, and the like.

If the target's protection exceeds the wounds inflicted, nothing happens. If the target's protection is exactly equal to the wounds inflicted, it's a glancing blow, and the target suffers a –1 disadvantage on his tests until after his next turn (if a target suffers multiple glancing blows, they all add up, or "stack"). Finally, if the target's protection is less than the wounds inflicted, then any wounds not negated are recorded, and inflict penalties as described under "Wounds" on page 60.

Scrap is always the attack trait when making a hand-to-hand attack. The defense trait used may be Scrap or Scamper, as chosen by the defender. Smaller characters should usually defend with Scamper, while larger characters should usually defend with Scrap.

## Throw

Throw attempts are the great equalizer for kids in *Grimm*. Kids can shower a larger attacker with various missiles from a distance all day long, nimbly dodging its own clumsy lobs and keeping out of reach of its deadly claws. The damage they do with their slingshot stones and small arrows might not be much, but it can add up. Throw attempts work just like Scrap attempts, except that targets can only use Scamper as a defense trait.

However, throwing is not without its drawbacks. Thrown items have base ranges of a cricket's hop, and may work upward from there. If your opponent is beyond that range, your attack just can't get there. Additionally, the narrator may apply a –1 disadvantage (or more) to your Throw test for every other character between you and your target. If the characters in the way are smaller, the disadvantage can be reduced; if they're larger, it can be increased. And, if the characters are all wrestling, watch out, because the narrator may roll to see if you hit the wrong person entirely!

## Wrestle

Wrestling is similar to Scrapping, but rather than trying to take swings at your opponent and dodge his in return, you are simply grabbing ahold of him. Monsters love to wrestle kids into submission, but on the other hand, a swarm of kids can dog-pile on a larger opponent and bear him to the ground with their combined weight.

To wrestle an opponent, make a Scrap attack without a weapon. The Scrap attack can be defended against as normal, with either Scrap or Scamper, with appropriate stature bonuses. If you win the opposed roll, you are now wrestling. If you lose the opposed roll, you do not wrestle your opponent.

When wrestling, two things happen: both you and the opponent suffer a -4 disadvantage on all non-Core trait tests, and both of your speeds are reduced to nothing.

Stature differences are pretty significant for wrestlers, though. For each stature level larger you are compared to your opponent, your disadvantage decreases by one, and your speed increases by one level (but never higher than your usual speed). So, if an adult was wrestling with a kid, the adult (one stature larger) would suffer a -3 disadvantage to non-Core trait tests, and his speed would be very slow. His opponent, the kid, would suffer the normal -4 disadvantage and wouldn't be able to move any significant distance at all.

Of course, wrestling doesn't always involve a mere two individuals. Several kids could wrestle against an adult, or an even larger creature. When two creatures of the same stature work together in a wrestle, treat them as one creature of the next higher stature for the purposes of their opponent's penalty. So, if two kids are wrestling one adult, the kids suffer penalties as normal (-4) while the adult suffers penalties as if wrestling an adult rather than a kid. Likewise, if four kids were wrestling an adult, the adult would suffer penalties as if he were wrestling with a moose-sized creature!

***Example:*** *Tom, Sarah, and Josh are all desperately trying to hold off a rampaging, flail-wielding, kid-eating ogre while Billy tries to pick the lock on their friends' cage and release them. Tom tries to wrestle the beast, so makes a Scrap attack. The narrator decides that the ogre, a moose-stature creature, will resist with a Scrap test. Tom gets an 8th grade result on the roll, and the ogre, even with his stature bonus, does worse. Tom climbs onto its shoulders, and the two are now wrestling. Normally, this would mean that both have no effective speed and each suffers -4 disadvantages to non-Core tests. However, the ogre is two stature levels larger than Tom, so it only suffers a -2 disadvantage on tests and moves at slow speed. Tome still suffers the usual -4 disadvantage and cannot move.*

*Luckily, Josh also manages to climb on board with a Scrap test, partially thanks to the disadvantage that Josh is inflicting on the ogre; since Tom and Josh are w o r k i n g together, they are equivalent to one adult, meaning the ogre is now effectively only one stature larger. The ogre's speed drops to really slow, and it suffers a -3 disadvantage to non-Core trait tests. Tom and Josh each suffer the usual -4 disadvantage and cannot move any distance for as long as they continue to wrestle the ogre. Together, Tom and Josh have managed to slow down the ogre enough to give Billy the time he needs to finish picking the lock.*

**Movement While Wrestling:** In any given wrestling match, no matter how many characters are involved, only the largest character should be able to move at all, and even that depends on how many smaller characters are involved. The rest of the characters in the wrestling match, simply by nature of wrestling with someone of their size or larger, have no speed at all. This means that wherever the largest character goes, the others are along for the ride.

**Actions While Wrestling:** Once you've started wrestling, you can try to do other stuff, but it's going to be very difficult, given that someone is hanging onto you. Generally, you have two ways to spend your subsequent turns that won't be impeded by penalties: try to wound one of your opponents who's wrestling, or try to escape from the dog-pile.

**Throw Off a Wrestler:** If you try to get one or more wrestlers off your back, or leg, or whatever, you make a single Muscle test, setting the difficulty for all of your opponents. Those who want to keep you in the wrestling match may make Muscle tests to oppose you, with stature advantages or disadvantages as normal. This is one case in which the inactive characters (the characters

reacting to the attempt to throw them off) receive the stature advantage or disadvantage, since the active character is setting the difficulty with his initial test. All of those who fail are thrown out of the wrestling match; those who succeed remain wrestling with you. If you throw off all of those who are wrestling with you, you may then move half your speed without the movement reduction from wrestling.

**Wound an Opponent:** Wounding one of your wrestling opponents requires an opposed Muscle test, with the larger character receiving a stature advantage (see page 57). If you beat your opponent, you inflict wounds, just like when Scrapping. You can only use light weapons (or weapons that are part of your body, like your fists, claws, or teeth) to wound an opponent who is wrestling with you.

**Gain the Upper Hand:** Size isn't the only determining factor regarding movement reduction and disadvantages to non-Core tests. You may spend a turn to try to gain the upper hand against those with whom you are wrestling, evening the odds. Make an opposed Muscle test against the opponent in question; if you win, you may either reduce one of your penalties (either movement reduction or disadvantages to non-Core tests) as if you were one stature level larger, or increase those of your opponent as if he were one stature level smaller. The benefits of gaining the upper hand can be increased over multiple turns, and via the actions of multiple wrestlers against a single foe.

Since only one wrestler can have a speed (really slow, or better), a wrestler with no speed must first gain the upper hand by reducing his opponent's speed before he can try to increase his own.

***Example:*** *In the previous example, Tom and Josh have clung tenaciously around the creature's neck, reducing its speed to really slow. The ogre spends its next turn trying to gain the upper hand on Tom so he can chase the now-fleeing captives who have been released from their cages. The ogre makes an opposed Muscle test, beating Tom soundly. The ogre chooses to increase its movement to slow, then gives chase with Tom and Josh going along for the ride.*

**Additional Options for Narrators:** The Bully grits his teeth as he barrels into the castle guard, pinning his arms in a bear hug and sending them both crashing down a flight to stone steps. In a sudden moment of reckless courage, the Outcast tackles the wily goblin and the two begin twisting and rolling back and forth, dangerously close the cliff's edge. The evil wizard cackles and points his wand at the helpless prisoners, but the Nerd springs forward, grabs the wizard's long sleeve, and the two begin a dangerous struggle while the wand glows and threatens to zap anything, or anyone…

Sometimes, wrestling isn't only about over-powering or slowing down your opponent; at the Narrator's discretion, special situations may involve additional trait tests to resolve an action scene. Will the Bully and the castle guard be hurt as they tumble down the steps? Perhaps the winner of an opposed Muscle test can make sure he's the one who lands on top. Will the Outcast and goblin tumble off the cliff together, or will one of them be able to escape as the other plummets to his doom? A Scamper test could decide that outcome. The Nerd may not be strong enough to rip the wand free from the wizard's clutches, but maybe he is skilled enough to turn the wand's powers against its master. Only a Gaming test will tell. There are many other possibilities for introducing extra tension and drama to wrestling action scenes; Narrators should feel free to further increase or decrease penalties under special circumstances, and to use their creativity to make each wrestling scene unique.

# Spending Your Turn Moving

Although *Grimm* is not a game of grids or hexes, and everyone's precise position in relation to one another need not be exactly defined, there are still some limitations to a character's movement during action scenes. In order to Scrap with someone, for instance, you have to be able to reach him. In order to Throw at someone, you need to have a clear line of fire. And in order to get somewhere, you need to have a clear path. But what, exactly, is a clear path?

For starters, assume that if there's someone or something between you and your destination, you have to either go around him or somehow go through him. Going around the opponent or obstacle may require you to spend an entire turn moving, which is called **Scampering**. Going through the opponent or obstacle requires you to attempt to go over, under, or through it, and is called **surmounting**. Finally, if you want to be that someone standing between an opponent and his destination, you should spend your turn **intercepting**. All three options are described below.

As mentioned under "Spending Your Turn Fighting," above, hazards or terrain elements may make it more difficult for your character move. The narrator will tell you what these effects are when the action scene begins or as the effects become relevant. They may include slowing your movement, inflicting disadvantages on trait tests, or even requiring trait tests in order to move at all.

## Intercepting

You declare an intercept attempt when you want to keep someone from going in a general direction, whether it be toward your hapless Nerd buddy or through the castle gate. Intercepting is different than just scampering in that you don't need to declare the place that you're trying to end up; all you need to tell the narrator is who you're trying to intercept, and you can move when that character does, in whatever direction he goes.

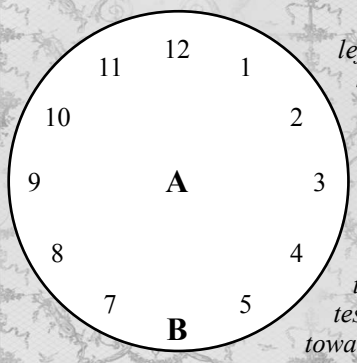
The success or failure of an intercept attempt can often be resolved using the narrator's best judgement. If you are already between your captive and his escape route, and you want to keep him from getting away, you

## Tactical Intercepting

In this rules variant, the intercept attempt is always resolved with an opposed Scamper test. If you as the interceptor beat your opponent, you get there before him, and he is forced to either Scrap with you, surmount you, or spend his turn Scampering to get around you. If you as the interceptor do not beat your opponent, he gets there before you and performs his intended action, keeps moving, or whatever else he had planned; you have no effect on his actions this turn.

The opposed Scamper test is modified by two factors: how fast you are, and where you start relative to your target. If one character is faster than the other, that character gains an advantage of +1 grade for every level by which his speed exceeds the other character's. The starting position of the two characters can have a more dramatic effect. At best, if your opponent attempts to move right through you, you automatically succeed at the intercept attempt; you were standing in exactly the right spot. At worst, if your opponent attempts to move directly away from you, he may gain an advantage of up to +6 on the Scamper test to avoid your intercept attempt. If your opponent attempts to move somewhere between these two extremes, he gains an advantage of between +0 and +6, as appropriate.

As a rough guide for how to assign such advantages, imagine a clock face with the character being intercepted in the middle, where the clock's hands are connected. The intercepting character would be at six o'clock. Determine the path that the character being intercepted wishes to take, then count how many numbers are between him and his interceptor, using the shortest route (so, counting clockwise if the character is moving somewhere to the right and counter-clockwise if the character is moving somewhere to the left). That is the number of the advantage that the character being intercepted receives on his Scamper test. If the character's path would take him directly through the number six, then of course the intercepting character doesn't need to move anywhere, or even make a test; he intercepts his foe automatically.




*In the diagram to the left, "A" is the target being intercepted and "B" is the character attempting to do the intercepting. If A were to move just to the right of B, he would gain no advantage on the opposed Scamper test. If A were to move toward the three, he would gain a +3 advantage on his Scamper test to avoid B. If A were to move directly away from B, toward the twelve, he would gain a +6 advantage on his Scamper test.*

probably can. Likewise, if a monster with extremely long arms and who is quick on his feet wants to box you in and keep you from fleeing his glade, he does so, and you have to deal with it. Perhaps the narrator will ask for a Scamper test to see if you can slip past him, but generally, that's what surmounting is for. For narrators who want rules for dynamic chase scenes and maneuvering, options are presented in the "Tactical Intercepting" sidebar.

### Scampering

When you want to do nothing but move during your turn, you spend it scampering. Scampering is usually unopposed; you simply move wherever you want to go, covering a distance equal to your normal speed. If you wish to push yourself while Scampering, you may make a Scamper test to attempt to cover even more ground. For every grade you perform above your base Scamper grade, you travel 20% farther than normal. Yet this is not without risk, because if you perform below your base Scamper grade, you stumble over obstacles or your own feet, and your distance covered is 20% less per grade you score below your base Scamper grade.

### Surmounting

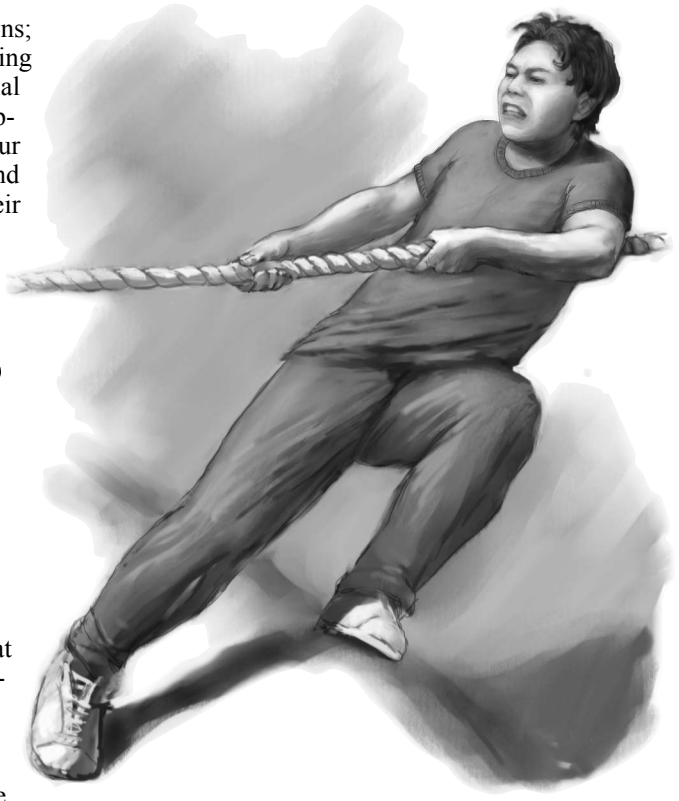
If you wish to move somewhere and a substantial obstacle is in your way, the narrator may require you to spend your turn attempting to surmount it. This most often occurs when you wish to move somewhere and an enemy is directly in your path, but might also include climbing a wall, jumping a chasm, or any other obstacle that is dangerous for your character to attempt or that actively resists him.

If the thing being surmounted is an inanimate obstacle, the narrator will tell you what your Scamper difficulty is. If the obstacle in question is another character, you make a Scamper or Scrap test, and your opponent uses Scrap as his defense trait. Similar to a Scrap attempt, stature differences may cause one character to gain an advantage.

If you, as the surmounter, meet the difficulty set by the other character, you move past him and may perform whatever action you intended, including continuing your movement. If you do not meet the difficulty, you are stopped in your tracks and your turn ends.

## Other Actions

Fighting and moving are not the kids' only options; indeed, if that is all your character does while traveling the Grimm Lands, he will not last long! Using special abilities, performing incantations, and activating keepsakes and talismans are all possible ways to spend your turn. Each of these options, and what sort of effort and action is required to use them, is described under their entries throughout this rulebook.



# Miscellaneous Game Terms

## Protection

Protection is a catch-all term for anything that lowers the number of wounds a character would suffer. The most common form of protection is granted by stature (see "Stature," page 57), but it is also granted by physical traits (scaly hides, thick skin, and the like) or by equipment or magical powers. The standard format for describing protection is to state that someone or something has "protection X," where X is the number of wounds it subtracts from any hit that it takes. So a character with protection 1 would subtract 1 from a hit that inflicted three wounds, meaning that he takes two wounds from that hit.

## Range

*Grimm* is not concerned with the exact distance of the bullseye, the prevailing wind direction, and the arc required to achieve optimal trajectory. Is it close, or far away, or somewhere in between? That's what we want to know. Spells and ranged weapons alike, as well as anything else than can be used at a distance, therefore have one of the following three ranges. If something is beyond that range, you're out of luck.

**A Cricket's Hop:** A pretty short distance, anywhere between just out of reach and around 20 feet.

**A Stone's Throw:** This phrase usually means a short way, but have you seen how far a kid can chuck an egg-sized stone? In the Grimm Lands, a stone's throw is anywhere from 20 feet to the length of half of a football field, about 50 yards.

**An Arrow's Flight:** When we say "an arrow's flight," we mean anything from a straight high-velocity crossbow shot to a fully retracted, arcing high, adult-sized longbow flight. Anywhere from 50 yards to a quarter-mile (around 400 yards).

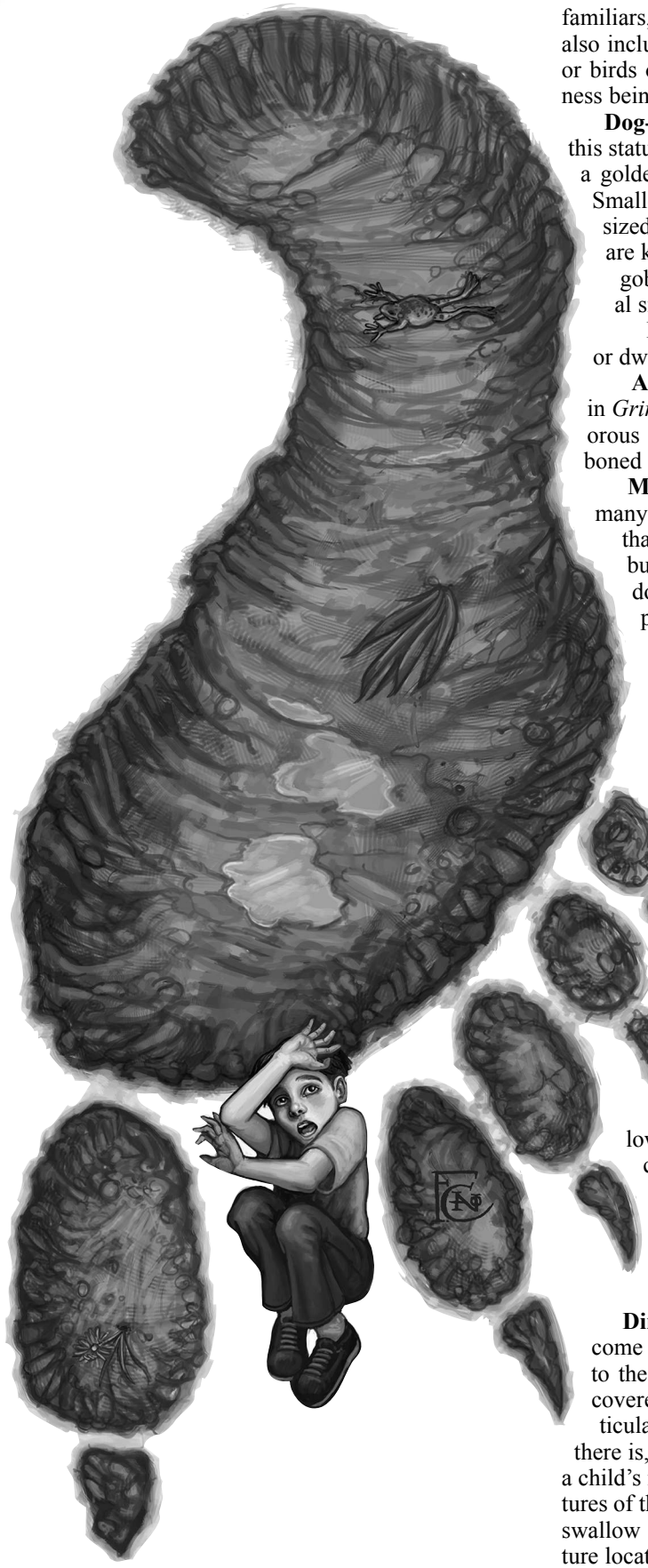
## Stature

Size matters in *Grimm*. In many ways, size is intertwined with the game's themes, whether it be that the even the smallest of heroes can make the largest of differences, or that even the largest of monstrosities can hide the gentlest of hearts. Thus, both to keep this theme in the forefront and to highlight the benefits and drawbacks of being larger or smaller than those around you, *Grimm* applies advantages to certain opposed tests based on the stature of the characters testing. After all, isn't it more rewarding to know that the giant's club swooped by you because you're a nimble, dodging little kid than that he "just missed"?

Just as ranges are determined using a rough descriptor that keeps the game flowing without recourse to measuring tape, stature is measured without needing to know a character's exact height, weight, or mass. Rather, stature gives us a rough idea of how a character's size compares to those of animals or creatures familiar to all kids. The statures in *Grimm* are listed, from smallest to largest, and briefly described below. In parentheses after each stature is a number; this is the number of wounds it inflicts with a successful hit, as well as the protection it naturally has due to stature.

**Mouse-sized (1):** This is the smallest stature level that kids will commonly run into in *Grimm*. The stature includes, in addition to the rodents for which it is named, all sorts of pixies, songbirds, and clockwork companions.

**Cat-sized (2):** Cats themselves are frequent characters in *Grimm*, whether as talking companions, witches'



familiars, or mysterious observers. This stature level also includes large rats, large birds like ravens, parrots, or birds of prey, and yappy canines that have no business being called dogs.

**Dog-sized (3):** Also known as "little-sibling-sized," this stature level is denotes a size roughly equivalent to a golden retriever. Thus, not all dogs are dog-sized. Smaller breeds like Chihuahuas and pugs are cat-sized; larger breeds like mastiffs and St. Bernards are kid-sized. Mischievous people like gnomes and goblin are often dog-sized, and so is the occasional small-boned kid.

**Kid-sized (4):** The size of the average tween, or dwarf, or redcap.

**Adult-sized (5):** Most of the everyday humans in *Grimm* are adult-sized, as are plenty of the carnivorous shrubs, child-eating critters, and a few big-boned kids.

**Moose-sized (6):** Unfortunately for the kids, many of their antagonists are moose-sized, a scale that implies someone even taller than a human, but not so large as to be uninterested in chowing down on children. Bears, tigers, trolls, sharks, pterodactyls, and the Big Bad Wolf, as well as most monsters that loom threateningly over kids while licking their lips, are moose-sized.

**Elephant-sized (7):** Elephant-sized characters are so large that they can squash a kid flat just by accidentally stepping on him, and so massive that they can't even squeeze through most doorways. This stature represents fearsome beasts like giant constrictors, carnivorous trees, and griffons, as well as the small end of the giantish scale, like ogres and infant giants. Since an elephant-sized giant is one who, if he curled up in a fetal position, would be about the size of an elephant, that means that even the littlest giants are rather large.

**Whale-sized (8):** Not quite Jonah-and-the-Whale size, this stature is appropriate for things that are two to three times larger than elephants, but that could not swallow whole rowboats without some good, solid chewing. Most giants are whale-sized, as are most dragons (including *the* Dragon). Something this big tends to exist on a different level than "smallies," and often doesn't even notice things that are kid-sized and smaller.

**Dinosaur-sized (9):** All kids know that dinosaurs come in many shapes and sizes, but this stature refers to the biggest of them all. Since new ones are discovered every few years, we won't refer to any particular dinosaur; rather, think of the biggest one there is, and then think of how even bigger it seems in a child's mind, and you'll get an idea of how large creatures of this stature can be. Dinosaur-sized creatures can swallow whole boats without chewing, can be adventure locations in and of themselves, and are so big, even communicating

with them requires extraordinary measures. The largest whale in the sea, the tallest of giants, and of course, the most massive of dinosaurs, are all dinosaur-sized. Anything larger is so huge as to beyond needing to take tests.

## Effects of Stature

The main effect of stature are simple: In any opposed test, one character or the other may receive an advantage due to stature differences. That character either receives an advantage of +1 for every stature level he is smaller than his opponent, or an advantage of +1 for every stature level he is larger than his opponent. Usually, only advantages are granted, not disadvantages, and only one character of the two receives the advantages; this keeps a character from benefiting or suffering from stature differences twice over.

Whether the advantage goes to the smaller character or the larger one depends on which traits are being tested. In a test between a character using Hide and one using Seek, the smaller character receives the advantage. In a test in which two characters are opposing one another with Muscle, the larger character receives the advantage. As you can see, applying advantages ends up being fairly common-sense.

Sometimes, who an advantage goes to is decided not only by the trait being tested, but the trait being used to oppose it, as well. When a combatant is using Scamper as the defense trait against a Scrap attack, for instance, the smaller character gets the advantage, because he's harder to hit. When a combatant is using Scrap as the defense trait against a Scrap attack, on the other hand, the larger character gets the advantage, as his better leverage and longer reach allow him to fight off the smaller character's attacks more easily.

## Wounds and Protection

One effect of stature deserves special mention: inflicting and negating wounds. All characters inflict a number of wounds with a successful attack, based on their stature. This number of wounds assumes that they're using their bare hands (if they even have hands). Characters wielding weapons or who have nasty teeth and claws inflict more wounds.

Characters also have a level of protection against those attacks, based on their stature. This is generally the same as the number of wounds they inflict, though it may be higher if they have particular tough hides, or thick scales, or the like.

## Stature Advantages on Opposed Tests

| Test | Advantage to? | Advantage |
|---|---|---|
| Muscle | Larger | +1 per stature level larger |
| Scrap vs. Scrap | Larger | +1 per stature level larger |
| Scrap vs. Scamper | Smaller | +1 per stature level smaller |
| Throw vs. Scamper | Smaller | +1 per stature level smaller |
| Hide or Seek | Smaller | +1 per stature level smaller |

Most of these advantages are reserved for opposed tests. It doesn't matter how large or small you are, for instance, when you're making a Seek test to spot an incoming pirate vessel, or when you're making a Scrap test to demonstrate a fighting technique you've learned to a crowd of admirers. Often, it's not your size that matters, it's your size relative to someone or something else. That is one reason that these advantages aren't simply included in characters' statistics. The exception to this is Muscle tests to lift, move, or carry things; the difficulties described under Muscle on page 24 are relative to character size and weight, and so require a bit of creative visualization on the narrator's part.

## Statures List

It can help to think of statures in three brackets, from large to medium to small, as shown by the lines separating the list below. The "Wounds/Protection" entry refers to the most common number of wounds that creatures of that stature inflict with a successful attack, as well as the most common level of protection granted by that stature.

| | Stature | Wounds/Protection |
|---|---|---|
| *Large* | Dinosaur-sized | 9 |
| | Whale-sized | 8 |
| | Elephant-sized | 7 |
| *Medium* | Moose-sized | 6 |
| | Adult-sized | 5 |
| | Kid-sized | 4 |
| *Small* | Dog-sized | 3 |
| | Cat-sized | 2 |
| | Mouse-sized | 1 |

Person-shaped characters tend not to have either nasty claws or tough hides, so their wounds and protection are the same as those listed under their stature. Thus, two person-shaped characters of the same stature who wail on each other with their fists aren't likely to do any real damage, at first. Instead, when one hits and the other doesn't, the one who took the hit will take a disadvantage on his next test, meaning that his opponent is more likely to score another hit next time, and so on. Eventually, one may start taking real wounds, or perhaps they'll simply push and shove and kick and punch until they're both too tired to keep going.

## Speed

As you can probably guess, speed in *Grimm* won't be addressed with any more obsessiveness than range or stature. We care about who will win in a race, who is likely to cover more ground in a single turn, and about how far you can go when you put your mind to it. We don't care about measuring it down to the inch or centimeter. Generally, each speed can move twice as quickly as the previous speed. So a slow character who spends his turn moving *might*, if he tests well enough on his Scamper, be able to stay ahead of an average character who only moves half his speed that turn and then does something else (like attack the slow character). Odds are better, though, that the average character will catch up. Likewise, a really fast character will probably get somewhere twice as rapidly as a fast one.

There are five speeds in *Grimm*, which are listed and briefly described below, from the slowest to the fastest. Note that speed doesn't reflect a kid's reflexes or a snake's ability to lash out suddenly; those situations are resolved using Scamper or Scrap tests.

**Really Slow:** Snails, tortoises, and fully-armored knights who are knocked off their horses all move at a really slow pace. Really slow characters have a speed of around 10 yards per round.

**Slow:** Particularly portly people, lumbering monsters, and anyone wearing or carrying a bunch of stuff (like some armor) moves at slow speed. Slow characters have a speed of around 20 yards per round.

**Average:** This is the average speed of a kid in the Grimm Lands, as well as that of adults (though adults have longer strides, they have more mass to move, and grownups in *Grimm* tend to be slightly ponderous and clumsy). An average character has a speed of around 40 yards per round.

**Fast:** Athletic kids and adults, small and medium quadrupeds (like wolves, dogs, and cats), as well as surprisingly speedy creatures like bears and snakes, are all fast. A fast character has a speed of around 80 yards per round.

**Really Fast:** Horses, cheetahs, fish in the sea, and birds on the wing are all really fast. A really fast character has a speed of around 160 yards per round.

# Wounds

An inevitable result of action scenes is that, eventually, characters get hurt. When your character suffers one or more wounds, mark them down on the wounds box on your character sheet. If a minor character sustains a number of wounds equal to her personal grade level, she is killed; however, kids are major characters, the heroes of the story. When a kid or other major character sustains a number of wounds equal to his personal grade levels, he is only knocked out.

Wounds are not simply slashes of pencil on paper, however; being wounded means that your character is suffering pain, fatigue, and perhaps even hopelessness. In short, he is not operating at his fullest potential. Each wound that your character has sustained causes him to perform at –1 grade on all trait tests.

## Healing

Several effects can lessen the disadvantages caused by wounds or remove the wounds altogether. The most commonly available are described below. If a character still has wounds at the end of a story, he should be assumed to be healed by the time the next story begins.

### First Aid

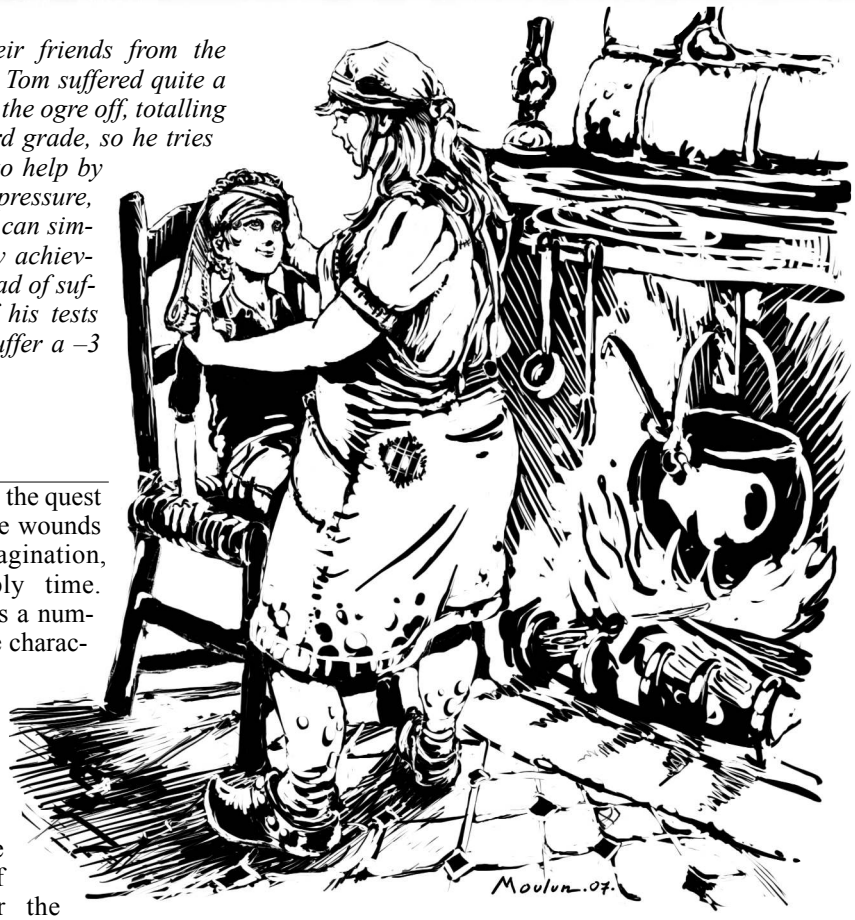
If a character's wounds are tended by someone with at least 1st grade in Boy Scouts in the scene immediately after the wounds were suffered, his disadvantages can be lessened. The difficulty of this test is equal to the number of wounds the character sustained in the previous scene (so, a minimum of 1st grade). If the test is successful, the wounded character's disadvantages from his most recently sustained wounds are reduced by 1. The wounds are still there, they're just not causing him as much difficulty.

A character can only benefit from one first aid attempt after each scene, whether it is successful or not.

## Death

Most kids aren't murderers, and most monsters prefer to imprison, torture, or at least slowly prepare kids as succulent meals, rather than outright kill them. A character who succumbs to too many wounds should almost always be knocked out rather than killed, and even situations that seem completely deadly may have hidden escapes and alternatives. When a character dies, particularly a major character, it should be meaningful and significant, not random and unexpected.

***Example:*** *After rescuing their friends from the ogre, the kids see to the wounded. Tom suffered quite a few cuts and bruises while holding the ogre off, totalling 4 wounds. Josh has Boy Scouts 3rd grade, so he tries to provide first aid. Sarah offers to help by cleaning the wounds and applying pressure, but the narrator decides that Josh can simply step up, instead, automatically achieving 4th grade on the test. So, instead of suffering –4 disadvantage on all of his tests from his wounds, Tom will only suffer a –3 disadvantage until he is healed.*




## Natural Healing

First aid may make continuing the quest easier, but it won't take care of the wounds themselves. That requires Imagination, magic, medical care, or simply time. Removing a single wound requires a number of evenings of rest equal to the character's current number of wounds. These evenings may be interspersed with activity as normal; after all, the story cannot wait for flesh to knit and scars to form! However, if a character does nothing but rest throughout an entire day, it counts as two evenings of rest for these purposes. After the required period of rest is fulfilled, the character may make a Muscle test, including his current disadvantages for wounds; if he scores at least 1st grade on this test, one wound is removed. This proceeds over time until, eventually, a character is healed.

## Medical Care

A character with at least 1st grade in 4-H may nurse the wounded as they rest. In this case, the character providing the medical care makes the test for the wounded character, using her 4-H trait instead of the wounded character's Muscle trait. Assuming the character tending to the wounds is not herself wounded, this means that the test is more likely to have a result of at least 1st grade, and that the wound is more likely to be removed. Additionally, if the result of the 4-H test is equal to the character's total number of wounds, an additional wound is removed, for a maximum of two wounds healed per rest period.

For every patient beyond the first that she is taking care of, a character suffers a cumulative –1 disadvantage on her 4-H tests to provide medical care. A patient can only receive medical care from one character at a time; other characters may offer assistance in the form of teamwork, but may not test on their own.

***Example:*** *Once the kids are all safely out of the ogre's stomping grounds, they stop to rest. Sarah takes over as the gang's doctor, using her 5th grade in 4-H, and declares that Tom needs two days of complete rest to get back on his feet (a full day of rest counts as two evenings, and Tom has a total of four wounds). After those two days, Tom would normally make a Muscle test with a –3 disadvantage (remember, he received first aid, so his disadvantages aren't as bad as they could be). Sarah is nursing him back to health, though, so she makes a 4-H test for him instead. She easily makes 5th grade, meaning that Tom not only heals one wound through rest, he also heals a second wound thanks to her ministrations. Now that he's down to two wounds, the kids decide to travel. After two nights, Sarah can make a test for Tom again, and will probably be able to remove that last two wounds.*

## Imagination

Finally, in the most dire circumstances, a kid who has chosen Imagination as her iconic Core trait may heal wounds with the power of Imagination. She must spend her turn holding onto the wounded character (or hugging herself, if she's the wounded one) and thinking happy thoughts. By expending up to one-half her personal grade level in Imagination, she can either heal herself of one wound per Imagination expended, or heal another character of one wound per 2 Imagination expended.

Chapter Five

# Tools of the Trade

This chapter discusses the things, both material items and magical abilities, that may allow the kids to survive the Grimm Lands. Many of the tools described here are just as likely, though, to be in the hands of the kids' opponents. The first section focuses on physical objects. First among them are **items**, referring to the mundane but necessary things that get a person through the day: his weapons, armor, gear, and clothing. Then come **keepsakes** and **talismans**, which are special objects that can save a kid's bacon or, if he's not careful, turn him into a rasher of it! The second section of the chapter deals not with physical tools, but rather with special abilities the likes of which the Real World has never seen: **magic** and **imaginings**.

## Items

The following section describes some of the armor, weapons, and miscellaneous gear that kids in the Grimm Lands may encounter and make use of. Subsequent to those are samples of special magical items that kids may find or be given during their adventures, or that may be used against them! Finally, each kid comes into the Grimm Lands with something more than the clothes on his back, be it a favorite book, a lucky charm, a piece of sporting equipment, or a toy. These keepsakes, whether modern conveniences or pointless chotchkes in the mundane world, become special when they enter the Grimm Lands. The narrator should take the examples described here as templates with which to create additional items for the player characters to use throughout play.

None of the items described here have costs associated with them. *Grimm* is not a game about amassing and spending treasure, and what is valuable to one villager might be worthless to another. Items in *Grimm* are more likely to be found, stolen, worked for, or rewarded as they are to be outright purchased.

### Protective Gear

Protective items make a big difference in a stand-up fight, but they're often heavy, noisy, and cumbersome. If you're constantly fighting foes of about your size, or standing around waiting to fight, it might be a good idea to wear armor or carry a shield. If you plan on getting anywhere quickly or quietly, though, or of going up against really big foes (the only defense against which is not to get hit), a shield might be okay, but armor would not be your best bet.

Most protective gear in the Grimm Lands isn't the right size for kids. Kids wearing armor that is too large for them suffer double the normal disadvantage on Playground tests, due to the ill fit and dangling straps. Overlarge shields, meanwhile, cause double the normal disadvantage and offer only half the normal advantage on Scrap tests.

#### Armor and Shields

A few of the more common kinds of armor are described below. The narrator may develop more types of armor if he wishes; in general, for each level of protection a suit of armor provides, it should impose a disadvantage of at least –1 grade on Playground tests other than Scrap. The heavier the armor, the more likely it is to also reduce its wearer's speed.

Shields are beloved by warriors everywhere, as they are more versatile than armor, easier to strap on and take off, and look really nifty. They are most warriors' first line of defense, though they require a hand to use.

**Bandit's Armor:** Those who wish to avoid detection as much as they wish to avoid harm favor this light, often dirty armor made of leathers, hides, and stiff cloth. It tends to come in green, brown, or mottled shades of either color. Unlike other armors, it doesn't reduce a character's speed. The wearer suffers a –2 disadvantage on Playground tests other than Scrap, but in return the armor provides protection 1.

## Helmets

Although all of a suit of armor's various pieces are lumped together, narrators may enjoy the optional helmet rule. This rule allows a character for forego any head protection, which allows him to ignore the normal disadvantage imposed to Seek tests. However, this means that attackers who position themselves appropriately (such as standing on a ledge directly behind and above a larger character, when sneaking up on him) or aim more carefully (voluntarily taking a disadvantage on a Throw test) may ignore the armor's protection entirely when inflicting wounds against the target's head.

**Mercenary's Armor:** Those who make their living on the battlefield know that the ability to run away can be more important than resisting a few sword strokes. Mercenary's armor is typically cobbled together out of scrounged pieces of plate, with a breastplate as the centerpiece. Most importantly, however, it leaves the limbs free to bend and flex. The wearer's speed is reduced by one level and he suffers a –4 disadvantage on Playground tests other than Scrap, but in return the armor provides protection 2.

**Sentry's Armor:** This armor is the typical protection of guards and sentries. It is heavy enough to afford decent protection, but cheap enough that it's not hard to make lots of it. Most sentry armor consists of a combination of chainmail and cured leather, including a telltale chainmail hood. Guards may wear tabards denoting the kingdom or noble house that they serve. The wearer's speed is reduced by two levels and he suffers a –6 disadvantage on all Playground tests other than Scrap, but in return the armor provides protection 3.

**Knight's Armor:** This heavy armor is the classic form of protection favored by knights, both valiant and foul. It consists of a layer of padding covered by chainmail, and finally an outer carapace of plate. The wearer's speed is reduced by two levels and he suffers a –8 disadvantage on Playground tests other than Scrap, but in return the armor provides protection 4.

**Shield:** Shields come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and help protect a warrior. They may be used as improvised hand weapons when wielded with both hands, but are more commonly strapped to one arm and braced with a hand. Shields provide an advantage of +2 grades to Scrap defense.

A character can hold as many shields as he has hands, but only gains the benefits of one of them.

## Weapons

The Grimm Lands are bristling with scary weapons. Soldiers and guards carry swords and halberds, hunters tote bows and spears, and bandits wield clubs and cruel-looking knives.

Weapons are divided by use (hand and ranged) and weight (light, medium, and heavy). The heavier the weapon, the more effort it takes to use, but the greater the potential impact.

Hand weapons are anything that can be held and used in close combat. They all provide an advantage of +1 grade to Scrap attacks. Ranged weapons allow you to contribute to a fight while remaining outside of the fray. They all provide an advantage of +1 grade to Throw attacks, and have a base range of a cricket's hop.

Weapons in the hands of heroes or villains can be used to pull off a certain number of **combat moves** each turn. These are represented by beads or other tokens kept in front of the player or narrator that can be spent throughout a turn, a bit at a time or all at once. A certain number of combat moves can be expended to do one or all of the following things, depending on the weapon:

**Fling:** Extend the weapon's range by one level (or throw a hand weapon up to a cricket's hop).

**Parry:** Gain +1 grade on a Scrap defense test

**Thrust:** Inflict +1 wound with the weapon on a successful attack.

A move can be expended at any point during a round, even before a character's turn. Expended moves are refreshed at the beginning of the round.

The narrator shouldn't bother determining the combat moves of minor characters. Instead, their ranged weapon combat moves are assumed to always extend the weapon's range, while their hand weapon combat moves are assumed to always increase the weapon's damage. The game effects of weapons for minor characters using these baselines are provided in the "Minor Characters' Weapons" sidebar.

## Minor Characters' Weapons

| Weapon | Wounds | Range |
|---|---|---|
| Light Hand | +1 | — |
| Light Ranged | +0 | Cricket's Hop |
| Medium Hand | | |
| (one-handed) | +1 | — |
| (two-handed) | +2 | — |
| Medium Ranged | +0 | Stone's Throw |
| Heavy Hand | +3 | — |
| Heavy Ranged | +0 | Arrow's Flight |

Some weapons may have special uses beyond those described in their categories, such as spears (which might be able to be thrown as if they were little weapons, for instance). To keep things simple, though, most hand weapons should fit one of the descriptions below.

Finally, most weapons are sized for adults, and shift up or down in category depending on the relative stature of their wielder. A light hand weapon sized for an adult and a heavy hand weapon sized for a gnome would both be medium hand weapons in the hands of a kid, for instance. Weapons that shift beyond the listed categories are either too large or too small to be used effectively.

**Improvised Weapons (Combat Moves 1):** These are the everyday objects that hapless folk pick up and use as weapons or shields in desperation. They include rocks, sticks, vases, chairs, serving platters, and cooking utensils. All improvised weapons are considered to be hand weapons, take up two hands, and grant an advantage of +1 grade on Scrap attack tests. However, such items are not made for combat, and expending its single move destroys the item, causing it to become useless (both in combat and for its original purpose).

*Combat Move Costs:* Fling 1, Parry 1, Thrust 1

**Light Hand Weapons (Combat Moves 1):** Knives, small clubs, short swords, hand axes…all of these are light hand weapons, and also do double duty as ranged weapons if a move is expended. They only take up one hand, and grant +1 grade on Scrap attack tests.

*Combat Move Costs:* Fling 1, Parry 1, Thrust 1

**Medium Hand Weapons (Combat Moves 2):** Medium hand weapons are versatile and effective, and include swords, axes, staves, and spears. They can be wielded in one hand or two, and grant +1 grade on Scrap attack tests.

*One-Handed Combat Move Costs:* Fling 2, Parry 1, Thrust 2

*Two-Handed Combat Move Costs:* Fling 1, Parry 1, Thrust 1

**Medium Ranged Weapon (Combat Moves 1):** Medium ranged weapons include slingshots, throwing spears, and small bows. They may require one hand or two, depending on the particular weapon, and all provide +1 grade on Throw attack tests.

In a pinch, medium ranged weapons may be treated as improvised weapons. As with improvised weapons, however, using a move destroys the item.

*Combat Move Costs:* Fling 1, Parry –, Thrust 1

**Heavy Hand Weapons (Combat Moves 3):** Heavy hand weapons include large clubs, heavy axes, swords as long as their wielders are tall, and big polearms. They require two hands to wield, and provide +1 grade on Scrap attack tests.

*Combat Move Costs:* Fling 3, Parry 3, Thrust 1

**Heavy Ranged Weapon (Combat Moves 2):** Heavy ranged weapons include longbows, crossbows, and even the occasional blunderbuss. The term "heavy" is a bit of a misnomer, in that a heavy ranged weapon can actually be rather light, but is nonetheless powerful and requires either time or effort to prepare between shots. They require two hands to use, provide +1 grade on Throw attack tests, and require that their wielder spend between 1 turn (the average longbow), 5 turns (the average crossbow), and 10 turns (the average blunderbuss) to reload before using again. If a heavy ranged weapon scores a hit, it ignores 1 level of protection per turn of reload time it requires. Thus, a smaller crossbow or flintlock might require 3

turns to reload, but would bypass armor that has protection 3 or would hurt an elephant-sized giant (ignoring his protection 3 from stature) just as badly as it would an adult-sized soldier.

In a pinch, heavy ranged weapons may be treated as light hand weapons that require two hands to use.

*Combat Move Costs:* Fling 1, Parry –, Thrust 1

## Miscellaneous Gear

The following is a sample list of equipment commonly found and used in the Grimm Lands. Kids who travel far and wide exploring this realm are likely to need some or all of these items at some time or another. The narrator may invent additional gear as needed.

**Backpack:** A backpack can hold up to two cubic feet or 30 pounds of gear.

**Bedroll:** A simple pad with a thin blanket, which allows a kid in the wild to sleep without shivering. While not the best, it beats lying on the bare ground.

**Candle:** A simple beeswax candle that produces shadowy light within a cricket's hop. A candle burns for one hour, assuming it is not blown out by breezes.

**Flint and Tinder:** Unless you already have a fire lit, using flint and tinder is nearly the only way to get one started. Using flint and tinder takes up a character's entire turn and requires at least 1st grade in Boy Scouts.

**Grappling Hook:** When you need to scale the wizard's tower, a grappling hook is crucial. Using a grappling hook with a sufficiently long rope grants a +4 advantage on Scamper tests made to climb up or down a vertical surface.

**Jug:** A large ceramic jug with a stopper that can hold a gallon of liquid.

**Lantern:** An oil-burning lantern produces bright light that within a cricket's hop, and shadowy light within a stone's throw. Best of all, it can't be blown out by the by wind. A lantern holds enough oil to burn for 6 hours of continuous use.

**Mirror, Hand:** This item is a mirror small enough to be easily held in one hand. In addition to allowing a fashion-minded little girl to check out her appearance, it's also useful for looking around corners and turning back the gaze of certain dangerous creatures.

**Rope:** Good old rope. Its uses are nearly infinite. Whether you're setting up a booby trap, lowering a wounded friend down a cliff, or attempting to scale a rampart, rope never lets you down. Depending how it's used, rope can provide at least a +1 advantage on just about any test.

**Sack:** A large burlap or leather sack, big enough to hold a single kid or its equivalent. The sack has drawstrings, allowing it to be closed shut. Bursting out of a sack requires an 8th grade Muscle test.

**Sewing Kit:** Includes several sewing needles, thimble, and a variety of different colored threads. Vital for making certain types of Home Ec tests.

**Spyglass:** While not as effective as binoculars, a spyglass lets you see details well into the distance.

**String:** A length of 100 yards of coarse string on a spindle. Although its uses are nearly unlimited, it's particularly good at helping kids find their way back through mazes and other labyrinths.

**Tent:** A sturdy two-person tent, which can accommodate up to four kids in cramped conditions. Unlike a bedroll, a tent can protect a traveler from the elements.

**Torch:** A torch is simply a wooden stick, wrapped with cloth on one end that is soaked in pitch or oil. A torch burns for one hour and lights as well as a lantern. A torch can be used as a light hand and ranged weapon.

**Quill and Ink:** If you want to chronicle your time in the Grimm Lands and lack a ballpoint pen, a quill and ink is all there is left to use. In addition to its use for writing, the jar of ink can be used in all sorts of interesting ways—all it takes is a good imagination.

**Quiver**: A quiver is a long leather cylinder that holds up to 20 arrows or crossbow bolts. Typically worn on the back or hip.

**Waterskin:** A waterskin holds up to a half gallon of liquid and can be easily strung about the shoulder for ease of carrying.

## Clothing

As any Popular Kid can tell you, clothes make all the difference. Instead of listing every single item, the following outfits are divided by social status and utility. Depending on the situation, wearing the right outfit can grant you an advantage or disadvantage on Cool checks in social circumstances (or neither, if the clothing fits the correct type for the area). For example, wearing a noble's outfit while trying to impress the peons grants a +1 advantage on Cool tests.

**Craftsman's Outfit:** Although the particulars vary depending on the professions, a typical craftsman's outfit consists of wool pants, sturdy boots, shirt, and leather apron full of pockets and loops for holding tools.

**Hunter's Outfit:** This outfit consists of leather pants, rugged boots, linen shirt, headgear, and a doublet or leather vest. The muted tones helps the wearer blend into the background of forests, granting a +1 advantage on Hide tests in wooded areas. Bandits and other ne'er-do-wells commonly wear hunter's outfits.

**Peasant's Outfit:** Little more than a burlap sack with holes cut out for the head and arms, tied at the waist with bit of frayed hemp rope. Instead of shoes, the outfit includes either cast-off leather shoes or cloth to wrap around the feet.

**Burghers' Outfit**: While not quite as fancy as a noble's outfit, a burgher's outfit is still crafted with care. It consists of breeches, shirt, vest, hat, and leather boots for a man or dress, slippers, corset, and headwear for a lady.

**Noble's Outfit:** The finest of the fine, a noble's outfit is made of the finest silks and velvets and adorned with jewels and gold thread. A noble's outfit also comes with an appropriate style of hat and cloak, cape, or cowl. However, it does make a person stand out in slums, rural villages, and deep dark dungeons.

**Priest's Outfit:** This outfit consists of a simple robe, cloak, and rope or belt around the waist, often

adorned with the symbols of the priest's faith. The quality of the material (and additional jewelry and the like) depends on both the religion's beliefs on displaying such things and the wealth of the priest in question.

**Wizard's Outfit:** A wizard's outfit typically is composed of a robe, boots or sandals, and belt. The crowning feature always includes some grand and ornate piece of headwear—a tall pointed cone, wide brimmed hat, or skullcap. Most items are embroidered with mysterious sigils and runes. It includes several pouches that may hold all manner of strange herbs, stones, and elixirs.

# Keepsakes

Keepsakes are treasured items brought by kids into the world of Grimm Lands. They are often all that a child has left from his life in the Real World. Each new character begins play with one, although it's possible for a keepsake to be destroyed or lost during play. Although potentially useful back home, keepsakes become doubly so when they enter the Grimm Lands: They gain magical abilities powered by a kid's Imagination, his sense of hope, and his yearning for the world he has lost.

The following are examples of keepsakes that a typical kid may bring into the Grimm Lands. The narrator is highly encouraged to work with his players to create keepsakes for their new characters, or to surprise them with some of his own creation.

**Beeper:** When one of your friends is hurt, dying, or about to be eaten by a troll, your beeper goes off and alerts you with the flashing numbers "911." If you expend 1 Imagination, it then displays the name of the person in trouble, his direction and distance, and a short message (10 words or less) describing his situation.

**Digital Watch:** You always know what time it is (this can be important, since time in the Grimm Lands is a spotty, messy thing—including a 13th o'clock and "Tea Time") and can predict the approach of sunrise or sundown to the second. Additionally, by expending 1 Imagination, you can perform one turn's worth of action twice as fast as normal. So you could run twice as far, make two attack Scrap tests, pick a lock twice as fast, and so on. This ability cannot be used in conjunction with **Hyper**, **Flying Fists**, or other effects that grant additional actions.

**Binoculars:** These work like any other binoculars, allowing you to see four times farther than normal when viewed through. The narrator may grant you discretionary advantages to Seek checks involving noticing things at a distance. Additionally, by expending 1 Imagination, you can see far beyond the horizon, including peering into a neighboring kingdom or a far land.

**Cigarette Lighter:** Considered the signature item of the Outcast kid, a cigarette lighter is highly treasured in the Grimm Lands, both for its ability to produce fire and to scare the wits out of the ignorant yokels. A cigarette lighter also casts light as a candle. Finally, by expending 1 Imagination, you can produce a tremendous gout of flame from the lighter. The gout automatically ignites flammable materials, such as paper, straw, cloth, and hair, which can be bad news for the body on which the hair grows or that is wearing the now-flaming cloth (see "Fire," page 103). A Scamper test with a difficulty equal to the personal grade level of the lighter's owner gets any potential victims out of the way in time.

**Family Heirloom:** This keepsake could be any sort of locket, signet ring, or other piece of jewelry that has been in your family for generations. While clenching it (and nothing else) in one of your hands, you gain an advantage of +1 grade on Pluck tests. If you wish, you can expend 1 Imagination to gain the advantage bonus for the scene while simply wearing the heirloom, but not holding onto it.

**Game Console:** This is a small, handheld electronic device with a variety of quest games. Due to untold hours of playing these video games, you gain a +2 advantage on Gaming tests that involve puzzles, mazes, or other logic conundrums. Additionally, you may expend 1 Imagination to "play out" one potential course of action on the console over several minutes, such as answering a riddle a certain way, trying one method of bypassing a trap, or bringing a certain weapon to bear against the monster. The level of success you achieve in the game console is fairly indicative of how wise a move this strategy would be in the Grimm Lands.

**Helmet:** Whether originally intended for baseball, hockey, football, or even biking or skateboarding, your helmet now does double-duty as a piece of armor. Sure, it looks goofy, but it keeps you alive. If you're wearing it when you're hit, you may negate a number of wounds equal to the amount of Imagination you expend.

**Louisville Slugger:** This baseball bat was once your most prized possession, and now that you're in the Grimm Lands, it has become a trusty weapon. It counts as a medium hand weapon that always requires two hands. Additionally, by expending 1 Imagination, you can turn any piece of convenient ammunition (such as a stone, a doorknob, or a heavy gourd) into a powerful ranged attack. You simply toss the ammunition up, give it a crack with the bat, and the object races toward your enemy as if it were launched from a heavy ranged weapon with a 1-turn reload time (advantage of +1 grade to your Throw attack, 2 combat moves to increase range or increase wounds inflicted, and ignores one level of protection).

**Lucky Rabbit's Foot:** Carrying around a real rabbit's foot is pretty gross, not to mention cruel. Most kids have something else that they keep as a good-luck charm, whether it be a favorite action figure, a special shell found on a hidden beach, or a well-worn baseball hat. Whatever it is, it seems to help when things get dicey. As long as you're clutching the keepsake (and nothing else) in one hand, you can expend grade levels in Luck as if Luck were your iconic Core trait. For each test on which you expend one or more Luck, you must also expend one Imagination (regardless of the grade levels in Luck that were expended).

This keepsake cannot be possessed by a kid who has chosen Luck as his iconic Core trait.

**Magic Markers or Crayons:** Magic markers and crayons delight the residents of the Grimm Lands with their bright colors and the ease with which these "paint sticks" can be carried about. By expending 1 Imagination, you can also use them to draw a doorway, window, or other opening in a wall. This typically simply leads to the other side, but occasionally takes you somewhere else altogether.

**Skateboard:** Although surfaces smooth enough to ride on are rare in the Grimm Lands, a skateboard allows you to take advantage of them: Your speed improves by one level when riding the board. Additionally, by spending a turn building speed and expending 1 Imagination, you can become airborne with your board on the next turn, traveling as far in the air on the skateboard as you normally could on the ground. For each turn spent remaining aloft, you must expend an additional 1 Imagination.

**Sunglasses:** These stylish shades grant an advantage of +1 grade on Cool tests. In addition, if you are subjected to any attack that would affect or rely on vision (being blinded by a bright flash of light, being turned to stone by a medusa's gaze, being hypnotized by meeting a witch's eyes, and so on), you may expend 1 Imagination to be protected from the single instance of that attack.

**Stuffed Animal:** When you're lost, cold, frightened, and alone, where else can you turn but to your stuffed animal? By spending a turn to entreat your stuffed animal for help and expending Imagination, you can convince it to come to life and grow larger, aiding you in any way you wish. The animated doll has the traits of an animal of the narrator's choice (see "Animals" in **Chapter 8: Friends and Foes**), though it should have a personal grade level no higher than the number of grade levels of Imagination you expended to awaken it. The stuffed animal helps you for the duration of the scene, whether it is an overland journey or a desperate fight. Unless you expend the same amount of Imagination again to keep it around, it reverts to its normal

form as soon as another scene begins.

If the stuffed animal is wounded, the damage appears in its doll form as well, and can only be healed with the old stuffed-animal surgical standbys: needle and thread, with the occasional dose of new stuffing, replacement button eyes, and the like, all used with Home Ec tests.

**Umbrella:** Although primarily used to keep the rain off of one's head, an umbrella in the Grimm Lands also allows the user to safely and slowly fall from any height, moving at a sluggish walking pace. The umbrella must be open and held in at least one hand the entire time for this ability to function, although it's possible to open it up during a fall by making a Luck test; the difficulty varies based on how much time you have before you hit the ground! Regardless, every three turns spent falling causes the expenditure of 1 Imagination.

**Wind-up Flashlight:** These very useful plastic contraptions give off light as well as a lantern, but require no oil…or batteries, for that matter. Simply wind it for one turn, and it lasts for one minute. It can store enough energy to be wound for five turns, giving it a light duration of five minutes. Additionally, by expending 1 Imagination, you can cause the flashlight to pierce not only darkness, but illusions, as well. For a single turn, anything caught in the flashlight's beam is revealed as it truly is, regardless of magical disguises.

# Talismans

In a world fueled by imagination, amazing and magical items are commonly encountered by adventurous kids. Witches brew potions and elixirs, evil queens talk to magic mirrors in order to stroke their egos, and wizards employ animated objects to perform mundane chores. That said, magic items in the Grimm Lands are not common, everyday things. Each one is a unique object, a talisman, with special properties, its own history, and particular uses. Many a talisman is quite highly prized by a powerful and dangerous personage who will do anything to get it back; if the original owner is already done away with, the item is still likely to elicit envy, or worse, from strangers.

The items described here are but a sample of potential ideas. Narrators should invent their own for the stories they tell, whether original items from their own imaginations or objects inspired by those in familiar tales.

**Apprentice Wizard's Cap:** Tall and conical, this cap is normally worn by an apprentice wizard to show his status as a student of magic. While wearing it, you gain an advantage of +2 grades on Gaming tests to learn magic via any method, and are considered to have the **Earnest Apprentice** talent. If you already have that talent, you are instead considered to have the **Journeyman Wizard** talent (and if you already have that talent, then you've moved beyond apprentice level, and shouldn't be wearing this hat). However, actual wizards, witches, and other persons capable of casting spells and wielding magic treat you with utter condescension and contempt—you suffer a –2 disadvantage on all Cool tests in social situations dealing with these types. Also, many evil creatures of the Grimm Lands hate wizards, and may single you out in encounters as if you had the Normal Kid's Generic flaw.

**Bag of Breadcrumbs:** This innocuous-looking leather bag contains several (kid-sized) handfuls of normal, albeit hard and stale, breadcrumbs. The word "remember" is crudely stitched on the side of the bag. In order to activate the bag's magic, you must speak this word while pulling out a handful of the breadcrumbs. If you drop the breadcrumbs at regular intervals (roughly one breadcrumb per 30 feet), the path laid becomes indelibly marked in your mind so that you'll easily remember the way that you came.

Flipping over the bag effectively empties the entire contents, although as soon as it is turned upright and reached into again, the user finds the same amount of breadcrumbs as before. One side effect of using the Bag of Breadcrumbs is the sudden appearance of numerous crows, seemingly drawn to its magic (or merely its food). The crows find and eat the breadcrumbs over the course of 1d6 days, at which point the trail is lost forever. Due to the sheer number of crows, shooing them away has no effect.

**Bag of Magic Beans:** This plain leather bag contains nine dried beans. Strange magic allows only a single bean to be pulled out at a time—the others seem to slide away from the user's grasp and even inverting the open bag releases only a single bean. When a bean is planted in earth and 1 Imagination is expended, the ground immediately begins to shake. The next turn, a bean tendril emerges, growing at a staggering 20 feet per turn, gaining thickness until it is as round as a stout oak tree. Anyone immediately adjacent to the beanstalk can grab on and "hitch a ride" as it grows. The beanstalk continues to grow until the person who planted the bean utters the word "stop" or until it reaches 200 feet in height. The bean's growth is powerful enough to plow through the roofs of most buildings, but is stopped by solid rock or thick earth. Saying "shrink" reverses the process just as rapidly, although the bean is used up in the process. A 6th-grade Gaming test is necessary to reveal these keywords.

Each time a bean is used in this way, the narrator may secretly roll a single die. If the result comes up as a 1, then the beanstalk's top leads into a bank of clouds. Anyone that climbs up into the clouds will find a small and boring realm of solid clouds and friendly giant rabbits, but when they attempt to climb back down, will find that the stalk is now planted in a completely different place. Its new location may be anywhere in the Grimm Lands.

**Cloak of Invisibility:** This green cloak has an enormous hood and large brass clasps, which bearing etchings of a person holding his hands over his eyes. If you spend your turn pulling the hood up while the brass clasps are fastened, you and your gear become completely invisible to normal sight, as if you

had succeed at a 12th-grade Hide test. The invisibility lasts until you remove the cloak or at any point that you have to make a physical trait test, such as Scrap, Scamper, or Throw.

**Crystal Slippers:** Elegant and regal in the extreme, these fancy slippers seem to be crafted from a single piece of crystal. If you're a girl, wear both, and have at least 6th grade in Home Ec, you receive an advantage of +3 grades on Cool tests and may select one character to **Go With** (as per the Popular Kid ability); both effects last from dusk until midnight as long as you continue wearing the slippers. The slippers decrease your speed by two levels.

Those with the **Spoiled** talent who attempt to put on the crystal slippers not only automatically fail, but suffer a disadvantage of –4 grades on Cool tests, as their faces transform into comical caricatures of their normal appearance. This effect works regardless of the time of day and continues, even if the slippers are removed, until midnight.

**Dancing Broom:** This ordinary looking broom is actually infused with magic, allowing it to move about on its own. Dancing brooms are common items found about the hovels and towers of witches and wizards, who are too busy and lofty to clean and tidy up themselves. A Dancing Broom attaches itself to a single master at a time, to which it is quite loyal. However, a Dancing Broom may decide that it is not being appreciated and attach itself to another master—often with no warning. After untold centuries of doing the same chores over and over, Dancing Brooms tend to acquire their own personalities and quirks. Most are dedicated, surprisingly brave, obsessed with cleanliness, and about as bright as one would expect for a broom.

The Dancing Broom's master may issue the following commands, which it does until ordered to stop:

• *Sweep*. The Dancing Broom begins sweeping an area defined by the owner.

• *Follow*. The Dancing Broom follows any single person designated by the owner.

• *Attack*. The Dancing Broom smacks the chosen target about the head and shoulders (see below).

• *Stop*. The Dancing Broom ceases any previous orders and drops to the ground.

A Dancing Broom has stats as listed on page 198.

**Genie Lamp:** A genie lamp traditionally appears as an oil lamp of exotic oriental design, with a long, tapering neck and elegant handle. In reality, a genie lamp can appear in many different forms, including a Victorian-era lamp with glass shutters or a battered copper pot filled with fuel. Regardless of its appearance, this lamp serves as the home for an imprisoned genie. In order to activate its magic, the user must rub the lamp while calling out the magic phrase etched in the lamp's side. The phrase is very difficult to pronounce, and requires a Gaming test with a difficulty of 6th grade + 1 grade per its Imagination rating. If you cannot get the pronunciation right by the third try, the genie will never respond to your calls. If you succeed, a cloud of roiling smoke to emerges, coalescing into an impish yet attractive genie, dressed in exotic finery and with its lower torso composed of smoke. The genie then states that it is allowed to grant the wielder up to three wishes.

Each Genie Lamp has an Imagination rating from 1 to 6, indicating the number of grades of Imagination that the genie has at its disposal per wish. Genie Lamps with a rating of 1 are fairly common, while the one known example of a rating 6 Genie Lamp hasn't been seen in thousands of years.

For each wish asked, compare it to the various levels of imaginings (see page 71) within the lamp's rating. If the wish fits that category or below, it is granted. If the wish is beyond the level available, the genie asks for "something a bit more reasonable" until the wielder comes up with an appropriate wish. Once the wielder asks his third wish, the Genie Lamp disappears in a puff of acrid smoke.

**Golden Egg:** Gleaming in the sunlight, this enormous goose egg looks and feels as though it were made of solid gold. All intelligent creatures that value gold (or creatures that covet shiny things, such as ravens) and view the Golden Egg for a full turn must make a 10th-grade Pluck test to resist temptation or become overwhelmed with the need to possess it for themselves. This obsession persists even after the Golden Egg is removed from sight. The exact actions taken to acquire it depend on the individual, but typically goes through

the following stages: desire to trade, pleading, demanding, attempted theft, and then violence. Considering the turmoil it causes, most people eventually toss it into a river or down a deep well…until someone else stumbles across it and starts the process anew.

**Jar of Fairyflies:** This is a clear masonry jar with a sealed top, containing dozens of what appear to be fireflies. In reality, they are tiny fairy creatures captured long ago and cursed to remain in their prison. When you spend your turn doing nothing but singing to the fairyflies in the jar, they emit a bright glow equivalent to sunlight that reaches out a stone's throw in all directions. Some creatures of the Grimm Lands are notoriously fearful of sunlight; while the jar is emitting light, you may make an opposed Cool test (with an advantage of +2 grades) to force the creature to flee from its glare, if possible.

The glass of the jar is remarkably tough, having protection 2 and health 5. If the jar is broken, the fairyflies immediately swarm together and disappear in a flash of light that blinds everyone within a stone's throw for 3 turns (a 5th-grade Luck test or Sunglasses keepsake avoids the effect).

**Living Harp:** This gorgeous lap harp is crafted from fine woods, decorated with mother-of-pearl inlays, and strung with the hair of a princess. Anyone playing the living harp gains an advantage of +4 grades on Imagination and Country Club tests for the purposes of playing a lovely tune.

Once per day, a user can order the living harp to play on its own—which is always a lullaby. The user can tell the harp how long to wait before starting and how long to keep playing. All creatures within earshot, even the harp's previous possessor, must make a 10th-grade Pluck test or fall sound asleep (though they can be roused by loud noises, physical assaults, and the like).

**Magic Mirror:** This four-foot-tall mirror has a gorgeous, ornate frame gilt in gold and jewels. The mirror holds some form of spirit, fairy, or other magical being that is capable of revealing a person's innermost desires. If you expend 1 Imagination while calling for the spirit of the mirror (typically starting off with "Mirror, mirror…"), your reflection fades, replaced by an odd, stern face of ambiguous gender.

Once the spirit arrives, you can ask a single question that relates to your desires, hopes, and dreams. Proper questions include "What will I become when I grow up?" or "Am I powerful enough to defeat the Rotten King?" Inappropriate questions garner a very rude rebuke from the mirror's spirit—if this happens three times, it disappears from the mirror, never to return for you.

Once you find out what you truly desire, it can make a serious impact on your efforts to achieve your utmost. For the next three full days, your personal grade level is considered three grades higher than normal. This affects your health and the level of impact you may have when interacting with other characters' special abilities. However, after this, assuming your innermost desire is not yet achieved, doubt and second-guessing set. For the next three days after that, your personal grade level is considered three grades lower than normal (affecting your health and level of impact, as above).

**Red Cloak:** Brilliant red and finely made, this cloak seems to perfectly fit most kids who don it (adults and kids with the **Big Kid** or similar talents gain no benefit from wearing the cloak, other than looking rather ridiculous). While worn, the wearer suffers a –2 disadvantage on all Hide tests due to its brilliant color, but gains the **Cute as a Button** talent. If a kid already possesses this talent, she gains an advantage of +2 grades to the opposed Cool test when using the talent.

**Sword of St. George:** The Sword of St. George is an ancient medium hand weapon, with a dragon-shaped hilt and a blade nicked from long-forgotten battles, stained with blackish blood, yet still razor-sharp. St. George was a historic and literary figure in the Real World, known for slaying dragons. His presence in the Grimm Lands is unconfirmed, although most suspect that his many battles failed to prepare him for his final encounter with *the* Dragon of the Underworld. Regardless, his sword survived and is highly coveted by questing knights for its powerful and fearsome abilities.

Characters can't even lift the sword unless they're at least a 9th grade and pure of heart. Rather than granting combat moves, it provides a static advantage of +3 grades to Scrap attacks and Scrap defense, always allows the wielder to inflict +3 wounds on a successful hit, and also makes him immune to fire of any kind, regardless of its source. Also, if the wielder expends 1 Imagination, he immediately knows the direction and rough distance, to within 10 miles, of the nearest dragon (or dragonish creature). Unfortunately, this is quite literally a double-edged sword: The same information, and the fact that the wielder has the sword, is revealed to the dragon. Most dragons, rightfully fearing the sword's power, pick up and leave, thus making the quest to destroy them both long and arduous. Some dragons, however, take the information as a challenge. They seek out the wielder in hopes of destroying him and the sword.

The sword becomes even more powerful in combat with dragonish creatures. First of all, as soon as a dragon comes within one mile of the wielder, he instantly becomes aware of its direction and distance. Second, he is immune to any type of dragon breath, fire or not. Finally, the sword cleaves through dragonish creatures' vaunted scales like a fish through water, ignoring levels of a dragon's protection (whether the protection is granted by its stature, its magic, or its scaly hide) equal to the wielder's Muscle.

**Woodsman's Hatchet:** Despite its battered and worn appearance, this mundane-looking light hand weapon is actually a weapon of extraordinary ability. The Woodsman's Hatchet imbues the wielder with strength and courage, but also an almost obsessive desire to eliminate anything that isn't human. If used against a creature native to the Great and Awful Forest, the hatchet

provides an advantage of +3 grades to Scrap attacks, and it can also be thrown at targets within a stone's throw. If it misses its target, it unerringly returns to your hand at the beginning of your next turn. Also, the hatchet exists to chop down thick-skinned trees that are much taller than a man, so it ignores both the first three levels of physical protection (tree bark, thick hides, and the like) and the first three levels of stature protection. Finally, creatures that can rapidly heal due to some magical or unnatural means find that wounds caused by the Woodsman's Hatchet heal at a normal rate.

However, in order to even pick up the Woodsman's Hatchet, a would-be wielder must make a 9th-grade Boy Scouts test. A failure indicates that the Woodsman's Hatchet flies out of his reach. A character can only try once per day, and non-human creatures of the Grimm Lands can never gain control of the Woodsman's Hatchet.

The main downside to possessing the Woodsman's Hatchet is the way in which it slowly warps a character's mind, until he desires nothing else than to chop down trees, whether animated or mundane, and hunt down animals, whether upright, talking, or simple beasts. At the beginning of any scene in which either of these two types of targets are visible, the possessor must make a Pluck test. The first test of the day is a 1st-grade test, the second one is a 2nd-grade test, and so on, to a maximum difficulty of 12th grade. Failure means that the wielder suffers a disadvantage on all tests equal to the amount by which he failed, until he attacks the target. The disadvantage lasts until the target is no longer nearby.

# Imaginings

The expenditure of Imagination is a common occurrence in *Grimm*, whether it be in the use of keepsakes or talismans, the activation of archetype abilities, or the improvement of talents. However, it also requires special explanation for its use as an iconic Core trait. Unlike the other Core traits, Imagination's expenditure use is neither simple nor limited. Its powers are vast and varied…as vast and varied as its user's dreams.

*Grimm* is, at its core, a game of Imagination. Whatever their true origins might be, the inhabitants and environments of the Grimm Lands have been created, shaped, and twisted by acts of pure creativity. Those who are in touch with their own Imaginations can therefore bend reality to varying degrees.

## Using Imagination

Characters who have chosen Imagination as their iconic Core trait may spend their turns to expend an amount of Imagination equal to half their personal grade level (round down). A standard use of Imagination changes the world around the character in some particular and usually short-term way. It is important to note that the following uses of Imagination are only guidelines; creativity is not easily categorized, and players and narrators alike are encouraged to let their flights of fancy reign supreme. The only restrictions to an expenditure of Imagination is that it should not directly replicate another character's ability, talent, or known spell, nor should it be able to directly damage or destroy.

### Level 1 Imaginings

Expending 1 Imagination allows a character to create minor changes to her environment that appear as coincidental developments. Such a use is always personal and takes place immediately on or adjacent to the character. A level 1 imagining cannot affect other characters, though it can create small, simple items. These items must be generic (so for instance, a level 1 imagining could not create a key to fit a specific lock). Also, such items exist for short durations (1d6

rounds). Examples of level 1 imaginings include the following:

— Find an insignificant item on your person, like a truffle under your hat or a candy cane in your pocket.

— Cause to appear a small, useful item nearby, such as a short length of rope, a torch, or some flint and steel. You must make a 2nd-grade test as appropriate to cause the item to appear, whether it be Seek to find the item, Home Ec to create it quickly from unlikely materials, and so on. Finally, you must be able to explain how it came to be (you found the unlit torch that someone dropped in his haste to escape a monster, or you wove the rope together out of strands of Rapunzel's hair that happened to be wafting by on the wind). Only you can find or create the item, and each explanation can only be used once; this rule applies to all levels of imaginings that cause items to appear.

— Heal yourself of one wound.

— Increase your boost range by 1 on a single roll (this does not require spending your turn).

## Level 2 Imaginings

Expending 2 Imagination allows a character to cause less subtle changes to her environment that appear as fortuitous happenings. They may be mild environmental changes, even affecting other characters, but must take place within a cricket's hop of the character. A level 2 imagining can create simple items of medium size and middling complexity, which last for slightly longer than level 1 imaginings (1d6 minutes). Examples of level 2 imaginings include the following:

— Find a dagger in your belt or a gold coin in your boot.

— Find or cause an item to appear as with level 1 imaginings, but item may be larger or more complex, such as a medium hand weapon, a small guard dog, or a pair of manacles. You must make a 4th-grade test to find or create the item.

— Heal yourself of two wounds.

— Increase your boost range by 2 on a single roll (this does not require spending your turn).

— Inflict a –1 disadvantage to an adjacent creature's next test. You must explain why this happens, such as because there's a banana under its foot causing it to slip. Each explanation can only be used once. This requirement applies to all levels of imaginings that inflict disadvantages.

## Level 3 Imaginings

Expending 3 Imagination allows a character to cause dramatic changes to the world. They may be amazing environmental changes, affecting other characters within a stone's throw of the character. A level 3 imagining can create complex items or creatures, which last for longer than level 2 imaginings (1d6 scenes). Examples of level 3 imaginings include the following:

— Suddenly have in hand a medium weapon or be wearing bandit's armor.

— Find or cause an item to appear as with level 2 imaginings, but the item may be specific, useful, or a nearby creature; for example, a heavy weapon, mercenary's armor, or a pony to ride. The thing found can now be specific: The key you find will unlock a specific door, or the weapon you find can be made of silver. You must make a 6th-grade test to find or create the item.

— Heal yourself of three wounds.

— Increase your boost range by 3 on a single roll (this does not require spending your turn).

— Inflict a –2 disadvantage to the next test of a creature within a cricket's hop.

— Change the environment in some minor way, like making the Sun come out from behind the clouds, or causing a refreshing rainstorm. Such minor changes should require some very simple yet playful explanation, such as that the Sun got lonely and wanted play, or that the giants in the clouds are watering their flowers. This requirement applies to all levels of imaginings that change the environment.

## Level 4+ Imaginings

These most-powerful imaginings allow a character to take the story by the reins and steer it where she will, whether back onto the path or over a cliff. The players as a group can only use one level 4+ imagining per scene. Once a player declares a desired effect, the narrator has the final say as to the amount of Imagination that must be expended for a powerful imagining. Players could then decide to expend the Imagination, try for a lesser effect, or try something else entirely. Items created last for the entire story. Some examples are listed below.

— Suddenly have in hand a heavy weapon or be wearing mercenary's armor.

— Find a powerful item nearby, such as a heavy weapon that inflicts one wound more than normal, a set of knight's armor, or trained warhorse. Alternatively, you might request a keepsake or talisman; though you cannot pick which one you find, it should be useful to your current situation. You must make an 8th-grade test to find or create the item or creature.

— Heal yourself of four wounds, or heal another character you are touching of two wounds (or more, by expending more Imagination).

— Increase your boost range by 4 on a single roll (or more, by expending more Imagination; this does not require spending your turn).

— Inflict a –3 disadvantage (or more, by expending more Imagination) to the next test of a creature within a stone's throw.

— Shape the environment as with level 3 imaginings, but you may do so in a significant way, such as declaring that there's probably a convenient ford across a raging river around the next bend (and lo and behold, there is!) or causing a rope bridge to give way after your friends cross it but before a monster can follow. The more unlikely the effect, the more fanciful and complex your explanation of how it happened should be.

# Magic

Magic in the Grimm Lands is terrible and dangerous. From enchanting songs that can sway any mood to ferocious fonts of energy able to flay flesh from bones, magic is far too powerful for most kids to handle. However, for the very brave, or the very foolish, mastery of magic is possible. But such powers come at a great cost, one far greater than many kids could ever imagine.

## Magical Spells

The Grimm Lands are steeped with magical energies of all kinds. Most inhabitants of the Lands can influence these energies, usually unconsciously, but their powers are relatively minor. However, some practiced magicians have far more control, and are capable of great magical feats, called spells. These rare masters of magic are feared across the Lands, for their powers are awesome to behold, and few can withstand them.

The vast majority of minor magical spells are represented in *Grimm* by the special abilities of a story character's entry. The abilities granted by these abilities vary so widely that narrators are encouraged to create new powers as they are needed. After all, each inhabitant of the Grimm Lands is unique, with his own story to be told, and it's always good to keep the kids unsure of what they may encounter next.

The more controlled, and more powerful, manipulation of the Grimm Lands' mystical energies is represented by **magical spells**, the focus of this section of the rules. Magical spells are grouped together into six different categories, each of which represents a style or method of using magic commonly found in the Grimm Lands. The styles themselves, and the spells that comprise them, are listed at the end of this chapter. Much as with keepsakes and talismans, these spells are only the tip of the beanstalk, and the narrator is encouraged to create new spells, or change the ones presented here, as his game requires. In fact, keep in mind that magic in *Grimm* is tremendously powerful, and can strip a gang of kids of their free will, flesh, or worse, with relative ease. It is therefore primarily intended as a narrator tool; if you can't find the tool for your tale, make it up. However, be aware that kids are capable of learning magic too, so keep this in mind when creating new spells.

## Learning Magic

Although movies regurgitate the old tales of magic schools, aging wizards, and cruel witches, few kids ever believe they're real. After all, knowing all the spells from *Traps & Trolls* by heart or uncovering killer card combos for *Sorcery: The Assemblage* is a sign of supreme geekdom, not the first step toward uncanny powers. But in the Grimm Lands, where dark fantasy is the stuff of reality, such knowledge is special. Not only does it help a kid navigate the strange, new world she finds herself in, but it's essential to understand the greatest mystery of them all: magic.

At the beginning of a *Grimm* campaign, kids know no magic. However, they may understand more than they initially expect, for those wishing to unravel its powers do so with the Gaming Study trait (see "Gaming," page 27). There are three primary ways for a kid to learn magic: from others (**apprenticeship**), from books (**study**), or by figuring it out for themselves (**precociousness**).

### Apprenticeship

The Grimm Lands hide all manner of wicked creatures seeking to abuse the trust of others, so sensible kids should view offers to teach magic with extreme suspicion. Most would-be teachers conclude their lessons with the revelation that the kid is the primary ingredient of the next spell, or perhaps merely a pleasant mid-

ritual snack. But no matter the dangers involved, the temptation to learn exciting powers can prove very appealing. The lucky few who avoid being put into the cauldron or oven have an opportunity to learn something very special indeed.

Even if a willing teacher of magic is found, a would-be-wizard still faces several problems. First, most masters of the magical arts are jealous of their power, and rarely teach anything but the most basic of incantations. Second, nothing in the Grimm Lands is free, and the kid may have to perform all manner of dangerous or degrading duties before a potential teacher even accepts her as an apprentice. And third, magic is dangerous, and kids, no matter how well-trained they are, put themselves at risk every time they attempt to use magical spells. However, if all of these obstacles are surpassed, it is undeniable that becoming the apprentice of an expert is the safest, most reliable, and—assuming the master doesn't purposefully slow things down—quickest way to learn magic.

The more powerful the magic, the longer it takes to learn. All magical spells are ranked into one of six **circles of magic**; the higher the circle of magic, the more powerful the spell. Thus, a 6th-circle spell is more powerful than a 5th, which is more powerful than a 4th, and so on. The higher a spell's circle of magic, the longer it takes to master it. 1st-circle spells take at least one day of intensive study to learn; 2nd-circle spells take double this (two days); 3rd-circle spells take double this (four days); and this doubling continues all the way to 6th circle spells, which take at least 32 days to learn. If the character only spends the evenings studying, while his days are encumbered with traveling, questing, and the like, this time requirement is quadrupled.

For each day spent studying under the guidance of a master, a character can make a Gaming test with a difficulty equal to twice the circle of the spell to be learned. The character may not step up or focus on the test, and characters wishing to contribute teamwork dice must: 1) have grade levels in Gaming equal to twice the circle level of the spell, and 2) spend the entire day aiding the studying character. If the test is failed, the character makes no progress towards learning the spell that day. If the test succeeds, one day out of the total number of days of study required is considered completed.

Once the requisite number of successful days of study has been attained, the character learns the spell, and may use it freely from that point onwards.

***Example:*** *After she uses a bit of Home Ec to repair the shoes of a downtrodden elf, Sarah is pleasantly surprised by the little man's offer to teach her a power called* ***Swift Work****. Intrigued, Sarah accepts the offer. As* ***Swift Work*** *is a 2nd-circle spell, Sarah must pass two 4th-grade Gaming tests (with a maximum of one test per full day of training) to learn it. She has Gaming 4, and over the next two days of tutelage from the elf, easily passes her two Gaming test, and learns the magical spell.*

## Study

Some spells are very complicated, so flawlessly recalling all of their intricacies is unlikely. Other magical spells are inexplicably difficult to remember, refusing to be constrained by the mind alone. Because of such

problems, some practitioners of magic record how to use their powers in dusty grimoires, recipe books, old scrolls, and the like. These repositories of arcane lore are closely guarded by their owners, for not only do they contain powers no kid should ever be privy to, but they can be dangerous in the wrong hands. Thus, securing such a tome of magical formulae is a rare event, and may be the goal of a long and perilous quest. Even if such a book is found, it may be written in code, filled with treacherous lies, or require that a riddle be answered before releasing its secrets. If such problems can be surpassed, the spells held within may be worth every risk.

Learning a spell from a written magical formula takes twice as long as the times listed under apprenticeship. Thus, a 2nd-circle spell would take at least four days to learn, and a 3rd-circle spell at least eight days. Other than this, spells are learned in exactly the same fashion, with one exception: When first trying to use these untested spells, they are extremely unreliable.

Until a character successfully casts a newly studied magical spell, instead of nothing happening on a failed attempt, the spell goes dreadfully wrong. Perhaps an **Animation** spell on a mop goes haywire, and the mop (or all mops!) goes crazy. Maybe an attempted **Curse** rebounds onto the caster. Exactly what happens is in the hands of the narrator, although it is suggested that failures are used to create fun and inconvenient situations rather than anything overtly dangerous.

Once a studied spell is cast successfully three times in a row, the spell is mastered, and no longer has a chance of accidentally going haywire.

***Example:*** *Having found a tome of magic inside the belly of an alligator that had been terrorizing its local neighborhood, Billy is trying to work out how to cast the* ***Charm*** *spell found within.* ***Charm*** *is a 1st-circle spell, so Billy will need to pass two 2nd grade Gaming tests (with a maximum of one test per full day's study) to learn it. Once this study is completed, Billy will not be able to reliably use the spell until he has successfully cast it three times in a row.*

## Precociousness

Those children with the Imagination, Luck, and Pluck to make it into the Grimm Lands in the first place are fairly special. No wonder, then, that some manage to pick up magic just by watching and repeating. This causes delight, jealousy, and fury from the other denizens of the Lands, and soon all manner of practitioners of magic may compete for the child's attention. Some hope to help the kid combat the land's darker creatures, some seek to fool a precocious child into enacting their evil plans for them, and others simply want the child captured, brainwashed, or dead, and fast, before they become too powerful.

Whenever a kid witnesses a magical spell being used, she can attempt to copy it if she succeeds in a Gaming test with a difficulty of twice the circle of the spell being used. During an action scene, watching a magical spell takes up a kid's turn every round until the power being watched is completed. The kid must see and hear every part of the casting to make the test. If he succeeds, the kid may attempt to duplicate the spell during at least the next day, and possibly longer.

To duplicate a magical spell that he has successfully observed, a kid attempts to use the spell as normal (see "Using Magic," below). The character may not step up or focus on the test, and characters wishing to contribute teamwork dice must have grade levels in Gaming equal to twice the circle of the spell. If the test succeeds, the spell is used successfully, and is considered to have been learned just as if the kid had studied it. However, for each scene that passes after the one in which the power was learned, the difficulty of the Gaming test to use it increases by 1. So much happens to kids in each scene that it can crowd spells out of their brains, like trying to remember a phone number when someone's talking to you about the scores of today's sporting events. If a kid can spend an entire scene writing down notes and sketches of what she has observed, while making a Gaming test at the spell's current difficulty, she manages to record enough of the basics to formally study the spell later.

***Example:*** *A witch has captured Mike, and has been brewing up a potion to send the rest of his friends into a magical slumber. Mike watches from the cage as the witch uses her spell, and his player tells the narrator that he is trying to learn the spell.* ***Sleep*** *is a 2nd-circle spell, so Mike will need to pass a 4th-grade Gaming test to pick the spell up. Mike's Gaming is 5th grade, and he rolls a 4, so he easily passes the test, and figures out the basics of the power. When the witch leaves the cave, Mike spends a scene picking the lock and freeing himself from his cage. As the spell is a 2nd-circle spell, and it was learned two scenes ago, Mike will need to pass a 6th-grade Gaming test (double the circle of the power plus two), or the spell will go haywire. Mike's player rolls his die, knowing that with 5th-grade Gaming, he will need to roll a 6 to succeed.*

Miscast spells learned via precociousness always go haywire, regardless of how many times the kid has successfully cast them. Perhaps an attempted **Fascination** makes everybody, including the kid's friends, start fighting over who her favorite is. Maybe a haywire **Vision** grants everyone within a mile a vision of the kid assaulting them, or stealing from them. Exactly what happens is left up to the narrator to decide, but it is suggested that any haywire results are potentially life-threatening, probably embarrassing, never desirable, and always entertaining.

## Learning Progressive Spells

Some spells, called **progressive spells**, have effects at multiple circles of magic. A character wishing to learn a progressive spell must master each previous level of the spell before they can attempt to learn the next.

***Example:*** *Billy is now learning the Seer spell* ***Scry*** *from the tome of magic he found. He wishes to learn the 3rd-circle effects of the spell. To do this, he must first learn and master (i.e., successfully cast three times in a row) the 2nd-circle effects of the spell.*

## Using Magic

As mentioned under "Learning Magic," all magical spells have a place in a **circle of magic**, from the 1st circle (the least difficult effects to create, and the least powerful) to the 6th circle (the most difficult effects to create, and the most powerful).

To use a magical spell, a character ascends through each circle of magic, one circle per turn, until she has reached the circle of the spell in question. The character must make a Gaming test with a difficulty of twice the circle to which she is ascending that turn. So on the first turn of using magic, the test has a 2nd-grade difficulty; on the second turn, the difficulty is 4th grade; and so on, until the necessary magical power is gathered, and the effect is created. If any of the Gaming tests fail, the magical spell fails, and will have to be started again from scratch. As with other ways of spending one's turn, a character may move half her normal speed on any turn she is trying to create a magical effect.

## Magic and Minor Characters

Some minor story characters know a single spell or two, as appropriate for the tales associated with them. Heroes and villains who are practitioners of magic, on the other hand, tend to know a great deal more spells. Such story characters often know an entire range of spell from an appropriate **style** (these styles can be found in the "Magical Styles" section, page 79). This is marked on the story character's entry as the magical method employed, followed by the circle of magic the character has achieved. For example, "Seer (2nd circle)" means that the character can use all 1st- and 2nd-circle seer spells, while "Wizard (4th circle)" means that the character can use all wizard spells up to, and including, the 4th circle of magic. Some characters have access to multiple categories of magic. If this is the case, each magical category, along with the circle of magic they can perform, will be listed.

## Progressive Spells

Some magical spells can be enhanced by ascending to higher circles of magic. For example: the 2nd-circle enchanter spell, **Nixie's Allure**, has extra effects if the enchanter ascends to the 3rd circle or 4th after completing the spell.

Casting a progressive spell is handled in exactly the same fashion as a normal magical spell. However, as each extra circle of magic is attained after the original spell is cast, the spell's effects get progressively stronger. If a character wishes, she can choose to ascend to a higher circle of magic any time after the original spell was cast, as long as the spell to be enhanced is still in effect. If a Gaming test to enhance a spell is failed, the entire spell immediately comes to an end.

## Kids and Magic

Magic in the Grimm Lands is immensely powerful, far too powerful for kids to wield safely. Magic has two further detrimental effects upon kids: weakening and estrangement.

### Weakening

Successfully using magic drains magical energies from the caster. For inhabitants of the Grimm Lands, creatures suffused with magical energies, this draining is barely felt. However, for kids from the Real World, a place where magic is exceedingly scarce, this draining takes a terrible toll upon their very life essence, severely weakening them.

Upon successful completion of a magical spell, a kid suffers a disadvantage of –1 grade on all of her Playground tests equal to the circle of the spell cast. This disadvantage lasts for the scene, and stacks as more spells are cast. If these combined disadvantages ever exceed a kid's Gaming trait, the excess disadvantages extend to the rest of the story, rather than just the scene. If at any point these extra, story-long disadvantages also exceed her Gaming trait, any excess disadvantages permanently lower all of the kid's Playground traits. Traits lost in this fashion may only be regained by normal advancement when a kid graduates to the next personal grade level.

Progressive spells—those with a different effect depending upon the circle of magic the caster has attained—incur a disadvantage of the highest circle attained.

***Example:*** *Billy has successfully cast the progressive spell* ***Scry*** *at 2nd circle, incurring a disadvantage of –2 grades on all Playground tests for the rest of the scene. He then casts* ***Fortune Telling****, a 1st-circle spell, incurring a further –1 disadvantage, taking the total to –3 on all Playground tests for this scene. Finally, he casts* ***Find****, a 3rd-circle spell, for another –3 disadvantage, taking the total to –6 on all Playground tests this scene. However, as Billy has Gaming at 5th grade, one less than the total weakening disadvantage of 6, he will also*

*suffer a disadvantage of –1 grade to all Playground tests for the rest of the story.*

### Estrangement

Casting magic swamps a kid with the barely controlled power of the Grimm Lands. Sometimes these energies can grow so strong that they irrevocably change a kid, taking a portion of her soul forever. Such kids slowly grow more estranged from the Real World, until eventually they become unable to return.

Whenever a kid rolls a 6 when making a Gaming test to perform magic, the power of the Grimm Lands swells strong within her. Unless she then passes a Pluck test with a difficulty equal to difficulty of the spell (twice its circle), she suffers from a single estrangement.

Estrangement affects different kids in different ways. Some become dark and broody; some are changed physically, gaining features similar to those from whom they learned the magic; some grow obsessed with an aspect of the Grimm Lands, and do anything to pursue it; and others may gain dark abilities similar to those they stand against. In the end, an estrangement is determined by the narrator, although it is suggested that the effect be interesting and flavorful, reflecting not only the nature of the Grimm Lands, but something about kid's inner desires, as well.

The more estranged from the Real World a kid becomes, the less likely she will ever be able to return to it. If a kid ever gains more estrangements than she has Pluck, the Grimm Lands have changed her forever, and she may never escape. Usually this means that the kid becomes a story character, and falls under narrator control.

Fortunately, estrangement is not all bad. As a kid is slowly saturated with magic, growing more like the other inhabitants of the Grimm Lands, the weakening caused by casting magic affects her less. For each estrangement a kid has, she reduces by one grade the disadvantage caused by weakness when casting spells.

***Example:*** *Mike has successfully cast a* ***Sleep*** *spell, but rolled a 6 on his Gaming test to do so. Because he rolled a 6 when casting the spell, he must pass a 4th-grade Pluck test (****Sleep*** *is a 2nd-circle spell), or suffer from estrangement. Mike has 5th grade in Pluck, and expects to pass the test easily, but, amazingly, rolls three 1s in a row, meaning he fails the test. The narrator decides that Mike, who had learned the spell by watching a witch, develops the witch's evil cackle for his laugh, and a strange longing for the flesh of children. The narrator takes Mike's player aside and discusses how best to manifest this in play.*

## Magical Duels

Duels between powerful practitioners of magic are extremely rare in the Grimm Lands. Most wizards or witches of skill are aware of the potential danger of such conflicts, and take care to avoid them. However, sometimes the only way to be rid of an enemy is to tackle him

# Magical Methods

Every magic user in the Grimm Lands manifests her power in a different way. Some are excellent potion brewers; others use magical diagrams to manipulate the arcane. Some use rhymes to complete an incantation; others whirl, swoop, or dance to perform a ritual. The manner by which a character performs magic is mostly a matter of flavor, and will normally only be used to determine how the narrator describes a story character's actions. However, inventive kids may find ways to disrupt a character's magic by interrupting his magical method. Narrators are free to decide how this influences each magic user as she feels fit.

As kids learn their magic from books or other inhabitants of the Grimm Lands, they often pick up the magical methods of their teachers. This can cause some kids to have an odd variety of casting styles if they have gathered their magic from multiple sources. Some narrators or players may prefer for the kids in their game to create their own magical methods as they learn new spells. This is encouraged, as it helps develop each character in a unique direction, and adds to the flavor of the game. Further, you never know when your particular magical method will be especially handy or especially troublesome, which can create some great story situations.

Of particular note is the fact that a magic user's method is often her soft spot (see page 183), if not for her, then for her spells. Gain control of the magician's tools or item of power, and you take over control of her powers. Destroy those tools or item of power, and you end all of her powers that are currently "running."

The following list provides some sample magical methods for narrators or players to develop for their characters. Characters may need to use one, several, or none of these in order to cast their spells:

**Charms** (e.g., amulets, dolls, runes, talismans)
**Consumables** (e.g., fruit, liqueurs, pastries, potions)
**Items** (e.g., cards, cauldron, spinning wheel, wand)
**Movement** (e.g., dancing, face pulling, hand gestures, spinning)
**Natural Setting** (e.g., full moon, storms, trees, water)
**Words** (e.g., chanting, nursery rhymes, rhyming couplets, singing)

personally, and find out once and for all who is the more powerful.

On his turn, any character who knows at least one magical spell can declare that he is entering a magical duel with any other character who is currently using magic (the target character must be actively using magic, not simply have the ability to do so). The character attempting to initiate the duel must pass a Gaming test with a difficulty of twice the circle of magic the casting character has most recently achieved, probably on his last turn. If this test is passed, the target has an option to immediately flee the duel (see below). If he does not, the two characters begin dueling. They are linked by a bridge of eldritch energy and each is surrounded by a bubble of the energy. Among other things, this means that any magical spells currently being performed by the casting character immediately cease (the spells continue if the target immediately flees the duel). Also, the magic surrounding both duelers is suddenly so powerful that neither character can be attacked in combat (at least, not under normal circumstances). On his turn, a dueling character has three options: continue dueling, back down, or flees the duel.

***Example:*** *Unfortunately for Mike, a witch walks in on him searching through her stuff. The hag immediately grabs entrails from pouches hidden beneath her sagging bosom, and begins to cast a spell. Panicked, Mike, who knows a few magical spells himself, declares that he's going to enter a magical duel with the witch for his action. As the witch has only reached the 1st circle of magic so far, Mike only needs to succeed in a 2nd-grade Gaming test to enter the duel; with his 5th grade in Gaming, this shouldn't be too difficult. However, if the witch had been casting for three turns, and thus had achieved the 3rd circle, Mike would have had to pass a 6th-grade Gaming test to enter the duel successfully.*

## Continuing to Duel

To continue dueling, a character must spend his entire turn, and cannot even move. He must concentrate entirely on his opponent. He must succeed on a Gaming test one grade level higher than the grade level of his opponent's last Gaming test in the duel. If he succeeds, the duel continues. If he fails, he has lost the duel.

***Example:*** *As Mike passed a 2nd-grade Gaming test on his last round in the duel, the witch must pass a 3rd-grade Gaming test on her turn or Mike will win. If she passes this (which is likely, as she has 6th grade in Gaming), Mike will then need to pass a 4th-grade Gaming test on his turn. This will continue until one dueler fails, backs down, or flees the duel.*

## Backing Down

To back down, a character simply states that he will spend his turn backing down. The opponent can then immediately use a spell against the character who is backing down, at whatever circle

of magic she has attained in the duel so far, and the backing down character automatically suffers the spell's full consequences. So, an opponent who had passed a 6th-grade Gaming test on her last turn could immediately use a spell of 3rd circle or lower against her backing-down opponent. Note that this power is cast outside the normal turn sequence, and does not require the victor to spend his turn. After suffering these effects, if the backing-down character is still mobile, he may move half his normal speed.

***Example:*** *After two turns of sweat-drenched magical dueling, Mike now needs to succeed at a 6th-grade Gaming test or the witch will win; as Mike has 5th grade in Gaming, this isn't likely. However, his only other option would be to back down, which would result in the witch being able to cast a free 2nd-circle spell (her last successful Gaming test was 5th grade, which halved, rounding down, is 2), and she would still be able to act again this round. Thus, Mike considers fleeing the duel, knowing he will need to roll a 6 or lose the duel.*

### Fleeing the Duel

If a character flees a duel at the beginning of his turn, he avoids the ill effects of whatever spells his foe had in mind for him, plus may perform another action that turn as normal. However, the energies of the magic he suddenly breaks lash out at him, inflicting wounds equal to his opponent's last successful Gaming test.

Fleeing a duel as soon as it starts is the only way to maintain a magical spell that it is in-progress when a duelist successfully challenges you.

### Losing the Duel

If a character attempts to continue a duel, but loses, he faces the worst effects of both backing down and fleeing: He suffers wounds equal to the opponent's last successful Gaming test *and* automatically suffers the effects of a spell. Note that this spell is used outside the normal turn sequence, and does not require the victor to spend his turn.

***Example:*** *Unfortunately for Mike, he has just lost a magical duel against a witch. As her last successful Gaming test in the duel was 5th grade, she can now cast a 2nd-circle spell (one-half of 5, rounded down, is 2) for free. Further, Mike suffers 5 wounds as the magic rips through his body! Pushing back tears as blood leaks from his nose, Mike falls to the ground. He hears the Witch cackle out the last words of her* ***Sleep*** *spell, and he passes out.*

## Magical Styles

Each of the six styles of magic is split as follows:

**Title:** The common name used to refer to the individuals who use the magical style.

**Description:** A short description of the magic style.

**Sample Users:** A selection of sample characters who may use the magic.

**Method:** The basic requirements to use a power from the style's list. Consider these to be mandatory (see the "Magical Methods" sidebar).

**1st Circle–6th Circle:** the different magical spells, organized by circle. Progressive spells, those that have enhanced abilities if the caster ascends to higher circles of magic while using them, are marked with a (P).

### Artificers

Artificers are skilled craftsmen, able to create the finest, and most dangerous, objects in the Grimm Lands.

**Sample Users:** Diligent craftsmen, simple cobblers, mischievous elves.

**Method:** Artificers need the tools of their trade to use their magic.

#### 1st Circle

**Repair:** You can repair a damaged object, no matter how badly damaged, as long as you have all the component parts. How long this takes depends on how bad the damage is, and what sort of object is being repaired, and is dictated by the narrator.

**Swift Work (P):** You can create or repair objects in half the time it usually takes. For example, a tailor who would normally take 20 hours to make a jacket could now make it in 10 hours.

#### 2nd Circle

**Perfection (P):** You can create a wonderfully made object, if you have the correct raw materials and tools at hand, without needing to make a Home Ec or Industrial

### Artisans' Work

Artisans can only work on (make, repair, reshape, strengthen, or whatever) objects tied to their chosen profession. Thus, artisan cobblers use their powers on shoes, artisan weavers manipulate cloth, artisan clockmakers tinker with clocks, and so on.

Kids with artisan magic can only use their powers on objects they have learned to affect. So, if a kid studied a perfect recipe for plum pie (**Perfection**), and was taught how to mend shoes by a thankful elf (**Repair**), she could only use **Perfection** to make plum pies, and **Repair** to repair shoes. If she needed to repair a plum pie that was dropped on the floor, or she needed to make shoes from scratch, she'd be out of luck.

Arts test to make the object. This object will be worth at least four times the value of a normal example of the object, and will impress any who experience its magnificence. However, the item's worth is based on its craftsmanship, not the materials (so you couldn't create a golden horseshoe out of pig iron). It takes the normal amount of time to make the item.

**Strengthen:** You can strengthen an object so that it is immune to all normal (but not magical) damage. So, a builder could reinforce a cottage he built to be impervious to the elements and the ravages of time, but not the Big Bad Wolf's breath, while a brewer could strengthen his beers so that they never go bad.

## 3rd Circle

**Artifact:** You can empower an object you have created as a magical item (see "Talismans" on page 68 for examples). The powers of this object should suit the object created and require the narrator's approval. As a rough guide, such a magical item might:

— Grant up to an advantage of +2 grades to a trait when used.

— Mimic a talent with 3 grades worth of trait requirements, or a single previous talent requirement.

Magic items created by this power can operate either once per day for an entire scene, or whenever the possessor likes by expending 1 Imagination.

**Perfection (P):** You can now create your perfect object from inferior raw materials. Thus, a cook could create a perfect stew from rotten vegetables and meat, or a tanner could cure a perfect skin from a shredded animal hide. However, the item is still only a finely crafted version of its raw materials (so you couldn't create a mink coat from a bear's fur).

Alternatively, you could accomplish a lower-circle effect of Perfection without any tools.

**Swift Work (P):** You can now work your objects in a quarter of the time it would normally take.

**Trap:** You can magically trap an object you have created. The trap will activate on a pre-specified trigger, and will result in whatever nastiness best suits the story and your character. Perhaps the object explodes, causing wounds. Maybe the object releases a slow-acting poison, or sends the victim into a deep slumber. Ultimately, the details of the trap are dictated by the narrator, but should use any 1st-circle or 2nd-circle magical spell as a guideline.

## 4th Circle

**Artifact (P):** You can now empower an object into a magical item as follows:

— Grant up to an advantage of +3 grades to a trait when used

— Mimic a talent with up to 6 grades worth of trait requirements (a previous talent as a requirement counts as 3 grades)

— Mimic a 1st-grade imagining

**Mundane:** You can take away one of a touched magical item's powers until the next sunrise or sunset, or if it has more than one, all of its powers for a single scene. Thus, a weaponsmith could take away the Sword of St. George's ability to detect dragons for a day, or a seamstress could take away the Cloak of Invisibility's powers until the next sunrise or sunset.

**Perfection (P):** You can now create a perfect object from any raw materials. So, a fletcher could make arrows from spare cutlery, or a cooper could make a barrel from beanstalk leaves. You are limited to creating objects of only basic materials, such as plain wood, simple steel, and the like.

Alternatively, you could accomplish a lower-circle effect of Perfection without any tools.

**Reshape:** You can reshape an object with your tools, making it up four times larger or one-quarter the size. This power can be used multiple times on the same object. It is sometimes used to create odd dwelling places, or to manufacture items for very small, or very large, inhabitants of the Grimm Lands.

**Swift Work (P):** You can now work your objects instantly.

## 5th Circle

**Artifact (P):** You can now empower an object into a magical item as follows:

— Grant an advantage of up to +4 grades to a trait when used

— Mimic a talent with up 9 grades worth of trait requirements (a previous talent as a requirement counts as 3 grades)

— Mimic a 2nd-grade imagining

**Disintegrate:** You can cause a touched, mundane object to return to its unworked component parts.

**Straw to Gold:** You can use your tools to turn any one inanimate substance into any other (as dictated by the narrator). This power is believed to be the source of many rumors claiming the elves, dwarfs, and the other little folk have crocks of gold or similar stashes of treasure, and can be used in combination with **Perfection** to create finely crafted items out of the richest materials.

## 6th Circle

**Artifact (P):** You can now empower an object into a magical item as follows:

— Grant an advantage of up to +5 grades to a trait when used

— Mimic any talent

— Mimic a 3rd-grade imagining

**Door:** You can empower an object with the ability to take a single individual from the Grimm Lands. Once the object is used, it loses all magic. Those rumored to

know this spell are legendary figures, and many believe that this spell may not even exist.

## Enchanters

Enchanters use magic to charm, control, and manipulate others to their own ends.

**Sample Users:** Wicked step-mothers, frisky satyrs, malevolent water-spirits.

**Method:** Enchanters need to be seen (or heard—many enchanters sing or play an instrument to enact their magic) for their enchantments to work. For those who need to be seen, their item of power is usually a glittery bauble or something else that attracts the eye, whether it be a pendant, a crown, or even the enchanter's eyes themselves! For those who must be heard, their items of power might be musical instruments, chimes, or their own tongues. It can be difficult to take control of an enchanter's power if her item of power is her own body part…but then again, if someone wants to end her powers, the enchanter risks enduing up with poked-out eyes or a ripped-out tongue!

### 1st Circle

**Fascinate (P):** A single target within a stone's throw immediately finds you interesting and wants to know more about you. The target may still dislike you, or seek to work against you, but will probably delay any antagonistic actions for a while as he pursues his sudden curiosity. This is largely a matter for role-playing.

**Charm:** You become more attractive and interesting. You gain an advantage of +1 grade on Cool tests during a current or upcoming social scene. This benefit does not help talents or abilities used in combat.

### 2nd Circle

**Fascinate (P):** Now everyone who can see you (or hear you) is affected when the enchantment is cast.

**Nixie's Allure (P):** Any who see you (or hear you) must make 5th-grade Pluck tests (which can be attempted each turn) or travel towards you. Those who score 2nd grade or lower must do so mindlessly; those who score 4th grade or lower can spend their turns performing other actions, so long as those actions don't inhibit their movement. So a kid might call for help, throw something at the enchanter, or take a swing at the troll standing in her way, but couldn't grab onto a doorknob and hold on.

**Romantic Dream:** Your target, who can be anyone you have ever met, will dream about you when they next sleep. During the following day, you gain an advantage of +2 grades on Cool tests when dealing with your target.

### 3rd Circle

**Command (P):** You order a target within a stone's throw (who must be able to understand you) to do a single, simple, non-dangerous deed, which he must obey.

## Players and Enchantments

Narrators are encouraged to promote the roleplaying potential of the various enchantments, and to involve the players in contemplating the impact of such powers on their characters. How does a kid act when she is suddenly attracted to another? Does she become shy? Confident? Embarrassed? Scared to make a mistake? Keen to be seen? Further, what if a kid briefly falls in love with an enchanter? Does she betray her friends for love? Does she try to make everyone get along? Does she do something else?

Magic in *Grimm* is primarily a tool for narrators to create great stories, and if handled well, enchantments do just that, especially when the kids then have to deal with the repercussions of their actions after the enchantments wear off.

**Nixie's Allure (P):** Targets now need a 7th-grade Pluck test to resist your allure completely. Those who score 3rd grade or lower must now walk toward you mindlessly, while those who score 6th grade or lower can spend their turns performing other actions.

**Passion:** A single target, who must have heard of you or met you, falls in love with you. Love, of course, does not blind a target to reality, but she will not act to harm you, or allow any others to do so except in the most extreme circumstances. To perform this spell, you must have a treasured item of the target or a lock of her hair. This love is extremely powerful, but can wane or be destroyed over time by your actions.

### 4th Circle

**Command (P):** You can now command someone to perform a simple dangerous deed, or a complex non-dangerous one. If following the command will obviously threaten the life of the target, she may attempt an 8th-grade Pluck test to resist the power.

**Hypnotize:** You can implant a subconscious command (as per the 3rd-circle **command** spell) into a victim within a cricket's hop, which he will not remember you putting in place. This may include a trigger to activate the command at a later date. If enacting the command will obviously threaten his life, the target may attempt an 8th-grade Pluck test to resist it upon the moment of the triggering.

**Nixies's Allure (P)**: Targets now need a 9th-grade Pluck test to resist your allure completely. Those who score 4th grade or lower must now walk toward you mindlessly, while those who score 8th grade or lower can spend their turns performing other actions.

### 5th Circle

**Automaton:** A single target who can see (or hear) you completely loses her free will and must enact your every command until the next sunrise or sunset.

**Hypnotize (P):** The target may no longer resist a command that would obviously threaten her life.

**Worship (P):** All who can see (or hear) you immediately fall to their knees and worship you. You become their world, and they will perform every request you make if it is within their power to do so. However, if you command an individual to risk her life in any way, she may attempt a 10th-grade Pluck test to resist the order. Even if she does, she remains under the power of the enchantment.

This power lasts until the next full moon.

### 6th Circle

**Far Mistress:** You may immediately use another enchanter power on a single target who has ever seen (or heard) you, no matter how far away they are.

**Worship (P):** No command you make can be resisted anymore.

## Guardians

Guardians grant wishes that benefit others, and are able to watch over the vulnerable to aid them when required.

**Sample Users:** Fairy godmothers, good witches, guardian angels.

**Method:** Most guardians can only cast their spells at the request of the target of the spell, or at the request of her parents if the target is too young to speak for herself. Some guardians require that a symbolic badge of acceptance is worn by the ward, such as a ring, an amulet, or even something more permanent, like a tattoo. A ward who decides that she no longer wishes the guardian's attentions can remove the badge, cut off the flesh on which the tattoo is drawn, or, if she or her parents gave verbal acceptance, simply announce loudly that she withdraws her permission.

### 1st Circle

**Fortune:** You bestow a measure of good luck upon a single target within a cricket's hop. The next time the target rolls a 1 and performs below her grade, she may re-roll her die to avoid the result. However, if she rolls a second 1, the result stands.

**Ward (P):** You create a bond with a single target that you touch, referred to as your ward. This bond allows you to instinctively know when your ward is

upset or in peril. You may only ever have one ward at a time. This power ends when the ward dies, or you use this spell upon a new ward. You are automatically considered to have permission to cast spells upon your ward.

Higher-circle versions of **Ward** must be cast upon the target again to have an effect; if a guardian uses 1st-circle **Ward** on a kid and later wishes to increase its effects to the 2nd-circle spell, he must cast it again, in-person and at the higher circle. Each of these higher-circle effects of **Ward** also require additional Gaming tests, though the effects require spending only a single turn and single test to accomplish (rather than building up through the circles of magic, as when casting the spell initially).

### 2nd Circle

**Heal (P):** With but a touch, you can heal half of a target's wounds.

**Ward (P):** With a 4th-grade Gaming test, you can now determine the location of your ward, no matter where she may be.

**Warn:** You can send a short message to an individual you believe to be in peril. The message must be beneficial, and will be received as a whispered voice or a brief vision.

### 3rd Circle

**Heal (P):** You can either heal half of the wounds of a target within a cricket's hop, or all of the wounds of a target that you touch.

**Inspire:** Your touch inspires a target to succeed in a difficult task she is potentially capable of achieving, such as creating a magnificent piece of art, withstanding the will of the mightiest of enchantresses, or avoiding the teeth of the Bad Wolf himself. The next test the target takes counts as if it has passed, no matter the grade level difficulty.

**Ward (P):** With a 6th-grade Gaming test, you can now see and hear what your ward sees and hears for the rest of the scene.

**Warn (P):** You can send a detailed dream to one individual you believe to be in peril. The dream must be beneficial, and will be experienced the next time the target goes to sleep.

**Wish (P):** You can grant a minor, flawed wish. The wish must be simple and localized, and may not affect other sentient creatures directly. So, a wish for a small pot of gold, or to go to the ball, could be granted, but a wish for a lost friend to appear, or for another to fall in love, could not. All wishes must have a flaw worked into them, such as granted experiences only lasting until midnight, or for granted objects falling apart in a pre-specified situation. The exact limits of **Wish** are left in the hand of the narrator.

### 4th Circle

**Bless:** You can bless a child that you touch to embody a single positive ideal, such as beauty, creativity, courage, compassion, or similar. As the child grows to adulthood, this ideal will grow progressively more evident. A blessed child gains an advantage ranging from +1 grade (at the point of the blessing) to +4 grades (when 16 years old) to any test specifically associated with her blessing. A blessing will end if the blessed child actively works against her positive trait. So, a girl blessed to be compassionate will lose her blessing if she purposefully acts in a cruel and heartless fashion.

**Heal (P):** You can now either heal all of the wounds of a target within a cricket's hop, or half of the wounds of everyone touching you (or holding onto the hem of your dress or something similar).

**Release:** By touching a target, you may release him from any power or ability that is controlling his mind.

**Ward (P):** With an 8th-grade Gaming test, you can now conduct a two-way conversation with your ward, no matter the distance involved. This power lasts until the conversation ends.

### 5th Circle

**Captains Courageous:** You can bring out the inner hero of someone you touch while announcing the cause that he will be fighting for. Until the next sunrise, whenever he is fighting for that cause, as long as he truly believes in it and is willing to sacrifice himself for it, he gains an advantage of +4 grades to all Pluck tests made to resist being scared, and he ignores half (round down) of a foe's protection if that foe actively opposes what you are fighting for. He also temporarily receives one of the following benefits: an increase of +2 to his Cool grade, and increase of +2 to his Muscle grade, or an increase of +2 to his personal grade level (including health).

**Lessen Curse:** You can lessen the impact of a **Hex** or **Transformation** (see "Witches," below) affecting

## Guardians

Guardians are greatly constrained by their requirement to have the permission of their targets to cast their magic. Because of this, some guardians actively seek permission to use their magic from almost anyone they meet, just in case. For example: a friendly old woman may ask a gang of kids if they mind her "dropping in unannounced," so she can later cast **Warn**.

However, not all guardians are good-natured—indeed, a great many aren't. The Grimm Lands are full of dubious characters looking to abuse passing kids in any way they can, and casting **Ward** upon a kid tricked into believing it will help them is a perfect way to do this. And many guardians protect bad people, not good ones…

someone that you touch. For example, a girl cursed to die on her sixteenth birthday might instead fall asleep, or a boy cursed to permanently become an animal might instead transform only at night. The exact nature of this lessening is limited by the narrator.

**Ward (P):** With a 10th-grade Gaming test, you can now teleport instantly to your ward's side.

### 6th Circle

**Ward (P):** With a 12th-grade Gaming test, you can now resurrect an ex-ward from death by touching her body. This spell must be cast within an hour of your ward's death.

**Wish (P):** You can grant a major wish. The wish can be complex and broad-reaching, and can even affect other sentient creatures, so long as they are minor characters. All such wishes must have a flaw built into them, such as a granted kingdom falling if any of its people suffer at the wisher's hand, or an enemy returning with two-fold power if any mention her name three times before a mirror. The exact limits of **Wish** are left in the hands of the narrator.

One thing a **Wish** cannot do is affect the Real World, and as such cannot send a kid home from the Grimm Lands. It is said that, once upon a time, a guardian magician figured out how to wish kids back home, but he was ambushed by the Rotten King's men and locked away, for fear that he would deny the land its favorite prey.

## What Seers See

Seers can be problematic to a narrator, for they see through to the uncertain future, potentially providing players with information the narrator doesn't know herself! However, narrators shouldn't worry too much about this, as most of the spells are vague in the specifics they provide; as long as the narrator is careful with what she says, there should be no problems.

There are two common two ways to tackle the predictive powers of seers. The first to plan out some future encounters, and provide hints and details of these when the players encounter a seer using her powers. The second is to not worry too much about the future events. Instead, plan out some generalized visions for seers to experience, and mold future events to match them.

## Seers

Seers see things normally impossible to see, such as far-off places, someone's destiny, or a future event.

**Sample Users:** Secluded oracles, traveling folk, wise women.

**Method:** Seers require their fortune-telling tools to use their magic, whether they be strange animal parts or carefully crafted cards. Those who use pools of water as their scrying surfaces either have a special cauldron that must be used or a special stick, wand, or wooden spoon with which a body of water must be stirred.

### 1st Circle

**Fortune Telling:** Having rolled the bones, read the tea leaves, scattered the egg shells, gutted the calf, or any one of countless other methods of divination, you may ask one simple question of the universe (i.e., the narrator). You gain a response that is helpful, but cryptic.

**The Edge:** You sense brief flashes of the future for the next scene. During this time, you automatically win all tied opposed tests.

### 2nd Circle

**Scry (P):** You cause the mists of magic within one reflective surface (such as a crystal ball, mirror, or pool of water) to swirl rapidly, and when they reach the peak of their motion, you can see any person, place, or thing that you have previously touched, wherever it now resides. You may scry until the subject leaves its present locale, or until the mists within the surface completely stop swirling (a few minutes, or as long as it would take for a well-stirred pot of water to become completely motionless).

**Vision:** You receive a vision of an upcoming danger. This vision is vague and obscure, but it does provide some hard facts and an insight into what lies ahead. The details of the vision are left in the hands of the narrator. During the prophesied scene, you gain an advantage of +1 grade to all Luck and Playground trait tests. After the first casting, this spell may not be cast again until the last foreseen event has passed.

### 3rd Circle

**Fairy Ring:** When you cast this spell, you learn the direction and approximate distance (within a few miles) of any entrances into the strange realms of the fair folk that are within a day's travel. Once you're in the general vicinity, you'll know the entrances when you see them, but must otherwise poke around until they come into view.

**Find (P):** You instinctively know the most direct route to travel to find an object or person you have touched in the Grimm Lands. Note that this route might not be the easiest or safest way. This spell ends at sunrise or sunset.

**Scry (P):** You may now maintain a **Scry** view until the next sunrise or sunset, and

the vision will follow a person or object who leaves their current locale.

### 4th Circle

**Find (P):** In addition to learning the direction of the object or person of you desire, you also instinctively know the easiest or safest path to it.

**Mind Reading (P):** You can see into the mind of a target within a cricket's hop range, allowing you to skim their surface thoughts. The target may resist this spell with an opposed Gaming test; the closer the roll to your Gaming test, the less you learn.

**Glimpse the Past:** You can see important past events concerning a touched person or object. Exactly what is uncovered is determined by the narrator.

**Scry (P):** You can now use **Scry** on a target for whom you have a treasured possession or a lock of hair. If you have touched the target, you can now use any of your seer powers on the target when scrying, effectively extending the range of those powers to anything that you can see in the surface or using that surface as a vehicle for your powers. Thus, if you used **Fortune Telling** or **Glimpse the Past** with **Scry**, the surface would reveal visions that everyone can see. If you used **Fairy Ring** or **Mind Reading** with **Scry**, you could detect fairy rings within a day's journey of your target or read the mind of someone being scryed.

### 5th Circle

**Destiny:** You comprehend the true destiny of one character within a cricket's hop. The details you uncover are left to the narrator to depict as her plans for her campaign dictate.

**Find (P):** You no longer need to have touched the object or person you desire to use this power: You must simply describe him or it.

**Mind Reading (P):** You can now learn any details you wish from the target, assuming you succeed at an opposed Gaming test; the closer the target is to your roll, the less detail you receive. Even if a target successfully resists your efforts, you can still always glimpse surface thoughts (canny wizards who must often deal with powerful seers simply train themselves to maintain a zen-like placidity to their surface thinking).

**Scry (P):** You can now use **Scry** on a target about whom you know nothing more than a name or a unique descriptor ("Show me the creature who attacked Alice last night"). You may now use any of your seer powers on the target without having touched him or it, needing only a treasured possession or a lock of hair.

**Straight to the Heart:** You can see through to the heart of an individual within a cricket's hop range, no matter the disguise or false skin she wears. This spell allows you to know if someone is lying about who they are, or if they have some hidden power. The exact information you learn is determined by the narrator.

### 6th Circle

**Absolute Awareness:** You exist several moments in the future, somehow always knowing what is about to happen. This requires all of your concentration, however, making it impossible for you to attempt any Playground tests or even communicate meaningfully to your friends, even to warn them. All of your words come out cryptically and jumbled. You can simply act as appropriate, and hope they get the general idea.

While under the effects of this spell, which last until the next sunrise or sunset, you are never surprised or ambushed. You always know exactly where to stand so that you're not within reach of the monster (if possible), you never fall victim to traps or ambushes, and you know the effects of any of your actions. However, you automatically fail tests that require quick action or intense physical activity, like dodging attacks (on the rare occasion that you can't just stay out of the way) or surmounting difficult obstacles. You may still use magic as normal.

You may break absolute awareness whenever you like.

**Gateway:** You instinctively know in which direction to travel to find the closest gateway from the Grimm Lands, though not its distance or the safest route there. Seeking out the rare practitioner of this magical spell can be the focus of an entire *Grimm* campaign.

**Scry (P):** You may now use any magical power or ability through your scrying surface, regardless of whether you've touched your target, have any possessions of him, and so on (though you couldn't, for instance, use physical abilities like shooting your tail spines at a target).

## Witches

Witches are known for casting an array of foul curses, most of which are unpleasant, spiteful, or just plain evil. Some witches also have mastery over nature and the elements, and almost all can fly.

**Sample Users:** Bad fairies, evil queens, wizened hags.

**Method:** Witches leave traces of their passing when they use their powers: nearby milk sours or runs red with blood, flames turn blue, animals shy and roll their eyes, hair stands on end, or similar unnatural and unpleasant effects.

Strangely, witches are unique magic users in that they have no particular items of power. Some say that this is because most of their powers have ways of being avoided or undone; others that the witches are consorts of the devil, trading their humanity for their power, so that the magic comes entirely from within their putrid selves. Regardless, this means that a witch is her own item of power. Find the witch's soft spot (push her into her own oven, douse her with water, get her to see her own reflection, and so on), and all of her terrible hexes, curses, and evil effects will be undone.

### 1st Circle

**Fly:** You (and only you) can fly at the speed of a swift bird (very fast) for one scene. Different witches fly using different methods, but broomsticks and flying potions are the most common.

**Misfortune (P):** You curse a target within a stone's throw to be dogged by bad luck. The next time the target boosts a test and would perform above her grade, she must re-roll her result. However, if she boosts the test a second time, the result stands. When this happens, the spell ends.

### 2nd Circle

**Blemish (P):** You curse a target within a stone's throw to suffer a minor, cosmetic ailment, such as warts, baldness, or horribly bad breath, inflicting a disadvantage of –1 grade on Cool tests. At the end of every day, the target can roll a die. If she rolls a 6, the curse wears off.

**Misfortune (P):** Instead of the lower-circle effect, the target must now roll two dice whenever she rolls her primary die, using the lower of the two results. This curse ends when the target rolls 6s on both dice.

**Sleep (P):** You send one victim within a stone's throw of you into a deep slumber that lasts until the next sunrise. The victim may resist this power with an opposed Gaming test.

### 3rd Circle

**Blemish (P):** The curse is now more than cosmetic, and also causes irritation, inflammation, or pain in your victim, resulting in an additional disadvantage of –2 grades to all Playground tests.

**Fly (P):** You may now give other characters the means to fly at really fast speed for one scene, whether it be by lending them your broomstick, giving them a potion to drink, or the like.

**Shapeshift:** You transform yourself into a single type of animal, of dog stature or smaller. Toads, ravens, and cats are common forms. If you wish to learn a new animal form, you must learn this spell again. The spell ends at sunrise.

For animal traits, see page 182.

**Sleep (P):** If a target within a cricket's hop fails an opposed Gaming test, she falls into a deep, fevered sleep, and won't wake up until the next full moon. She must then make a Muscle test with a difficulty equal to your base Gaming grade, or also suffer wounds equal to half her health (round up) when she awakens.

**Wither:** You can greatly weaken a target with nothing more than a touch. The victim suffers a disadvantage on all Playground tests and Muscle tests until the next sunrise. The disadvantage for each trait is equal to half the character's base grade in that trait (round up).

### 4th Circle

**Nature Witchery:** You force Mother Nature to bend to your will. All simple plants and animals within a stone's throw now do your bidding. Trees whip up at your cackled command; birds swoop from the sky with their eyes rolling madly; and rocks roll through the streets at the wave of your black wand. The extents of this power are controlled by the narrator, but as a general rule, **Nature Witchery** should allow you to dish out at least two wounds to every enemy within range every round. These wounds ignore all protection but, depending upon the source of the damage, may be avoided with a Scamper test opposed by your Gaming test. This spell ends when you stop spending your turn concentrating upon it.

**Transformation (P):** One creature within a cricket's hop is permanently transformed in some way that does not kill her, but effectively makes her helpless. Sample transformation curses include being turned into a toad or other harmless animal, being turned to stone, or being forced into an endless slumber. The curse remains until some unlikely condition, stated aloud when the power is cast, is met. The victim may attempt an Imagination test opposed by your Gaming test to retain her ability to communicate. So a victim turned into a toad would retain her power of speech, a victim turned to stone might be able to change the words on her pedestal, while a victim forced into slumber might speak to nearby people in their dreams.

### 5th Circle

**Hex (P):** You call down a terrible curse that can affect an entire small community (in which you must be present) when some event that is more than a month away is met. The farther away the likelihood of the event, the worse the hex may be. Sample hexes include turning every man in a village into a pig the next time a woman accuses her husband of being one, sending a whole castle into a sorcerous sleep when the next king is crowned, or cursing a baby girl to die on the day she is married. The curse remains until some unlikely condition, stated aloud when the power is cast, is met.

**Transformation (P):** The victim may no longer make an Imagination test to retain her ability to communicate.

**Weather Witchery:** You can call down the rains, summon thunderheads, or disperse hurricanes, forcing Father Sky to do your bidding. You may change weather conditions within a day's journey to any extent you wish, but you suffer from the bad weather just like everybody else. The extents of this power are controlled by the narrator, but as a general rule, **Weather Witchery** should allow you to dish out at least one wound to everything within the area every minute. These wounds ignore all protection but, depending upon the source of the damage, may be avoided with a Boy Scouts test (to avoid lightning), Muscle test (to endure cold), and so on, opposed by your Gaming test.

For every ten minutes you maintain this spell, you must make a Muscle test with a difficulty of 1st grade + 1 grade for each previous ten minutes spent maintaining the spell. If you fail, the effect ends, and the weather returns to normal.

### 6th Circle

**Hex (P):** The condition for ending the hex is no longer spoken aloud; indeed, even you as the caster don't know the condition. It can only be discovered by questing.

**Sundering Stroke:** You call out to the dark powers of entropy and demand that they unmake that which has offended you. A single large structure or small village within an arrow's flight begins to shake and shudder. Twelve earth-quaking turns after the completion of **Sundering Stroke**, the target is destroyed utterly, sucked down into a gaping rent in the ground. Occupants remaining within any destroyed building are sucked away along with the building or village. For most, this means instant death.

**Transformation (P):** The condition for lifting the curse no longer needs to be spoken aloud; indeed, even you as the caster don't know the condition. It can only be discovered by questing.

## Fillet of a Fenny Snake

Many witches are notorious for brewing their magical spells in bubbling cauldrons as their magical method (see "Magical Methods," page 78). The ingredients used to do this vary, but are generally a disgusting mixture of rotten meat, animal entrails, and dirty toenail clippings with a dash of dandruff for seasoning; certainly enough to make most kids barf! When a witch seeks to curse a victim, she usually has to drop something special to her victim in the pot, such as a favorite bangle, a drop of blood, a cherished teddy bear, or similar.

For witches who brew potions, some magical spells may need to be slightly adapted: spells such as **Wither** or **Sleep** would require the victim to drink some of a specially prepared potion to work; and powers such as **Nature Witchery** and **Weather Witchery** would require a brewed potion be splashed around the area targeted. As with all magic in *Grimm*, the narrator is encouraged to change the rules to best suit her story characters, rather than the other way around.

## Wizards

Wizards cast formulaic spells from tomes of magical lore, and are known across the Grimm Lands for the powerful and varied magic they study.

**Sample Users:** Ambitious advisers, bearded wanderers, absent-minded hermits.

**Requirement:** Wizards require their grimoires, staves, or some other bulky item of power to cast their incantations.

### 1st Circle

**Blast (P):** You throw a ball of fire (or a crackle of lightning, or a cloud of poison, or whatever else is appropriate) at a target within a stone's throw. It causes two wounds, which is reduced to one wound if the target passes a 2nd-grade Scamper test. These wounds ignore all protection except that granted by the **Protection** spell.

**Light:** You create a ball of light in your hand or at the tip of a wand or staff. It is enough to see by, and lasts until you dismiss it or fall asleep.

### 2nd Circle

**Animate:** You can animate one item (such as a scarecrow, mop, or statue) as a 1st-grade living object (see "Living Objects," page 198). The living object obeys your commands as if it were a well-trained animal, but it has no intelligence of its own. This incantation is commonly used by lazy wizards to create servants to cook and clean for them. The item remains animated for one day per grade you have in Gaming.

**Fear:** You can scare one opponent within a stone's throw by suddenly appearing more impressive than you truly are. The target must pass a 4th-grade Pluck test or flee the scene.

**Blast (P):** Your blast now causes four wounds, which is reduced to two wounds if the target passes a 4th-grade Scamper test.

### 3rd Circle

**Alarm:** You instinctively know when someone enters a room or area where you have cast this incantation. You can only have one **Alarm** cast at any one time.

**Fear (P):** The target must now pass an 8th-grade Pluck test or flee the scene.

**Blast (P):** Your blast now causes six wounds, which is reduced to three wounds if the target passes a 6th-grade Scamper test.

**Disjunctify:** You can attempt to dispel an active magical power by rolling a Gaming test against a difficulty of the original caster's base Gaming grade +2. If you fail your first attempt, you may not attempt to dispel the effect again. If used against magical spells that have specific conditions that end them, such as hexes or transformations, the difficulty is the original caster's base Gaming grade +5.

**Protection:** You surround yourself with a magical force-shield, which increases your protection by +1. If you ever suffer three wounds from a single attack even after negating wounds with protection, the magical force-shield collapses. Otherwise, the **Protection** ends when you fall asleep.

## 4th Circle

**Alarm (P):** You can now have as many **Alarms** cast as you have grades in Gaming.

**Animate (P):** You can now create a 2nd-grade living object.

**Blast (P):** Your magical missile now causes eight wounds, which is reduced to four wounds if the target passes an 8th-grade Scamper test.

**Illusion *P):** You create an illusion that looks, smells, and sounds like the real thing. It can be any size from a speck of dust to an elephant or ogre, and requires you to concentrate to maintain and control it, taking up your turn every round. The illusion ends if it is touched by an intelligent being.

**Invisibility (P):** You, your clothes, and your carried equipment become invisible. The spell lasts for as long as you concentrate on the spell, which requires that you spend your turn each round (allowing you to move at half your speed, as normal).

**Protection (P):** Your shield now grants you protection +3, and only ends when you suffer five wounds from a single attack even after negating wounds with protection, or when you fall asleep.

## 5th Circle

**Illusion (P):** Your illusion can now be up to the size of a small castle, and lasts even after you stop concentrating on it. It still ends if it is touched by an intelligent being.

**Invisibility (P):** You can now cause as many adult-sized objects or creatures to become invisible as you have grades in Gaming. All who are made invisible with your spell can see each other as ghostly, transparent forms. Creatures remain invisible for as long as they spend their turns concentrating on the power, while objects remain invisible until the next sunrise.

**Protection (P):** Your shield now grants you protection +5, and only ends when you suffer seven wounds from a single attack even after negating wounds with protection, or when you fall asleep.

**Summon (P):** You summon as many 4th-grade creatures (which may be demons, elementals, familiars, or similar) as you have grades in Gaming. The creatures follow your every command, and remain until the next sunrise.

## 6th Circle

**Animate (P):** You can now create a 3rd-grade living object. Further, you can grant a sense of self to a human-shaped object by permanently lowering your Imagination trait by one grade level. Upon completion of the incantation, a new 3rd-grade kid (albeit made of gingerbread, wood, or similar) is created. The living object has a mind and will of its own, and is under no compulsion to follow your commands.

**Illusion (P):** Illusions of this circle last forever, or until you dismiss them or someone else successfully uses **Disjunctify** on them.

**Conflagration:** You summon all of your powers to unleash a devastating assault against one spot or target you can see. The conflagration may be a fireball from the heavens, or a demon from the deep, or a mighty, irrepressible tornado; it affects an area roughly equivalent to a football field or a town square. Everyone in the target area suffers twenty wounds that ignore all protection other than that granted by the **Protection** spell, though targets may halve the wounds with a successful 12th-grade Scamper test. Casting this power causes you to pass out for at least a day. Although this devastating incantation is whispered to exist, none know of any instance in which it was cast.

**Protection (P):** The spell can now grant, instead of personal protection for you, a force-shield surrounding everyone and everything within a cricket's hop. It stops just about anything that tries to pass through, such as arrows, boulders, lightning strikes, and so on. No one and nothing can pass in either direction. Should game mechanics need to be involved, it can be assumed to grant protection +10 to everyone within the force-shield. If something would inflict twenty wounds to the area even after negating wounds with protection, the force-shield is shattered. The shield lasts for as long as you concentrate on it, or until the end of the scene.

**Summon (P):** This circle allows you to summon 8th-grade creatures.

Chapter Six

# Running the Game

The world of *Grimm* is a strange, terrifying place. The sane are mad, nothing is fixed, and every dark corner is filled with twisted, nasty things. Into this world are thrown kids who can and will do absolutely anything they can think of to fight off the monsters, help the innocent, and find a way home. And somehow, somebody has to keep all of this under control.

That someone is you.

But don't panic. Being a narrator can be a big responsibility, but it isn't all that difficult. All it requires is a little time in advance to read through these rules (which you've probably just done) and think about what kind of game you want to run. What follows below is a series of hints on how to decide what kind of game to run, what stories you want to tell, and how to bring out the elements that make a *Grimm* story rich, unique, and thoroughly enjoyable for everyone—without too much work by you.

There are also great rewards for being a narrator. Ultimately, you're the most important person at the table, because you hold it all together. You get to know all the dark secrets of the Grimm Lands and see all the evil plans of the monsters and villains. You also get the most control over the story, as you choose its settings, tone, and elements. Being a narrator is thus an incredibly rewarding experience, allowing you to create a whole universe for your players. And, you'll know you're doing well when they keep coming back for more.

## Sources

Your very first aid in telling great stories is the dark and twisted world of *Grimm*. There are vast volumes of story hooks and ideas to use in Chapter 7, but that's only the tip of the iceberg. Other source material abounds to inspire your stories and your settings.

For starters, try to get ahold of a collection of the original Grimm tales. There is really no substitute for the original works. Other folk tales of the period are also useful; the Russian tales of Baba Yaga, for example, weren't collected by the Grimm Brothers, but they share the same baroque, twisted malice. Although written much later, the tales of Hans Christian Andersen were also drawn from folk tales of his native Denmark, and will also be useful. The same goes for tales for slightly older children such as Lewis Carrol's *Alice in Wonderland*, J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* and C.S. Lewis's Narnia stories.

If you can't find the original sources, there is still plenty of useful stuff in any children's storybook. If you can find the ones you had as a child, so much the better: The stories will be even richer to you and will make your games that much more intense in their telling. You can even turn to modern sources, including the more mainstream and bowdlerized tales of recent blockbuster animated films; although the tales they tell are often far removed from their inspiration, they often preserve the original spirit at their core. More recent movies have themselves added large twists to classic tales and are good places to find inspiration for your own twists on the familiar.

The original Grimm tales are indeed very grim, but to find modern fairy tales with a similar darkness, you have to look at media aimed more at adults. Comics such as Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* and *Books of Magic* and Bill Willingham's *Fables* are very much in the spirit of *Grimm*. Movies such as *Labyrinth*, *Pan's Labyrinth*, and *The Neverending Story* are also perfect inspiration: Having a DVD-viewing session with your fellow players is a great way to prepare for a campaign. For a twist on the Brothers Grimm themselves, don't miss Terry Gilliam's *The Brothers Grimm*. Perhaps best of all is the Jim Henson TV series *The Storyteller*, which presents Grimm tales and other stories of a similar heritage in all their ancient glory.

# Grimm Sagas

*Grimm* is a game comprised of scenes, several of which are strung together and played through in one sitting or session. When considered together, all of the linked scenes form a series of sessions that are referred to as **stories**. Going one step further, a series of linked stories involving the same kids is referred to as a **saga**. Sagas can be short affairs, seeing the kids through just a few grades, or can last a year or more of real-world time, with regular sessions that advance the kids from 3rd grade all the way to their escape from the Grimm Lands.

## Defining the Saga

There are two basic ways to construct your saga: around a goal or around a theme. Goal-oriented sagas are perhaps the easiest to create because *Grimm* already assumes one clear and emphatic goal: returning home. Although the Real World may not be their favorite place, kids will soon realize that the Grimm Lands are far darker and more dangerous than their home, and their parents and siblings will be looking for them. The need to return home is a powerful sensation to which most players can easily relate, and all the characters will automatically share, so it can provide an intense drive to your saga.

### Goals

There are plenty of other possible goals, however. The kids could be charged with healing the Grimm Lands in someway, by restoring the fairy tales to their true natures, or healing the madness of its darker denizens. They might also try to protect those few citizens of the Lands who are good-hearted from their maddened enemies. They could work to protect the gnomes of the Beanstalk, the dwarfs of the World's Edge Mountains, or the peasants of a village under the cruel rule of an evil queen. Alternatively, the threat could be from outside of the Grimm Lands, with a horrific, unnatural invading force trying to tear the whole land to pieces. It could be unbelief, adult-oriented concepts, the personification of shattered innocence, or perhaps just other stories jealous of Grimm's pre-eminence in the Real World. It could be something else entirely—as long as it is something worse than the madness of the Grimm Lands itself, or the kids may decide that the lands aren't worth saving. The defense-against-outsiders goal can be combined with many others. Perhaps the only way to keep the borders strong is to unite, redeem, or heal the Grimm Lands. For a twist, perhaps the outside enemies have the secret that will get the characters back home.

### Themes

Rather than focusing on a goal, your saga can also be centered around a common theme. Again, *Grimm* comes with a theme already strongly suggested by the source material: that of kids growing up. In the world of *Grimm*, they have to put aside a lot of their childhood ideas. They realize that their parents weren't so bad and that going after their temptations without thinking is foolish, they have to work with other kids they might have hated in the playground, they have to understand that not all stories have happy endings…at least, not unless you do everything you can to make them end that way. In short, they need to learn to act like grownups. Again, this is a powerful theme that many people can relate to, and can provide a strong emotional element to your games.

On the other hand, given the power of Imagination in the game, perhaps it is growing up that is the real danger. This theme is also a common one in the media and one which many people can relate to. Although being childish (i.e., selfish, petulant, whiny) may be bad, perhaps remaining childlike (imaginative, open-minded, big-hearted) is the key to surviving or healing *Grimm*, holding back its enemies or finding your way home.

Another theme closely tied to childhood and growing up is self-discovery. Children thrown into all the danger and terror of *Grimm* may find all their

assumptions about themselves under attack. There are two ways this theme can progress. In the first, the children find their ideas about their identities cracking under the pressure, and discover that deep down they are different than they imagined. The Dreamer discovers her ability to be serious, the Bully learns to have sympathy for the Nerd, the Outsider finds acceptance. The alternative is for the theme to be about being true to yourself. Although the characters are forced to question their identities, their beliefs, and their strengths, and suffer great periods of self-doubt and struggle, they eventually realize that their ideas about themselves were correct, and they had the strength they needed all along.

Countless other themes are possible. One idea is to focus on a specific aspect of the above themes. For example, rather than the general nature of growing up, your game might focus on the importance of doing what is right, or on having courage in the face of adversity, or on standing up to arbitrary authority. Fantasy and fairy tales are also often metaphors for real-world concepts. Your tales could provide a mirror into social issues such as how children are treated in the Real World, or the childish squabbling of politicians or religions. After all, Humpty Dumpty was originally Richard III, and the Three Blind Mice were protestant victims of Bloody Mary.

Perhaps the most important place to get ideas for your goals and themes, however, is your players and the kids they create. Few players come to a game with an entirely blank slate. Even if they don't have any particular story arc in mind for their characters, they are your friends, and you'll have some idea of the kind of stories that interest them the most. The more you tailor your game to suit their wishes and tastes, the more involved they'll become, and the more fun everyone will have.

## Graduation and Story Progression

A key question when designing a saga is how long it will take, and how many stories you would like to have in your saga. You might not have a definite amount in mind, and you might even want to leave it undecided, but you should have at least a vague idea in

mind, because you need to know how much each story will advance the saga. Even more importantly, you need to know how quickly to advance your players' kids. Kids typically start as 3rd graders, and by the time they reach 11th or 12th grade, they're going to be too powerful for the game system and feel too old to still be in the world of *Grimm*.

This doesn't mean that you can only tell six or seven stories in your saga. Generally, after a satisfying tale, the kids should graduate, but this can be easily drawn out by using two-part stories or trilogies, or simply by telling longer stories that take up many game sessions. Alternatively, you can have stories that occur "off-stage," perhaps narrated by your or the player, or developed together away from the game. The end result is that your characters can jump up several graduations between each story, so that it feels like time is advancing even if the game itself only takes a few weeks or months to play.

Something that can affect the rate of graduation is how graduation happens. It may be something that happens automatically after each story, but you might also want to put limitations on it. Perhaps the kids have to actually study or train in the traits they wish to improve, or have used them in a significant or dramatic way during the story. The former can be done "off-stage," between stories, but it could also form the basis for a story all of its own, or at least a scene. Perhaps a kid goes off in search of secret knowledge, enrolls in the Black Tower to learn magic, or joins an order of knights to learn to fight. Perhaps the Nerd wishes to raises his Scrap, and asks the Bully he's always hated how to do so. Will the old enemies learn something about each other?

## Tone

The final and perhaps most important question to ask about your saga is its tone. This is the feeling and mood you want your stories to have—are they scary, or funny, or dramatic, or exciting, or inspiring? Or is it all the above, concurrent or consecutive? Twisted fairy tales tend to work best in establishing the following tones, but anything is possible.

**Horror:** As discussed above, there's something fundamentally creepy and disturbing about fractured or dark fairy tales, playing as they do with our cherished memories of childhood. Combined with the savagery and maliciousness of most of the denizens of *Grimm*, horror is a very easy tone to bring to your game. *Grimm* is not a nice place to be, kids can be hurt very badly and happy endings are entirely optional. By playing up these uncertainties and the dangers of the setting, horror will naturally flow.

**Fantasy:** It's said that horror is fantasy's dark cousin. It's true that they aren't far away from each other. The difference with fantasy is that there are happy endings…if the kids have the courage and strength to bring them about. Fantasy is very much about hard-fought victories against terrible odds, and these victories are typically moral as well. In a fantasy saga, morality becomes a focus, but that doesn't mean it has to be black and white. Noble heroes and dark villains are one option, but exploring the motivations in between is also part of fantasy.

### Comforting Clichés

Clichés are generally considered to be bad things in stories, and to be avoided, but in the world of *Grimm* that's not the case. Cliches are a major part of fairy tales—and fairy tales are so well known they are clichés themselves. *Grimm* is all about playing on the familiar, and the familiar tales we read as children were loaded with cliché because children are not yet inured to such things. In other words, you should not be afraid to have your villains twirling their moustaches and cackling with glee, to have your heroes bold and handsome, and your climaxes occur under a raging thunderstorm—and you should absolutely always begin your tales with "Once Upon A Time…"

**Adventure:** The difference between fantasy and adventure is one of consequences. Although the adventurous campaign is full of risks, thrills, and danger, death and suffering rarely feature. Victories are still hard-fought, but they do not require much sacrifice, nor are they ever particularly about moral or psychological battles. Adventure stories are full of swashbuckling action and daring, dashing kids saving the day, and thus are enjoyed by almost everyone.

**Drama:** Drama is perhaps the opposite of adventure; it is fantasy without the focus on the physical struggle. Childhood and growing up can be times of great personal struggle and discovery, and a dramatic game puts the emphasis on this. The actual battles in the world of *Grimm* fade in importance compared to what they bring out of the characters or what they reflect in the Real World. You need very willing players to use this tone successfully, but it can be very rewarding.

**Comedy:** Comedy is the mixing of the familiar with the unexpected, so it is a natural product of twisted fairy tales. It is also a much-maligned genre, and unfairly so. Comedy is not only wonderful in its own right, it can contain as much truth, beauty, and dramatic power as any other. Dark comedy can also go hand in hand with horror, and make it all the bleaker. Comedy is usually not the best tone for dominating your game unless it is a short one, but don't be afraid to include it in dramatic or horrific games. Fairy tales themselves are quite often funny, if only in their sheer ludicrousness, and it would be remiss never to laugh at them.

# Telling the Story

The inundation of books, comics, and films making use of the idea of twisting or darkening a fairy tale (or at least returning it to the darkness from which it originally came) begs the question: Why is this such an appealing idea? One answer is that they perfectly encapsulate the theme of broken innocence, which is something almost everyone can relate to. Children enjoy these dark stories because they confirm what they have always known: that childhood is a bizarre and terrifying place where precious little makes sense and big people are very scary.

For adults, however, the attraction is different. For better or for worse, adults cannot help but enshrine children and childhood, and cover them in the glamour of nostalgia. Children don't really notice the darkness of fairy tales, but adults do, because they feel a deep need to protect children. On top of this, they tend to romanticize their own childhood. This means when the fairy tale is fractured, there is a terrible sense of shock and horror at the violation of the trusted and familiar, as the world they need to believe is safe becomes anything but. This horror is as perversely fascinating to adults as every other kind of horror, if not more so, and we are drawn back to it again and again. It tells stories of children who find their innocent worlds shattered while at the same time shattering the illusions of the adult audience—reminding them of just how frightening childhood can be, and their youth perhaps was. When done right, it can combine the deep rush of pleasant memories that flow from finding your old teddy bear in a box in the attic, with the sick terror of discovering a dagger stabbed through its heart.

## Creating the Twist

Creating stories for a *Grimm* saga is very easy. The library of children's stories and folk tales is vast—the Grimm Brothers alone wrote more than 300, only a fraction of which have remained popular. The only thing you need to add is the dark twist that embeds it in the Grimm Lands. Here are a few of the classic ways to add a twist.

**The Façade:** This is where the fairy tale elements once existed, or are presented on the surface, but they are a false front for nothing of the sort. What appears to be Sleeping Beauty's Bower is a deadly carnivorous plant, Rapunzel is a corpse full of spiders, the fairy tale castle, once entered, fades to reveal a charnel house of corpses. In *Grimm*, players are expecting facades, of course (they even appear in the original stories—the gingerbread house was not what it seemed to be, nor was the figure in Red Riding Hood's bed her grandmother)

so this must be used sparingly, and only with things that in the original stories were perfectly safe or beneficial. When facing a dragon, the characters breathe a sigh of relief when they spy a sword in a stone—only to have it crumble to dust (or worse) when they reach for it.

**Reversal:** Reversal is very similar to the façade but does not require deception. The idea here is to simply reverse some aspect of the story. That which was good or heroic becomes evil and cruel, the pleasant and helpful becomes horrid and dangerous. Hansel and Gretel grow up to be just as cannibalistic as their erstwhile captor, the Billy Goats Gruff are violent bridge-raiders who revel in knocking passers-by to their death, Old King Cole is cursed to never be merry again, and in his rage, kills all those who dare to laugh in his kingdom. Reversal is perhaps the most classic of twists, because it plays upon our most treasured assumption: the nature of good and evil. Once the good become evil, everything is uncertain, and the world is a far darker place.

**Defeat or Failure:** Along with good and evil being sacrosanct and unchanging, the other most crucial assumption of the fairy tale is the happy ending. The hero kills the dragon, the kiss reverses the curse, the potion breaks the spell. But what if it doesn't work, or just makes things worse? The kiss turns the frog into an even uglier and more vicious toad, or a deadly snake? Killing the evil sorceress doesn't end her curses, and her victims remain stone statues forever, or explode into dust? The shoe fits, but the prince decides the servant girl is too ugly and smelly and cuts her head off? Both adults and children have a deep-seated need for things to be fair and reasonable; when what should work does not, the entire world seems that much more cruel, hostile, and malevolent.

**Consequences:** Fairy tales end pretty quickly, with the curtain closing over a single kiss or a blissful wedding or a new prince crowned. But life doesn't work that way, and in the dark world of *Grimm*, stories keep going…and they fall apart. Hansel and Gretel might escape the witch, but next winter their father will just try to kill them again, and this time he won't just hope the forest does the job for him. These can be long-term and widely felt, such as the prince and the princess being happily married, but his infidelity and her cruelty driving them and their entire kingdom into a dysfunctional and destructive hell, or the fact that women who fit shoes can become royalty leads to a world where women bind their feet into agonizing positions to impress future kings. Or they can simply be the moment after: The Emperor with the New Clothes has the critical child hung, drawn, and quartered for his insolence, and the falling beanstalk crushed hundreds of villages and killed hundreds of people. We come to stories because they end, neatly and satisfyingly; removing that takes away another safety net, and can be deeply unnerving.

**Dourness, Dreariness, and Decay:** Fairy tales are bright, happy places, where the vistas are always grandiose, the princesses are always beautiful, the wizards wise, the knights noble, and the heroes bold and brave and handsome. The fairy tale world does not know the mundane, the banal, the trivial, the faded, the boring, the pointless, the stupid, or the meaningless. Simply adding these dour, ugly Real-World ideas to a fairy tale can crush the life and hope out of it in a moment. The ugly duckling discovers he is really a swan…but turns out to be a very ugly swan anyway. The serving girl is just as ugly and horrid as her step-sisters. The knights are bloodthirsty, the wizards lecherous, the kings corpulent and egotistical. Jack and Jill have been going up the hill to get water for so many years that their hands are worn to the bone and the water is mostly mud, Rumplestiltskin's straw-to-gold business has crippled the economy, and the home of the Lost Boys is full of disease because none of them are grownup enough to clean out the privies. Like consequences, this intrusion of reality cuts away quietly and subtly at what we rely on stories to be, and can be very disturbing.

**Madness:** In the world of *Grimm*, everyone is mad, and the sane are treated like lunatics. A dash of madness will make any story darker, and a good dollop will make it downright horrifying. Very often the seed of the madness is there, just waiting to be exploited. What madness might drive a man to lock a woman in a pumpkin shell? Is he a sadist who enjoys watching her suffer? Does the crooked man like to snap the spines of cats and mice so they resemble his misshapen form? Does the woman who rides to Banbury Cross need to wear bells on her toes, and falls screaming to the floor if they are taken from her? Is Lady Godiva an exhibitionist, Jack a kleptomaniac, the Evil Queen a megalomaniac? Is the Big Bad Wolf bulimic? Madness is terrifying all on its own; madness added to the familiar is doubly awful.

# Structuring the Story

Choosing a fairy tale and finding a twist for it is only part of telling a good story. You then need to think about how the kids will become involved with the twisted tale, and how they might react to it. But once again we can look to fairy tales to find inspiration.

You can tell any kind of story you want in *Grimm*. The list of saga tones above shows the versatility of the setting; you may decide to change tone with each story. Some stories may focus on solving a problem or defeating an enemy, others may focus on the characters or the overarching storyline, moving towards the greater theme or goal of the campaign. Some stories might just be a comic or reflective interlude between the more dramatic moments. Most fairy tales, however, are based around a quest. Something has gone wrong, and the kids have to set out to make it right again. Such tales usually follow a basic structure: Beginning, exploration, escalation, climax, and resolution.

## Beginning

*Once Upon a Time…*

The beginning is the call to adventure. Almost always, this involves a problem. Sometimes, the problem has already happened to the characters, such as their

father cannot feed them and means to leave them in the woods to die. Other times, there is trouble elsewhere often accompanied by a herald of adventure: a literal individual who announces things, perhaps a talking animal or a traveling peddler. It might not even be trouble, but simply a chance for adventure—an announcement that the prince is holding a fabulous ball to seek a wife, or a request from your mother to take some goodies to your grandmother. Whatever it is, it is something that is imminent and important—the call to adventure cannot be ignored!

## Exploration

*On the way through the forest, she met a wolf…*

Fairy tales are full of exploration, usually of dark, scary places, in thick forests or deep underground. Sometimes it might not be one place but a journey across the kingdom or through a fabulous landscape, but whether one place or many, it is always a place full of strangeness, wonder, and danger. It is through this exploration that the characters discover more about the problem at hand, and how to solve it, or some other hidden or unexpected twist. Kids will make lots of rolls to talk to people, find their way, seek out clues, and understand old lore. Perhaps they find they have a fairy godmother, or stumble upon a gingerbread house deep in the woods. This is also the stage where they may meet enemies for the first time, although it is not always obvious they are enemies. Sometimes the wolf seems polite in his questioning, and the gingerbread house seems to be safe.

## Escalation

*He Disguised Himself as Her Granny, and Hopped into Bed…*

This is the point where the exploration develops a clearer image of the darkness faced. The true horror of the forest is discovered, the villain's identity is revealed, or the challenge made clear. The goal of the journey becomes visible, albeit perhaps at the top of an impossibly tall mountain which must still be climbed. The kids find out what blade can kill the dragon, and where it lies. The gingerbread house contains a witch who kidnaps the children. The wolf puts his deception into

play. This may involve Scrapping or Scampering away; it will certainly require Pluck or Cool tests to make it through the agonizing temptations or the terrible despair they face if they fail to Scamper to safety. Escalation may not always be a bad thing per se, it just raises the stakes: It is at this point the girl who just wanted to see a ball realizes that the prince is falling in love with her, or that her little white lie now means she is expected to spin gold in huge amounts—or die.

### Climax

*"All the better to eat you with!"*

With the villain exposed or the goal finally clear, the kids face their final and greatest test: to go the last mile, to take a stand, to face the horror, fight the villain, save the princess, and/or claim the prize. These trials are usually very dangerous and will typically require some amount of fighting, but they are also trials of the mind, heart, and soul. It is one thing to have enough Pluck to hold off despair while imprisoned by the witch, quite another to have enough to push her into the oven…or fight off the Big Bad Wolf, or defy your stepmother in trying on the slipper. In these trials the characters can play up their characters' internal struggles, and you can develop your themes of choice.

### Resolution

*And they lived happily ever after…*

This part is often forgotten, but it is essential to fairy tales and a very necessary respite in darker games of *Grimm*. Kids and players alike need to see that their struggles have achieved something. This might be simply surviving the danger, defeating the villain or reaching the object of your quest. But, it is also a good idea to sometimes add more benefits, unexpected and unsought. Not only do they complete the quest, but they win the hand of the maiden, are knighted by the king, or bring happiness back to the town. The villain's evil is seen to be gone in an overt and extended fashion —the servant girl will never be poor again, the woodcutter will not need to abandon his children. Of course, in a dark or horrific campaign, these victories should be rare.

## Setting the Scene

Sagas are made up of stories, and stories are made up of scenes. Scenes can be absolutely any possible moment in a story. The key to making each scene striking and dramatic is to have a clear idea of its purpose. This is true even if the scene is one you have improvised on the spot based on the actions of the players. Within the first few moments, it should be apparent what the kids intend to do, and thus you can spot what kind of scene it is and how it can end. Scenes can be any sort of length, and may even involve changes of scenery (a scene could cover an entire journey on a flying carpet, for example) but to be most affecting, it needs to accomplish something and end at the right moment. Don't be afraid, in fact, to declare a scene over once it has reached its goal, and cut ahead to the next scene. Spending time tying up little loose ends or dealing with minutiae so as to "naturally" link it to the next is not likely to make for a great game.

There are many types of scenes, of which only a few examples are listed below. Note also that many types can be combined with others: For example, a mystery could also build atmosphere, or demand action.

**Action Scenes:** These are scenes where the kids are trying to do something physical, and something is trying to stop them, or the task itself is challenging and dramatic. This may be a fight, but it could easily be a race, or a daring mountain climb, or a game of football, or even preparing a great feast before the giant comes home, hungry for his dinner. These scenes are nice and easy to run because they are simple. Action tends to have a very specific goal (either defeat the threat or escape), not to mention a very clear end when the goal is met. Using the Dramatic Moment rules lets you frame the scene perfectly from the start and you can end them with a flourish when the last test is made.

**Mystery and Exploration Scenes:** In these scenes, something needs to be discovered. If it is hidden physically, the characters must make Seek tests, or perhaps Hide tests to remain unseen while somebody else hides the object or uses the secret door. If it is a secret hidden by people, they will have to make Cool tests or use a Study trait to get people talking to them. If it is an academic puzzle, they will have to use Book Learning or 4-H; a magical puzzle might require Gaming; discovering a way into the impregnable castle may require Juvie. Much like action scenes, mystery and exploration scenes have very obvious end points, immediately suggesting new scenes. The difference between mys-

## Ending Scenes

It is important for scenes to not go on too long and lose coherence, but it is equally important that players do not feel constricted or frustrated by ends that come too swiftly or abruptly. Never end a scene without checking that the players have done everything they wish to do. You can do this by asking directly, or simply by reading their reactions: When the players run out of things they do, they'll stop telling your what their kids are doing and look to you for direction. That's your cue to create a new scene. As with beginnings and endings, the fairy tale clichés are your friend. Cut to new scenes with phrases such as "Later on," "Time passed," "Meanwhile," "The days came and went," and so on.

tery and exploration is that mystery scenes begin with the problem more defined, whereas in exploration scenes the kids might have no idea what they're looking for. That indeed, may be the first mystery, or even a separate one.

**Building Scenes:** Building scenes are scenes in which the goal is for the narrator to build up some aspect of the story. For the narrator, this is typically building up a sense of the setting, whether that is the Grimm Lands as a whole or the setting specific to the current Scene or Story. The purpose of the scene is to express to the kids that the forest is dark and scary, the villain evil, the common folk downtrodden, or, on rare occasions, that their victories have had great impact. This can be done purely through description of events or the sensations impacting upon the kids (what they see, hear, feel, and even smell) or by interacting with other characters in the scene. In some cases, interaction is the whole focus, because the purpose will be to express the nature of a character or several characters. For example, a scene could involve the characters meeting the Rotten King for the first time. There is no goal for this scene except establishing the king's dark and twisted soul. Another scene might be establishing the chief characters in a tiny hamlet through a whole series of conversations or events. Building scenes often meander, because the end goal is not well defined: It isn't always clear at what point the atmosphere has been sufficiently communicated. Take your cue from your players—when they start looking around for something to do, it is time to give them a mystery or some action.

**Character Scenes:** Character scenes are the easiest for the narrator. The goal of these scenes is for the kids to interact with each other. This may be to help build up their relationships with other characters or deal with any problems that have arisen between them, such as the Nerd trying to put aside his hatred for the Bully so they can survive their adventures. It could also be used to establish some internal struggle within a single character, and how that kid is dealing with it. It need not be anything so deep, of course; it could simply be the kids talking about the story they are involved in and how they might defeat the villain, or even just relaxing together and having fun. Character scenes can be guided and introduced by narrators, but then you should back off. Let your players run these, and, as with building scenes, let them tell you when they are finished.

# Tips and Tricks

*Grimm* has many of the trappings of a typical RPG: dice, rules for determining a character's actions, character archetypes, special powers, and character advancement over time. However, the true heart of *Grimm* is its storytelling elements. The heroes in these tales are not mighty warriors, powerful wizards, and the like: They are kids. Fragile, inexperienced kids, with only their imaginations or modern sensibilities to keep them from certain doom. The twisted fairy tale world in which they find themselves is dangerous and literally out of someone (or something's) worst nightmare. It's one thing to have your character get swallowed up by the Big Bad Wolf, but it's quite another for it to happen due to poor dice rolls, misunderstanding of the rules, or just dumb luck.

The narrator has a variety of tools at his disposal to make the most of these stories, and to ensure that when a dramatic moment is called for, it is not the dice that are telling the tale.

## A Narrative System

Although *Grimm* doesn't eschew dice, randomness, and rules altogether, neither should it get hemmed in by these aspects. Instead, the narrative should be the main focus of the game, with storytelling and roleplaying having more weight than character powers and dice rolls. Combat should be cinematic and memorable, rather than the rote "kick down the door, kill the monster, and take its stuff" formula so common to other RPGs. Matters should be resolved through an even mix between problem-solving, social interaction, and good

old-fashioned violence. Skimp on one and you're sure to alienate one or more members of your group.

## Creativity

Just like protagonists in the fairy tales on which the game is based, the characters in *Grimm* need to be extremely creative and resourceful in order to survive. Monsters and bad guys are typically powerful enough that overcoming them physically is challenging in the extreme. A combination of cleverness, wit, and logic—mixed with a healthy dose of inspiration and luck—is required to defeat them.

Although the Dreamer archetype typifies someone with lots of creativity, by no means should this prevent other characters from flexing their own inspirational thoughts to the max. A Jock who comes up with the answer to a riddle or an Outcast who stands up to the Rotten King prove that archetypes can be turned on their heads.

Because *Grimm* has such a narrative-intensive style, characters should be rewarded for making the story entertaining and thinking outside the box, even if adjudicating such actions requires the narrator to bend, break, or invent rules. Everything presented in this book should be considered guidelines to keep the story moving, nothing more. Of course, the narrator breaking the rules for the sake of the story is different than out-and-out cheating, which should be highly discouraged at all times.

## Character Death

Despite the fact that the world of *Grimm* is an extremely hostile and dangerous place, with characters put in peril on a regular basis, the actual death of a character should be an extremely rare event. For one, the death of heroes doesn't accurately portray the fairy tale setting. Characters can be defeated, true, but that is mainly so they can ponder what happened, regroup, and come back even stronger to win the day. Only story characters (particularly villains, but sometimes noble heroes) should die horrible deaths.

The mechanics are designed so that characters who suffer from too many wounds are incapacitated rather than killed. This is easy enough to justify during a battle scene or the like, but in instances in which death seems undeniable, a certain amount of license should be applied. For example, a character who is seemingly crushed under ten tons of falling rubble might have amazingly been trapped in a tiny space between two large boulders, or a poison that should end someone's life might put him in a coma instead. Even more fantastical events can take place, such as a character falling from a deadly height and miraculously being snatched up by a passing griffon or landing on a marshmallow monster. True, the character is still likely to be knocked out and need rescuing, but that's better than being permanently removed from the story.

Nonetheless, player characters occasionally die, whether through horrible luck or, more appropriately, as a heroic sacrifice. Even when a player character's death is poignant and meaningful, there should be some "out" made available to the player. Perhaps the character has a destiny that foretold of his "death and rebirth" to fight another day. This allows the character to be taken out of play for now, but saves his return for a memorable point later in the adventure. Maybe he returns as a ghost who cannot affect the world physically, but has special powers. Or perhaps he is reincarnated as an animal.

When a player character dies (or seems to die), take the player aside and speak to her. If she feels that the character did so nobly, or perhaps wants to play something new, then let the character's demise appear seemingly permanent, but always allowing for some *deus ex machina* that could bring her back.

# Everyone Shines

One of the most important aspects of running a *Grimm* campaign is to remember that you, as the narrator, should allow every player's character the chance to shine, to have a moment in the spotlight. Jocks should

## "But I Can't Do That!"

Spotlighting a character doesn't necessarily mean playing to his strengths. Sometimes the most satisfying encounter occurs when a character is facing a situation for which he is least capable—and comes out victorious nonetheless. Obviously, this should be done with a great deal of care, as allowing a character to succeed each time at something he's not particularly good at is neither fair nor logical. If done just right though, the end result can be extremely satisfying.

Throughout an adventure, note which traits each character seems to be deficient in, then place that character in situations where one of the only options available is to attempt that trait. Although chances at success are slim, allow for a chance at success via the use of equipment, teamwork, and creativity. Even if the character only pulls it off one in six times, when it works, it can be fun and rewarding for the entire group.

be allowed to display their superior physical skills. Bullies should get to boss everyone (including the bad guys) around at some point. The intellect of the Nerd should get a chance to save the day.

Because the player characters are already based on archetypes, setting up scenes to highlight their strengths is fairly straightforward. Even those who defy their archetype's norms are still likely to fit one of the descriptions below.

# A Scene for Every Kid

In order to help you craft your *Grimm* adventure to allow every character to get the proper amount of "screen time," here are a few examples of scenarios or situations that focus on each archetype's strengths or makes them face up to their weaknesses.

## The Bully

Bullies obviously get the most out of any scene in which they get to push others around, intimidate weaklings, and generally appear much more powerful than they really are. The best way to make a Bully face up to his weaknesses, on the other hand, is to force him to rely on others for help. His own shortcomings, and his embarrassment at them, show up in contrast to the Jock's athletic ability to avoid terrain hazards, the Dreamer's imagination in the face of conundrums, or other kids' ability to stand up to scary situations. Thus, when the Bully succeeds at something via his friends' teamwork dice, it cements the kids' relationships and suggests that the Bully might someday outgrow his previous assumptions about how he relates to others.

• A group of peasants must be whipped into shape in order to face down the marauding bandits who are soon to arrive. The Bully's threats might allow him to take on one of bandit's scouts with no problem, making the peasants respect his fighting prowess and listen to his orders.

• Bullies are not the best all-around fighters, but are very effective against specific types of foes. They are likely to be a group's best wrestler, for instance, and their ability to scare foes may allow them to keep scrapping without fear of retribution. Which situation a Bully is best at will depend on the talents he has chosen; so long as a few of the combats in a story work to the Bully's strengths, he will have a chance to prove himself as a warrior.

## The Dreamer

The Dreamer is at her best when she lets her imagination go absolutely wild or relies on nothing more than gut instinct and the belief that "because I want it to happen, it will." This comes to the fore in situations where things seem the most dire and help the most improbable.

• The characters are confronted with a situation that is utterly impossible—a staircase that twists back on itself or a blazing inferno that burns cold. Only the Dreamer's ability to believe in the impossible allows the characters to "disbelieve" the strangeness before them and move beyond.

• The characters must placate the petulant sultan, who threatens to behead them one by one unless they can keep him entertained. The Dreamer's fabulous imagination lets him come up with an evening's worth of amazing stories, keeping the sultan amused until he falls asleep, allowing escape.

## The Jock

All Jocks excel at tests of physical prowess, obviously. Others may be particularly brave, or good organizers and team players, depending on the talents they have selected.

• The characters are confronted by a belligerent centaur who threatens to cut them down unless one of them can beat him in a foot race. Unbeknownst to the centaur, the Jock is state champion in the 200-meter sprint!

• While attempting to escape an evil witch's hut that is engulfed in flames, one of the characters becomes trapped beneath a burning beam. Only the Jock's superior Muscle and **Winning Play** talent can free her from a fiery doom.

## The Nerd

The vast intellect of the Nerd is best shown through solving puzzles, deciphering riddles, or figuring out some obscure bit of knowledge that no one else would ever know. The Nerd often shines when spellcasting is required, as well.

• The characters must play a game of skill (such as chess, mah jong, or some completely unknown game) against the Eternal Guardian Who Looms and Plays Games of Skill. Only the Nerd's superior intellect allows them to triumph.

• As the peasant mob prepares a pyre to burn the characters as wicked outsiders, the Nerd's superior intellect allows him to discern that a full eclipse is nigh. Using this knowledge, he can make a great show (or passes along the information to the Popular Kid, allowing her to do so) saying that he is a powerful wizard who'll blot out the Sun unless they are released.

## The Normal Kid

Normal Kids don't appear to have any particular moments in which they shine. In fact, they end up shining quite regularly, in situations where no one else seems to have the right traits or talents. As such, a narrator generally need not prepare specific scenes for the Normal Kid; by nature of his diverse range of abilities, he ends up saving the day at the most surprising of times.

• Pick a particular Study trait that all of the other characters lack. By default, the Normal Kid is likely to have a few grades in every trait, allowing him to pull something off while the others stand slack-jawed.

• The Normal Kid's flaw means that monsters always target him first. While he goads the monster and runs it around ragged, the other characters are allowed to slip by or set up the trap that brings the beast down.

## The Outcast

The Outcast's abilities are highlighted in situations where a serious attitude and criminal background come in handy. The Outcast knows how to get into places where he isn't wanted, to "borrow" items from unsuspecting individuals, and to vandalize for maximum effect.

• When the characters are tossed into the evil baron's jail, the Outcast is the last character to be shackled to the wall. Through judicious uses of the Juvie trait, the Outcast could nab the guard's keys or use his talents to slink out of the guard's sight, coming back to pick the locks on his companions restraints.

• The characters find themselves hiding out in the slums of a large city. Where the others struggle to find shelter and food, the Outcast, used to such hardships, knows where to look for such things. Also, when they encounter a band of ragamuffins living on the streets, the Outcast's street savvy can shine, allowing them to avoid conflict or form an alliance with these other Outcasts.

## The Popular Kid

The Popular Kid stands out in social settings, where her natural charm and charisma lets her cut through red tape or slide out of a sticky situation just by talking (or batting her eyelashes).

• The characters must get into the Rotten King's ball in order to rescue their captured comrade. The Popular Kid is the ideal candidate to bluff her way past the suspicious guards and on to the party beyond the barred gates.

• As the werewolf bashes itself against the barn door that the characters have barricaded, only the Popular Kid's **Cheerleader** talent can rally their flagging morale and force them to come up with a plan (or muster their courage to face the monster directly).

# There Are No Useless Traits

*Grimm* makes use of traits that are broad in definition but versatile in implementation. Every situation imaginable can be approached in some way with the various traits described in Chapter 3. While every character has at least one or two traits that are considered their key abilities, at some point in a saga, every trait should be shown to have merit…even boring ol' Home Ec and Book Learning.

Setting up situations in which the entire spectrum of traits are needed to succeed is a good way for characters to break out of their particular stereotypes. For example, the Popular Kid might be the only one who can talk her

way out of the captivity with the excuse of helping the witch clean her hut. But if she has no grades in Home Ec, the "I'm a great housekeeper" ruse won't last long. Likewise, the Outcast may be the one who avoids capture, but if he can't muster the courage to demand help from the local knight, he won't be much good to his friends. As for why kids of a certain archetype would have these against-type traits, there are plenty of possible reasons. A Popular Kid might've had a closer relationship with her hired housekeeper than she did with her distant parents, thus learning some Home Ec; a Nerd might have picked up some Juvie grades from his experimentation with hacking. Additionally, as a kid graduates to higher grade levels in the Grimm Lands, he is likely to learn new things just from being around kids with other specialties and skills.

# Special Rules

A lot of the challenges and foes the kids will face in the Grimm Lands are unique, and are described in Chapters 7 and 8. A few of the more common dangers and rules effects that a gang of kids might face, however, are summarized here.

## Despair

Fairy tales are fine when you're being read them in a warm chair by the fireplace. But at night, alone in the darkness of your bedroom, the horrors become very real and very disturbing. Being in the world of *Grimm* is much the same. When the kids have friends and allies around them and the Sun is shining, they can hold off the fears and terrors of this dangerous land. But when they are alone, trapped, or locked away in a dark place, the strangeness and unfamiliarity begins to bear down upon them, and they risk falling into **despair**.

When in such a situation, a kid must make a Pluck test every three hours. The grade of the test begins at three, plus one for each previous despair test. However, if this grade is less than his grade in Imagination, he must test against that grade instead. In effect, his Imagination makes things worse for him, allowing him to dream up all of the horrors that might lie in the shadows.

Once three successive tests are passed, the kid is safe and will never give into despair from his current situation. If he fails a test, he becomes nervous, suffering a –1 disadvantage on all Study traits because he can no longer think straight. If he fails a second test, he becomes worried, and now suffers a –1 disadvantage to Playground traits and a –2 disadvantage to Study traits. If he fails a third despair test, he starts crying uncontrollably, and suffers a –1, –2, and –3 disadvantage to Core, Playground, and Study traits, respectively. These disadvantages remain until the kid feels safe again. Rescuing him from being alone in the dark may not be enough, as he might still be trapped deep in the prisons of the castle. For each scene that a kid feels safe, he reduces his despair by one level.

If the poor child remains crying for a full day or more before rescue, however, he also gains an estrangement, just as if he had been using magic (see page 77). The darkness of the Grimm Lands has become a part of him, and it will become harder for him to return to the life he knew.

## Hazards

The narrator of a *Grimm* game should remember that there is more that is dangerous and malevolent in the Grimm Lands than just monsters. There are, in fact, any number of things that can oppose or hurt the characters, yet would defy classification as a monster. The forest itself might come alive and attempt to strangle those who walk from the path. The lake of glass will try to break the ankles of all those who walk across it. A hall of mirrors may trap anyone who looks at her own reflection.

Truly epic and mystical hazards such as these are so much like monsters, however, that they should be given traits as if they were monsters. This gives them depth, and fits the fairy tale genre: In most stories, such terrible barriers, puzzles, and hazards are at least as central to the narrative as the evil villains and terrible beasts. This method also allows kids to think of all sorts of ways to defeat them. Consider, for example, a living wall of thorns protecting a castle. Kids might try to burst through it with a huge amount of force (an opposed Muscle test), try to slip through the tiny gaps between the thorns (an opposed Scamper test), or cut it down with an army (opposed Scrap tests). If it is truly intelligent, they might even try to outwit the terrible thorns or cast a magical spell on them.

On the other end of the spectrum, some hazards do not require so much personality. The world of *Grimm* is full of any manner of things that can hurt the kids. Here are rules for a few of them.

### Drowning

While drowning usually occurs when characters fail to stay afloat in water, or are trapped beneath a surface, a character who is wrestling in water can be forced under by an opponent with the upper hand who moves the dog-pile beneath the water's surface. Characters can hold their breaths for as many turns as their Muscle trait (or their Boy Scouts trait, if it is higher…thank goodness for lifeguard training!). After that, characters lose a wound each turn until they are knocked out.

### Falling

Falling might happen as a result of a climbing accident, or falling into a pit, or being dropped by a flying beast. Some absurdly dangerous falls can be walked away from without a bruise, while even the shortest fall can be deadly with some bad

luck. Any time a character suffers a fall, roll 1d6, just as if you were rolling a test. On a 1, the character takes no wounds. On a 2–5, the character takes one wound. On a 6, the character takes at least one wound, and you roll the die again. Further 6s result in further re-rolls.

The higher the fall, the more dice are rolled. Unlike normal tests, in which the number of dice merely increases the likelihood that a grade will be increased, each falling die rolled on a test has the potential to inflict a wound. So if a fall called for 3d6 to be rolled, and the results were a 1, a 3, and a 6, the kid would suffer two wounds (one for the 3 and one for the 6), and the die that came up 6 would be rolled again, potentially inflicting more wounds.

Falls from a rooftop, a low tree, or off a horse require just one die. Falls from a third-story window, a tall tree, or the shoulders of a giant would call for two or three dice being rolled. Falls from a castle tower, a low cliff, or the back of a flying goose might call for four or five dice. For even higher falls, the wounds may be increased linearly, at the narrator's discretion.

Falling characters may make Scamper tests with a difficulty of 3rd grade + 1 grade per wound they would take from the fall. Success allows the kid to reduce the wounds by one, plus one for each grade by which he succeeded at the test.

Falls should rarely be lethal for major characters. Those who fall from towers typically land in moats or bogs, or are caught by convenient tree branches or a serendipitous hay bale. The number of dice or even the number of wounds being inflicted can be reduced at the narrator's discretion if there is a soft landing at the end of the fall. If a major character should seemingly be killed by a fall, he may end up in a coma or be lost in the depths of the chasm, only to be encountered or miraculously awakened, later.

### Fire

Fire is very bad for almost everyone. In *Grimm*, fire damage is modeled just like any other damage in a conflict. The stature of the fire determines the wounds, as larger fires burn hotter. However, creatures can only wield or breathe fires of a smaller stature then themselves. Examples of fire statures are shown in the "Fire!" sidebar.

The real danger of fire is that it can catch and cause its target to burn. Anyone who takes a wound from fire must make a Scamper test with a difficulty equal to the number of wounds inflicted, or catch fire. Anyone on fire takes a wound every round until they or somebody else puts them out (which requires a Scrap test with a difficulty equal to the number of rounds they have been on fire).

Anyone in a burning environment is at risk of being hit by fire, and must make Scamper test with a difficulty equal to the number of wounds the fire inflicts, or suffer wounds and potentially catch fire. Such characters also run the risk of asphyxiation; use the drowning rules for smoky fires.

## Oaths

One of the most important differences between our world and the Grimm Lands is the power of oaths. Oaths, vows, and promises have a very real and literal power there, and those who make them are bound by them, regardless of their true intentions. Anyone who swears to do something, or not do something, must abide by her promise until she is released from it, lest she suffer terrible consequences.

However, an oath is a very specific thing. It must involve a specific promise and should involve a specific consequence for not fulfilling that promise. Saying

### Fire!

| Stature | Wounds | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| Mouse-sized | 1 wound | candle flames, a tinderbox spark |
| Cat-sized | 2 wounds | torches, lanterns |
| Dog-sized | 3 wounds | flaming branches, flaming swords |
| Kid-sized | 4 wounds | roaring campfires, flaming trees |
| Adult-sized | 5 wounds | blazing bonfires, burning rooms |
| Moose-sized | 6 wounds | house fires, forest fires |
| Elephant-sized | 7 wounds | burning castles, exploding wizard's towers |
| Whale-sized | 8 wounds | lakes of fire, liquid hot magma |
| Dinosaur-sized | 9 wounds | the conflagrations of Hades, erupting volcanoes |

"I swear I will have my revenge some day" is not an oath. Saying "I swear upon the Headless Knights that I will have my revenge, else cut out my heart!" is definitely an oath and would be completely binding. Oaths are also literal. A promise made to "search for my true love for all my days, on pain of death" would mean that you must search for your true love every single day you are alive, or be struck dead.

Oaths also cannot be forced upon someone. An oath can never be made under duress or while the swearer's loved ones are under duress. A villain demanding a kid to "swear to serve me or I will kill you and your friends!" will not produce a binding oath. Nor do oaths count if they are made while the subject was under a mind-altering spell, in the throes of madness, or under some other mental or emotional control. In the main, oaths are used between friends or comrades, as a show of trust, honor, respect, and dedication.

Oaths may be obtained by trickery, deception, or manipulation. The Rotten King might request that children swear an oath of fealty to him as a show of their respect or to prove that they intend him or his kingdom no harm. The Big Bad Wolf might ask for an oath from kids that he happens upon in the woods, not threatening to eat them but definitely implying such in the look in his eyes. Woodcutters or knowledgeable birds may ask for an oath in exchange for so kindly helping or rescuing the kids. The Devil or a shape-changing magician might appear as a friendly character and ask for a promise in that form.

A good trick is to keep the oath vague: Hans the Hedgehog once asked a traveling king to promise him the first creature he saw upon returning to his castle. Assuming it would be his hunting dog or a horse at the gate, he agreed—only to be met by his only daughter, jubilant to see her father returned.

Again, though, the oaths must obey the rules, and kids can use their own wordplay and trickery in making their promises or asking for ones in return. Should the Devil appear as Good King Wenceslas, and ask a kid to swear allegiance to him, the kid could say "I swear allegiance to Good King Wenceslas," which would give their service to the king himself, not the disguised villain. While the Big Bad Wolf promises not to chew them up with his teeth (but says nothing about not swallowing them whole), a kid might promise not to hurt the Wolf (but say nothing about what his friends will do).

Once made, however, there is no tricking an oath with a technicality or verbal gymnastics. Oaths are extremely powerful, and "they" are aware when they are not being followed. A promise to serve someone would require active service; a promise to quest for an object would require every effort be devoted to the quest. If you swear to kill a certain dragon, you cannot try to get someone else to do the killing for you, nor can you wait for the dragon to get old and die. However, if by chance the dragon dies before you reach it, you may be released from your promise…or you may have failed at the oath, and suffer the consequences.

Obviously, it's a fine line. What if a character tells all of his friends that he has sworn an oath to kill the Dragon of Darkenwood while he prepares and trains to do the deed? If he is sure that one of them, a renowned dragon-slayer, will do the deed so he won't have to, then that's trying to avoid fulfilling his oath. If he earnestly tries to do the deed, though, and friends give him aid on the quest without being asked to, he still fulfills it. Wily players may try to weasel their way out of their oaths, but the Grimm Lands does not let them. Oaths are darkly powerful things that do not enjoy being mocked or tested. A player trying too hard to get out of his oath should be punished accordingly, perhaps with a small taste of his punishment or by being pursued by those who would inflict the punishment if they caught him.

Suitable punishments for oaths and their rules are listed below. Apart from death, most punishments will fade after a year and a day. The punishments may also be removed by powerful magic, or, of course, returning your devotion to honestly completing your quest.

## Death

Since character death should be very rare, making an oath on pain of death is not usually a good idea. However, a powerful oath between great friends or between a knightly kid and a real king could produce a death oath, which would lead to some powerful drama and the kind of epic sacrifice that character death in *Grimm* should be.

## Severing a Body Part

Many oaths include a pledge to remove a body part as punishment. Typically this is part of the face (ears or eyes), a hand, or a foot. Losing such a part causes a permanent –3 disadvantage on relevant tests: Those who have lost their ears or eyes would suffer disadvantages to some Seek and Cool tests; those who have lost a foot would suffer disadvantages to nearly all Scamper tests; and those who lose a hand would suffer disadvantages to many Scamper tests and all Scrap tests. The disadvantage can never be removed unless the body part is restored (usually requiring magic).

## Pain

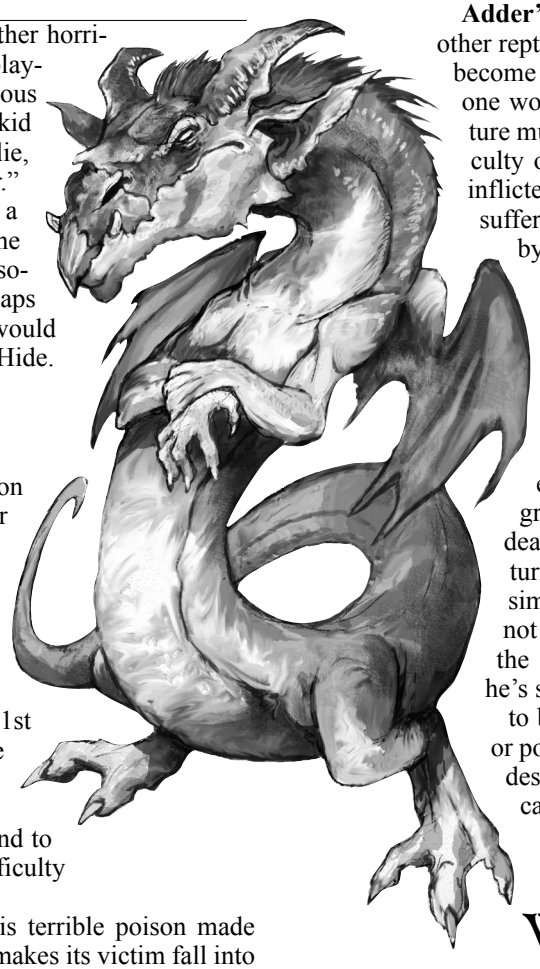
This punishment causes the body to be plagued with agony until the character re-dedicates himself to his oath or has the curse lifted. The pain may come and go in waves, allowing the kid to function, but the effect never changes. When in pain from a broken oath, all die rolls made by the kid count as one less than the number rolled. Thus, he botches on rolls of a 1 or 2, and cannot boost at all without focusing to increase his boost range from 6 to 5-6.

## Disease

Diseases caused by oath-breaking are always debilitating and disfiguring. The obvious signs of the disease—warts, pustules, rotting skin—cover the face and the hands, making all social checks extremely difficult. Diseased kids suffer an effective decrease of one grade to Cool and Muscle, which affects not only tests but also the amount of these traits that a character has available to expend on special abilities.

## Other Debilitation

There are any number of other horrible sufferings that you or your players might invent. Use the previous four as a guide. For example, a kid might pledge to "Never tell a lie, lest I stink like a pig forever." This could be represented like a disease, with the stink choking the kid's lungs and making him oh-so-uncool. On the other hand, perhaps the kid enjoys the smell, but it would make it difficult for him to use Hide.



# Poison

Apples, cakes, wine…poison can be in anything, no matter how yummy or tempting it appears. It may also be found in the fangs, claws, and stingers of terrible monsters. The effect of poison is usually resisted using the Muscle trait, and the difficulty can vary from 1st to 12th grade, depending on the potency of the poison. Sample poisons are listed below, but feel free to make up you own and to vary the base Muscle test difficulty listed.

**Powdered Mandrake:** This terrible poison made from the cursed mandrake root makes its victim fall into a deep sleep from which only magic can awaken them. A 6th-grade Muscle test resists its effects.

**Sleeping Draught:** This herbal draught is commonly made by sages and witches. If the drinker fails a 4th-grade Muscle test, he falls asleep for a day and a night. In this sleep, he often appears dead.

**Crystal Cordial:** This perfectly clear liquid tastes of sugared peaches, but anyone who drinks it must make an 8th-grade Cool test or become the willing slave of the first person she meets after drinking it. She may make another Cool test each scene to shake off this effect.

**Witches' Brew:** This dark green potion can be mixed by anyone but is a favorite of witches. Anyone who drinks it and fails a 3rd-grade Muscle test becomes terribly weak, suffering a –2 disadvantage to all Playground traits until the next day, and a temporary decrease in Muscle by two grades (this includes lowering the potential for expending Muscle as an iconic trait).

**Scorpion Sting:** This poison is also found in spiders and anything that likes to paralyze its prey. Unless a Muscle test is passed, a kid stung with this poison falls prone and becomes entirely helpless. The difficulty of the test is 5th grade, +1 grade per stature level the creature is larger than the target, or –1 grade per stature level smaller the creature is smaller than the target. Victims may test again each scene to shake off this effect.

**Adder's Bite:** The bite of snakes and other reptiles causes wounds to puff up and become infected. Anyone taking at least one wound from such a poisonous creature must pass a Muscle test with a difficulty of 5th grade +1 grade per wound inflicted. If the victim fails the test, he suffers one additional wound per level by which the test was failed.

**Stony Stare:** The gazes of a basilisk, cockatrice, or medusa are not exactly poisons, but they work in much the same way. Anyone caught in the stare of such creatures must make a Scamper test with a difficulty equal to the creature's personal grade level to avoid meeting its deadly gaze. If that is failed, the kid turns to stone. This is paralyzing, similar to a scorpion sting, but it cannot be shaken off. On the other hand, the kid is pretty hard to harm when he's stone, and doesn't age or continue to be harmed by things like diseases or poisons. Only magic or possibly the destruction of the petrifying monster can free someone turned to stone.

# Swallowed Whole

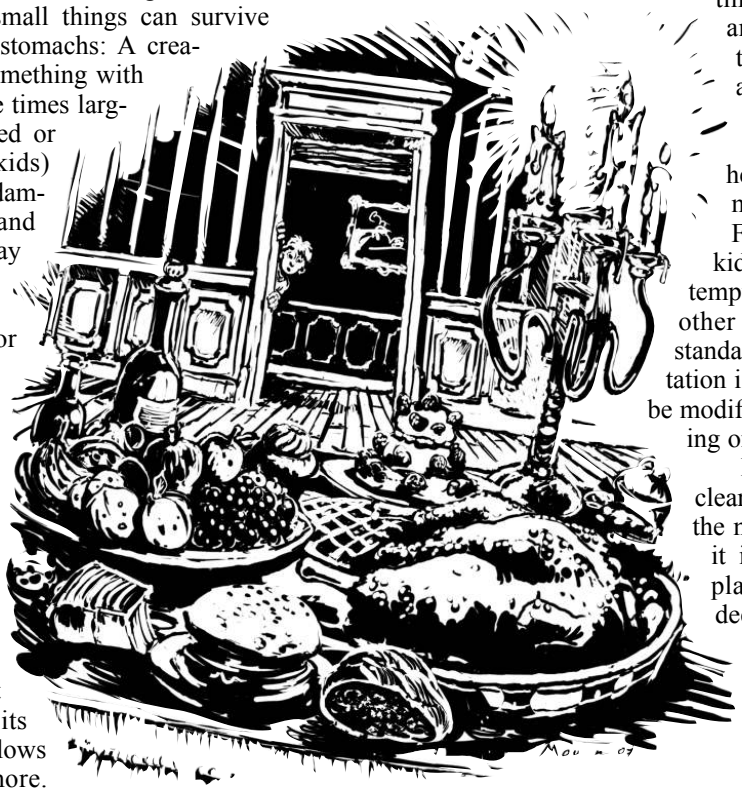
Monsters are particularly fond of swallowing delicious kid-shaped morsels. If a monster with this ability is wrestling a kid or other creature of the appropriate stature (usually at least one stature level smaller, but appropriate stature may be clarified under a creature's entry), it may spend its turn swallowing the victim with a successful opposed Muscle test.

A monster can eat up to half its own size in swallowed things without suffering ill effects. If it eats more than half its own size but not more than its own size, it becomes sluggish and suffers a –1 disadvantage on all Playground tests for the rest of the scene as a result. Finally, if a monster gluts itself, it can swallow even more. For each additional creature of one-quarter its own size that it swallows beyond its limit (for instance, for each kid that a moose-sized creature swallows), the

swallowing monster suffers an additional –1 disadvantage on Playground tests. Further, the swallower becomes sleepy, and must make a Muscle test each minute with a difficulty of 3rd grade +1 grade for every quarter-sized portion over its limit. The difficulty increases by another grade for each subsequent test. Failure means that the creature falls soundly asleep for a number of scenes equal to the number of quarter-sized portions it has eaten.

***Example:*** *The Big Bad Wolf eats Granny (adult-sized) and Little Red Riding Hood (kid-sized), for a total of three kids' worth of dinner. The Wolf is moose-sized, which is the equivalent of four kids. Thus he now has eaten more than half his size, but not more than his total size, and he becomes sluggish, suffering a –1 disadvantage on Playground tests. That disadvantage isn't enough to keep him from gobbling up the Woodsman, though! Now he has two adult-sized creatures in his belly, and one kid, for a total of five kid-sized objects. He suffers a –2 disadvantage on all Playground tests, and since he is only the size of four kids, he must now make a 4th-grade Muscle test or fall asleep for at least five scenes. The next minute, he must make a 5th-grade test, then 6th-grade, and so on, until he eventually falls asleep.*

Characters who are swallowed can do nothing until rescued. If the action ends before the poor child can be cut out (perhaps because the monster runs off), the kid suffers two wounds per scene until she is knocked out. Protection will not prevent any of these wounds. It is up to the narrator if being knocked out in this case results in death, but it usually shouldn't—even wolf stomachs are survivable for children for a significant amount of time. In particular, small things can survive indefinitely in large stomachs: A creature swallowed by something with a stature four or more times larger than it (whale-sized or dinosaur-sized for kids) takes no Wounds of damage at any point, and may try to find a way out. This may be a separate adventure, but if the narrator wishes to gloss over it, simply allow swallowed characters to attempt Scamper tests once per scene, opposed by the swallower's Muscle. Successful kids may then make a Hide test against the monster's Seek. Failure means that the monster slams its teeth down and swallows the kid once more. Success means that the kid has sneaked out of the monster's mouth without it noticing.



Kids who aren't swallowed have two ways to rescue their friends. First, they may try to sneak or rush into the creature's mouth, using the same tests as described above to do so. Once inside, they don't have to roll to be swallowed down into the belly, but they will take damage if the stature difference is not great enough. Even in a small stomach, they may then use teamwork to escape.

The other option is to cut open the beast. This may only be done if the creature has been knocked out or killed first.

## Temptations

The Grimm Lands, just like the fairy tales that spawned them, are full of temptations. Those denizens of the Lands who make a habit of pursuing children know that they have a weakness: They are terribly fond of heapings of candy, plates of Turkish delight, big shiny apples, fine ballgowns, sparkling jewelry, powerful swords, and piles of gold. Some temptations are simpler and circumstantial, like a beautiful clear stream to a thirsty and tired traveler, or a field of fresh poppies encountered by someone who has been trapped in a dungeon for several days. Either type of temptation can be a cruel trap for kids, and may drive them to actions that their players wouldn't normally have them undertake.

Whenever faced with a temptation, kids must make Pluck tests. The difficulty of the test depends on the niftyness of the temptation, the level of danger present (such as whether a kid must face certain doom in getting to the temptation), and the immediacy of that danger (sure, there's an eyeless monster sitting at the head of the table, but he's blind, so he won't be able to see me eating his food). Failure indicates that the kid must partake of the temptation, regardless of any other considerations. The standard difficulty of a temptation is 5th grade, but this can be modified up or down depending on the circumstances.

For example, a beautiful clear stream looks nice, but the narrator may decide that it is not as enticing as a plate of candy, so he decides it is a 4th grade temptation. However, if a kid has just crossed the Deadly Deadly Desert and

is parched, the temptation becomes much stronger, perhaps 6th or 7th grade. On the other hand, if the kids know that a troll lives nearby, they may be wary, thinking that the creek is part of one of his traps. Those who point this out may receive a +1 advantage on their Pluck tests, but not more than that, since the troll isn't even present. If the kids know the whole truth, which is that the river causes its drinkers to fall asleep so the troll can eat them, then it becomes much harder for them to succumb; in that case, they'd receive at least a +3 advantage on their Pluck tests. However, Pluck tests to resist temptations are never automatic. Kids are kids, after all, and cannot always control their impulses.

Note that partaking of temptations does not automatically render the kids senseless or helpless to attack. However, it almost certainly will allow any nearby monsters to ambush those enjoying the temptation.

Sample temptations and their typical Pluck difficulties, as well as typical advantages or disadvantages for certain kids, are listed below.

**Battles or Battle Honors:** 5th grade (for boys only)

**Beautiful Images:** 5th grade (–2 for kids with the **Art Student** origin talent)

**Candy:** 4th grade (–2 for kids suffering from despair)

**Crowns, Scepters, and Thrones:** 5th grade (–1 for kids with the **Spoiled** talent)

**Feasts:** 4th grade (–2 for hungry kids)

**Kindly Old Women:** 6th grade (–2 for kids suffering from despair)

**Jewelry or Pretty Dresses:** 5th grade (for girls only)

**Ponies:** 3rd grade (–2 for girls only)

**Restful Clearings:** 4th grade (–2 for tired or wounded kids)

**Stories or Storytellers:** 4th grade (–2 for Dreamers)

**Swords or Armor:** 4th grade (–2 for boys)

**Toys or Playgrounds:** 4th grade (+2 for kids above 6th grade)

**Wealth and Riches:** 3rd grade (–2 for kids with the **Orphan** origin talent)

Chapter Seven

# The Grimm Lands

## The Sun, the Moon, and Everything Else

Astronomy, gravity, geography, and meteorology…all of them and pretty much anything else ending with a "y" can be guaranteed to operate differently in the Grimm Lands. Only one rule is consistent: There are no rules. The Sun and Moon, for instance, sometimes seem so far away as to seem like the distant solar objects that scientists in our world claim them to be. Other times, they speak directly to the land-bound creatures who scurry about beneath them, gazing beatifically or malevolently down upon them, as befits their mood. Likewise, falling off a cliff might be certain death in the Real World, but in the Grimm Lands it might be the only way that a kid can learn how to fly.

The uniting factor behind all of the insanity of the Grimm Lands is that everything, even things that in our world are inanimate objects, stable geographical features, and predictable sciences, are instead pieces of a story. There need be no rhyme or reason to how something behaves or when it comes to life, so long as it makes the story more interesting by doing so.

Now that you know how to play the game of *Grimm*, it's time to explore the at-times fantastic, often horrid, and always disturbing lands in which they take place. As with so much of this work, much of what follows may vary from saga to saga, and even from story to story. The narrator should adapt, build on, or alter completely what he finds here to best tell the story that he has dreamed up for his players. And needless to say, players with no intention to narrate a story should read no further, unless they wish to greatly lessen their fun while playing.

## The Land's Shape

The kingdoms of the Grimm Lands have never been fully mapped, and seem to grow and shrink as the amount of belief that kids have in them back in the Real World waxes and wanes. Thus, for the purposes of each saga, any one Checkerboard Kingdom may border any other. Some places that the narrator particularly wants the kids to have to travel through may be between here and there, regardless of in which kingdoms "here" and "there" happen to be.

Despite the potential puzzle-box variation of the kingdoms, though, the Grimm Lands do maintain a certain shape from one saga to another. To the west is always the Sea. Unlike the other terrain features of the Grimm Lands, it needs no descriptors, and would brook none. It is as varied as the moods of a person throughout the stages of her entire life, and as expansive as all of the Imagination in all the history of all the worlds that have ever been. To the east, always somewhere in the distance, are the World's End Mountains, looming dark and enigmatic and full of malice and potential. Between the two are the Checkerboard Kingdoms, a mish-mash of every fairy tale land that has ever been dreamt of or read about.

The barriers between the kingdoms may be solid, in the form of a waterways, chasms, man-made walls, or fairy-grown hedges—or they might be hardly noticeable, a faintly traced dotted line or a shift in humidity.

Running through some of the kingdoms is the Rioting River, a tempestuous being of elemental angst. Connecting others is the fallen Beanstalk, of *Jack and the Beanstalk* fame, which now stretches endlessly across the landscape. And somewhere within each, growing like a canker sore and bearing malice toward all that is bright and good, is a piece of the Great and Awful Forest.

# Leaving the Land

The first question many kids ask, once they arrive in the Grimm Lands, is "How do I get out?" The answer to this question depends on the saga that the narrator has developed. There may be one escape, and it may be more dependent on the kids' actions than on their finding any particular location. There may be a way home beneath every leaf and behind every doorway, if the right magical key is found. Or there might be a few secret, difficult-to-reach, closely guarded pathways back to the Real World, each one taking a different form and each with its own particular way of asking the kids if they're sure, absolutely sure, that they're ready to go back home.

Regardless of its form, the primary way for the kids to get home is referred to in this text as "Babylon." It may be the mystical city of Hanging Gardens and pathways, one of which leads back to the Real World; it might be a reference to a state of being that one must attain in order to travel between worlds; it might be a person, a time of day, or a unique form of magic. The form that Babylon takes is, in the end, up to the narrator.

# The Beanstalk

How can a giant beanstalk that once reached up to the clouds fall all the way to the ground without making an impact? The answer is that it cannot. When Jack's beanstalk fell, it shattered mountains, laid low castles, damned rivers, and redefined the borders between kingdoms. After their hovel was destroyed by its landing, a trio of enterprising gnomes emerged from the rubble and saw that the large vine extended to the horizon in both directions. Such a momentous event, they thought to themselves and said to one another. Surely there must be a way that clever folk like we can capitalize on it?

And capitalize they did. The gnomes carved out the Beanstalk's center, offering employment and shelter to all of the other nearby creatures who had similarly lost their homes to the Beanstalk's fall. The more of the vine that was carved out, the farther the gnomes could travel, and the more homeless creatures they found eager for work and a place to sleep. In their efforts, they learned that the Beanstalk did not follow the normal laws of time and distance. It had reached to the highest cloud in the sky, yet had been able to be climbed in minutes. It had held aloft the largest giant in the Grimm Lands, yet it had been chopped down with a few swift strokes by a teenage boy. These same traits allowed the Beanstalk, which had fallen in meandering loops across the length and breadth of the Checkerboard Kingdoms, to take a traveler from one kingdom to another in a few ticks of the second hand, from the place that the Sun rose to the place that it will set in a few hours.

## Ferret Tunnels

The thieves from the Ferret's Nest managed to secure several safe houses on top of the stalk, drilling secret entrances into the tunnel in order to smuggle goods and people around. Children who become associated with the Ferret's Nest can travel through these secret entrances without ever having to pay the service toll.

The gnomes, being ambitious businessmen, opened it for business, allowing travelers to enter it and travel via its pathways to wherever they wished. Such travel, however, does not come without a price. The gnomes always exact some form of payment before allowing anyone inside. Payment could be some sort of cleaning, the performance of a quest, the giving of a gift, or maybe even the removal a finger, depending on the particular gnome gatekeeper's mood and inclination. The gnomes disappear once payment is rendered and the Beanstalk is entered, and they make no promises to potential travelers about helping them find their desired destinations, or even figuring out how to leave the Beanstalk's cavernous interior at all. Hence, the Beanstalk is full of all sorts of strange and wandering creatures, all looking for their long-lost homes, or merely for a way out, regardless of where it might lead.

The Beanstalk itself looks much as it did when it first fell: Its central stem is a thick green vine with a radius that varies between 10 and 50 feet, and is covered with leaves, boles, and tendrils of all shapes, sizes, and colors. Only the astute notice the tendrils of smoke snaking from well-concealed chimneys where someone has rented a piece of the Beanstalk from the gnomes, or see the outline of a door where an entrance has been carved. Most Beanstalk doors are round wooden portals without window or handle. Not even the hinges are visible. Searching around a bit near the door reveals a strange bean pod. When shaken, the pod makes a terrific noise, like something between a cicada and a crying baby. This alerts one of the gnomes or his servants to the presence of travelers, but also draws trolls and other hungry predators. Assuming that one of the gnomes or his proxies gets there first, he pops his head out of the door, unfurls the traditional Beanstalk banner welcoming travelers, and demands his payment.

Some of the entrances are guarded all of the time, while all are guarded some of the time. Payment is demanded by voice, by written message, by paid guard, or by proxy. Those who fail to pay may be attacked, or may be let in but spat out somewhere quite dangerous, or may simply be unable to find a way in. Even this last fate can be more dire than it at first seems: Clever and hungry monsters often roam near the Beanstalk's known portals, eager to catch emerging children by surprise or to "console" children who can't get in.

## Inside the Beanstalk

The Beanstalk's interior varies according to the environment through which the vine passes. On the one hand, these changes help travelers within recognize when they enter a new region, as is the case with the checkerboard pattern that appears between each of the Checkerboard Kingdoms, the seeping in of water when the Beanstalk crosses the Rioting River, and so on. On the other hand, the Beanstalk sometimes lets in things that are hazardous to travelers' health, including monsters and hazardous terrain. When the Beanstalk is suddenly filled with saltwater and kid-eating piranhas, for instance, you can be pretty sure you've hit the Sea.

Though the properties of the Beanstalk change as it passes into new and strange lands, most of it is taken up by the "Tweens," areas between different lands where the walls are pale green with just barely visible veins. The ground underfoot is formed from wood chips shaved during the time of the Beanstalk's excavation. Along the way, smaller tunnels branch off to sections of new growth, some of which have not yet been opened, while others lead to strange places, some as far as the Underworld, Dead Man's Cove, and maybe, as some claim, as far as the North Pole.

The only help a traveler receives in terms of directions are the fingerposts. Unlike the wooden fingerposts of the Real World of yore, these signposts are made

from actual fingers, hanging from small metal rings piercing the meat between the knuckles, with wooden signs hanging below the digits. Unfortunately, the fingers bleed a lot from the piercing, and the constant dripping of blood makes the ink on the signs run, obscuring the writing and really being no help at all. Worse, the fingers are quite grumpy about their predicament, and are prone to making rude gestures at the smallest provocation.

The stalk's tunnel is for the most part considered its own territory, autonomous of the lands through which it passes. The tunnel, its maintenance, and its security are entirely the responsibility of the gnomes and their staff, while homes built on or around the stalk still belong to the kingdoms through which the stalk passes, and their inhabitants are still their kingdom's subject. Each realm's army is supposed to patrol and protect the outer parts of the stalk and make sure no one drills illegal openings into the main tunnel. In exchange for this autonomy, the gnomes have agreed that anyone showing a royal decree of passage from a kingdom that hosts the stalk can travel without paying in service, but with coin at a reduced price. Many kings and queens have benefited from this agreement by exploiting the tunnel as a (relatively) safe and sure way to send messages and packages to other kingdoms.

### Terminals, Branches, and Waystations

The central stalk houses the widest and cleanest tunnel of this verdant highway. Secondary branches occasionally sprout from the main stalk, taking travelers into more remote areas and lesser lands. These are narrow, and often in disrepair, but are still serviceable.

## The Basement

When the Beanstalk fell to the Grimm Lands, it leveled everything beneath it, almost sending the London Bridge into ruin once and for all. Many upon whom it landed were killed, while others were just flattened, or "squished," as a few surviving children from the time solemnly recount. Both types of victims remain where the Beanstalk's fall knocked them: in the Basement of the Grimm Lands.

Reaching the Basement is easy, if you know where to look. Throughout the Beanstalk, there are large pink mushrooms called Moancaps. When touched, they cry, sounding sort of like people in pain, but with voices that are muted and uttering words that are hard to make out. If shaken, the cries become more pronounced, and great welling droplets rain like tears from gills underneath the cap. The liquid, usually red, collects near the base and runs towards a depression in the floor, normally invisible, and drains away in a matter of moments. A careful search of the area where the fluid disappears reveals a handle disguised to match the floor. The handle is attached to a portal with a ladder that descends to the Basement.

The Basement is not a fun place at all. It is dark, filled with sour smells of mildew and dust, covered with hanging sheets of cobwebs, and seems to be flooded with a constant, ominous dripping sound. If a candle is lit or a flashlight turned on, the wonders and horrors of the basement are revealed, but not for long; they mostly scatter from the sudden and painful light, their long antennae quivering with fear. The principle inhabitants of this world are giant cave crickets, which have bloated, fleshy humpbacked bodies, long legs, and feathery antennae. Riding on their backs are the flat folk, those who were squished by the Beanstalk's fall. From the front, they look almost human, except for faces that seem stretched out and movements that seem unnatural. From the side, the flat folk cannot be seen at all, for they are only two-dimensional. Though strange and ominous, the flat folk have no interest in harming innocent travelers and can even offer a haven for lost children. However, the Basement is so dim and depressing, and the flat folks' fates so weird and unpleasant, that despair is sure to set in within a short time.

The flat folk, whether for good or ill, also know the path to the Underworld. It lies beyond the Great Chasm, where the force of the Beanstalk's fall shattered the subterranean earth. The Great Chasm is so large and unnerving that only the giant cave crickets, or similarly powerful jumpers, can leap across it. Even those who can fly are stymied by the chasm…it is such a dark and empty void that a flyer quickly loses which way is up, and ends up flying down into it or up to the ceiling more often than across its width. Only someone or something who intuitively relies on gravity and momentum can manage the crossing, and it must be done in a giant, single bound. All sorts of nasty things with sharp teeth crawl upon the walls of the Great Chasm, and far, far below, quite beyond sight, the flat folk tell of a great fleshy floor that just might be the bald head of Atlas, holding up the world.

### Illumination

For security's sake, no windows or openings are allowed in the body of the stalk except for the entrances. The air inside the stalk is therefore a bit stale and often pungent with the smell of decaying plant. Darkness dominates inside the stalk, and, while some of the more supernatural travelers do not mind, the vast majority of the stalk's clientele would rather see what they are stepping on. Torches are out of the question, both because of the danger they would represent for the stalk as well as for the constant upkeep they would require, so the gnomes buy large quantities of wind-up lamps from the Clocktower. Other illumination options include luminous sprites hired to stay in place, bottled fireflies, or phosphorescent mold.

## Castle of the Rotten King

Where the Beanstalk comes closest to the castle of the Rotten King in the heart of the Great and Awful Forest, the great highway takes on a sinister appearance. Unlike anywhere else along its path, the Beanstalk slowly rots as it passes through the king's domain. The walls, ceilings, and floors are sodden and slippery with foul-smelling ooze. Pools of slime coalesce in depressions in the floor where knotty tendrils seem to reach out to snare and trip unwary travelers. An unwholesome mist pollutes the Beanstalk, smelling sulfurous and acrid.

Despite these physical symptoms, the Beanstalk remains here, as it is everywhere, neutral ground. The Rotten King knows that the gnomes could easily shut him out from the Beanstalk, and though he would eventually have them slaughtered, the difficulty of reopening trade and reestablishing links with his spies and agents would be prohibitive. So the gnomes let the Beanstalk fester and rot, because they know that's how Humpty Dumpty would prefer it; and Humpty Dumpty, in return, doesn't presume to rule the vine as he must rule all other things that enter his domain. Nonetheless, horrible and desperate things haunt this section of the Beanstalk, things like twisted children who escaped from the Rotten King's wrath, albeit without all of their limbs, or bizarre mockeries of talking animals who are forced to hide within lest they be targeted by the evil egg's acid orangutan hunts. The Ugly Duckling on occasion stalks this section of the Beanstalk, relishing the straight and narrow passage the leaves his prey with little opportunity to hide.

Unknown to either the gnomes or the Rotten King, the Beanstalk itself has become a danger here. Should a child manage to fall asleep on one of the rare dry spots in this section of the stalk, a disgusting vine tendril emerges from the muck and drifts toward the child. A bulge then works its way from the Beanstalk wall, through the tendril, and out its tip, revealing itself as a mucus-covered seed pod that slides into the victim's ear. The egg hatches in 1d6 days, resulting in a warped vine growing out of the child's ear. Not only is it ugly and painful, but it is also extremely disorienting, inflicting a disadvantage on all Playground tests equal to –1 per day of the plant's growth. When the disadvantage exceeds the kid's Scamper grade level, he becomes rooted to the spot and the vine reconnects with the Beanstalk; the kid is forever after forced to be a gatekeeper at one of the Beanstalk's entrances. The only known way to remove the plant before it takes root in the ground is to lure it out of the child's head by shaking a small fish near its leaves. The little plant emerges with a great sucking noise, reveals a nasty Venus flytrap–style maw, and devours the fish messily before choking to death on a fishbone.

## Edge of the World

The Beanstalk crosses all of the Grimm Lands, even extending far out to sea and, eventually, hanging over the Edge of the World. Those who cross through the water-filled tunnels come to a gaping hole hanging over a waterfall as wide as the world itself, down which the Sea constantly flows. Looking out and down reveals a great sea of stars. Sometimes a ship filled with cannibalistic pirates drifts to the edge of the falls and goes over, or a bucket containing three crazed men, fighting over something in their midst, spins by. Sometimes a lucky sailor manages to catch one of the Beanstalk's vines before the rest of his ship falls over the edge, only to find that he is trapped by the Beanstalk's water-filled tunnels. Great big, nasty, filthy seagulls patrol the Edge looking for a good meal in the things the Sea spits out, and roost on the Beanstalk while they watch and wait. Worse, when the merry Sun sets and the wicked, mad Moon rises, he sometimes hovers just over the Beanstalk, casting a leering eye at the edge to drive the moon-mad into jumping to their dooms. Between mad pirates, hungry seagulls, and lunatic celestial bodies, the Edge of the World is not a place to tarry.

One such madman living in this forsaken place is an old crusty sailor named Bobby Shaftoe, who went to sea, leaving his betrothed back in the Checkerboard Kingdoms. He never returned to her, for his ship was swallowed by a whale…he counted himself lucky in some ways, for he never had liked the old shrew. After escaping from the monster's mouth, he drifted at sea for ten long years, then caught one of the Beanstalk's vines as his raft sailed over the Edge of the World. Long years alone have driven poor Bobby Shaftoe quite insane; every human being he sees is, in his mind, his nasty old wife come to fetch him, a vision that strikes him with terror.

## Great and Awful Forest

The Great and Awful Forest has long since grown over the Beanstalk, its trees taking root on its sloping sides and its lichens covering the vine in a vain effort to break it down like the other fallen forest refuse. The plants resent the Beanstalk, for it offers a slim chance of escape for those doomed to wander this terrible woodland.

Travelers can easily tell when the Beanstalk passes through the Great and Awful Forest. Much of the tunnel is underground, and all manner of pale white, yellow, and red roots pierce the walls and ceiling of the stalk, caressing (and occasionally grabbing hold of) the heads of those who travel beneath them. Much like the Great and Awful Forest has lucid moments of heart-stirring wonder, though, so too does its segment of the Beanstalk. Subterranean forests of giant mushrooms are lit by otherworldly light, lush blue grasses and ferns caress the feet, and in areas where the ceiling reaches high enough, green-speckled sunlight light filters through and is accompanied by the trilling of songbirds.

These descents into the earth are close to the Underworld, though, and therefore come within the control of the Devil. Scattered about the strange wonderlands are concealed pits, plants that give off a cloying and soporific odor, and other means to, if not harm children, at least trap them until the Devil can extract unfortunate oaths involving their souls.

## Riotous Passage

The Beanstalk crosses the Rioting River, weathering the river's mercurial temper without a problem. Nobody builds anything near the place where the stalk and the river intersect, for the stalk is often submerged during the numerous flash-floods. Those traveling inside the stalk know they are crossing the Rioting River by the sound and vibrations of water running over and/or under the stalk. Fairy patrols examine every inch of the tunnel in this place just in case one of the malicious water sprites tries to drill through and inundate the tunnel.

## The Sea

The Beanstalk extends even out into the Sea, floating in some places and traveling along the ocean floor in others. Once the Beanstalk leaves dry land, there is a noticeable swaying motion inside. As the waves of the Sea crash against the walls, the whole stalk shifts and moves, making footing uncertain. The air is damp and mildewed, with a noticeable fishy stink. The farther along one travels, the wetter it becomes, with puddles of brackish water standing on the floor and dripping from overhead. Sometimes the Beanstalk fills completely with seawater, preventing further travel unless the traveler makes good use of his imagination. Other places, though, are weirdly dry. Those few intrepid explorers who have journeyed its entire length claim that the stalk travels all the way to the Edge of the World.

The most common denizens of the Beanstalk in this region are sea dwellers who squirmed through rents in the stalk's walls and could not find a way back out, whether they be talking fish, seductive mermaids, or clever crustaceans. Slightly less common and potentially more dangerous are lost and shipwrecked pirates and sailors who came upon the floating stalk while adrift. They may have managed to get in, but cannot pass the flooded sections that lead back to land, and so remain, castaways who have little reason to live and even less reason to remain sane.

## World's End Mountains

The Beanstalk narrows as it nears the World's End Mountains, and strangely seems to descend. The farther one goes, the steeper it gets, until eventually travelers can only climb or slide down it (never mind that, from the outside, it seems to travel on a level plain, then slowly makes its way uphill toward the mountains' foothills). When the travelers tumble out of the Beanstalk's end, they find themselves deposited in a multi-purpose pit

belonging to those who are more closely tied to the Beanstalk's history than any others: the giants.

The fallen Beanstalk is renowned for traveling the length and breadth of the Checkerboard Kingdoms, but all things must begin and end *somewhere*. In the case of the Beanstalk, it is here, in the foothills of the World's End Mountains, that the fallen vine reaches its terminus. It is not a natural end, though: The giant vine has been hacked off by, appropriately, giant axes, and those who travel this far are spilled unceremoniously into muddy pit filled with bones, refuse, and oversized dirty laundry.

As for the residents of Beanstalk's End, they're all giants of middling size. They hail from various places: Some once lived throughout the Grimm Lands, while others once resided in the World's End Mountains. Only the most elite and powerful of giants lived among the clouds, with the rest worshipping the cloud-dwellers as celebrities and royalty. That is, until the day that Jack cut the Beanstalk down, and the giant to rival all giants fell to his death. With him died much of the hope, faith, and goodwill among the giant community. Knowing not what they would find at its end, giants from throughout the land followed the Beanstalk, traveling for days or months or years. It was a pilgrimage of the large, and when they came to its end, they found the most famous of their kind lying dead and destroyed by his fall from on high. The sight left a void in the hearts of the giants, one that was filled by malaise, distrust, and a lazy viciousness that would be terrifying, if the giants could be bothered to act upon it.

Luckily for the Grimm Lands, these angsty giants have been content to remain in this place where their giant hearts were broken. They occasionally raided nearby kingdoms for food and sport and to capture a princess or two; among their favorite games is a disturbing thing called "goat golf," which can actually be played with any livestock the giants come across. Eventually, the more enterprising among them realized that the Beanstalk had become a highway of sorts. They snatched up their axes, made use of an understanding of the magical methods of plumbing, and turned their end of the Beanstalk into a faucet, of sorts. Now, travelers who travel too far along the Beanstalk's length find themselves being irrevocably pulled toward Beanstalk's End, spilling them out into the giants' combination laundry basket, garbage pit, and larder. Getting out of the pit requires either the ability to fly or a 12th-grade Scamper test.

The foothills are home to at least a score of giants, ranging from elephant-sized to dinosaur-sized, and their assorted retinues. The more industrious and intelligent among them mine rock and metal from the surrounding peaks and have enormous manors clinging to the mountainside. The more brutish live in simple caves, the openings of which are covered by large boulders, loose brush, and the hides of their victims. Savvy kids will quickly realize that the later are the dangerous ones, while the former are the really, really dangerous ones.

The dangerous ones, luckily for the kids, are rather dim, and can be easily outwitted and dazzled. These are the ones who are likely to find the kids in the pit beneath the Beanstalk's outlet, as they are either emptying the garbage, doing laundry, or looking for food scraps. Once the kids convince them to help them out of the pit, or to at least hold off on eating them, they can fairly easily get the run-down on the really, really dangerous giants in their mountainside manors. For more details on the giants of the World's End Mountains, see pages 175 and 194.

# The Checkerboard Kingdoms

Once upon a time there was a great kingdom, and a peaceful kingdom, and a bountiful kingdom…and hundreds of other kingdoms of all shapes, sizes, and cultures. For the most part, those kingdoms' rulers were fair and just, and the people lived happily. Sure, there was the occasional evil queen or greedy king, but each was eventually disposed of by a clever stepdaughter or a brave peasant boy.

All of that changed when those kingdoms became condensed into a single magical land. Whether they were Real World kingdoms shunted over into the fairy tale world, or that world of imagination and fable slowly condensed as belief in the stories faded, the kingdoms found their lands shrinking. No longer was each kingdom a vast place full of diversity and wonder. Instead, they became one of countless crushed and crazed places, packed together in the improbable square pattern of the Checkerboard Kingdoms.

The land receives its name because each of the different kingdoms in the land is contained within almost perfect square borders. Dimensions stretch and shrink regularly, creating kingdoms of very different sizes, some so large as to be called empires and others so small as to only consist of a little keep and a large courtyard. However, they all fit together somehow; it is better not to question the whys, for that way lies madness.

## Kings and Queens

Kings and queens in the Checkerboard Kingdoms are, unlike the rulers of the Real World, quite likely to be encountered by wandering children. Some have the habit of traveling incognito throughout their lands in hopes of finding the next beautiful maiden to capture their hearts, or to check that their subjects are not idling in their fields. Others roam about publicly, accompanied by their court of jesters, hunters, gossipers, and

assorted noble folk, making great noise as they travel. And some demand that their subjects bring any newcomers to an immediate audience at their palace.

Whatever the case, kings, queens, princes, and princesses have the disturbing habit of finding children or demanding to see children at particularly sensitive moments, such as when they've just arrived in the Grimm Lands but haven't yet found their feet, have just barely escaped from the Big Bad Wolf, or have just come into possession of an incredible magic talisman that any noble would kill to have for his own.

## Marrying Young

Many kings have the disturbing tendency to marry off their daughters at the slightest provocation. If the players defeat an ogre haunting a well in the village, they can expect a grateful king to offer the princess's hand in marriage, regardless of the new groom's age. Boys should be very careful as to how they word their refusal: One king might take a no for an answer and offer alternative rewards, while another might be deeply offended and try to cut out the all of the children's hearts with his grapefruit spoon.

Girls have a similar problem—not that queens often give their sons in marriage, but that wandering princes are always on the lookout for pretty and clever wives. A girl left alone in the Checkerboard Kingdoms not only has to worry about falling to despair, but must also be careful lest a prince ride by and be smitten by her beauty, or her vivacity, or whatever else the mercurial young noble wants to be obsessed with. Dreamer girls are in the most danger from this fate, since riding off on a white horse toward the castle *is* a dream come true for many of them…at least, until the prince reveals his more distasteful habits or the entire court turn out to be monsters, at which point the dream becomes a nightmare.

Rescuing one of their own from an unwanted marriage to royalty is thus a problem that the kids may have to face many times. Some deal with it on such a regular basis that they all know what to do when one of them calls out "operation: runaway bride!"

## On Royal Quests

Another danger that children must be wary of is the ever-present call for heroes, particularly those from the Real World, to step in and solve one of a kingdom's many problems. Some of these problems are so long-standing that folk throughout the Grimm Lands can tell the kids of the quest, its kingly rewards, and its nigh-impossible challenges. Kids might be forced to attempt a quest as a punishment for breaking esoteric laws, or volunteer to do so in exchange for information or a much-needed item. Even if the kids are not recruited for a quest, they might meet those who are undertaking one. Princes, who are even more numerous than the land's kingdoms, often travel to these troubled kingdoms in the hopes of winning a princess's hand and gaining half of a kingdom for themselves. Other times it is not dashing princes, but rather lowly and brave commoners who attempt the tasks. Regardless of the quester's origin, he is likely to be grateful of any help the kids can manage to provide.

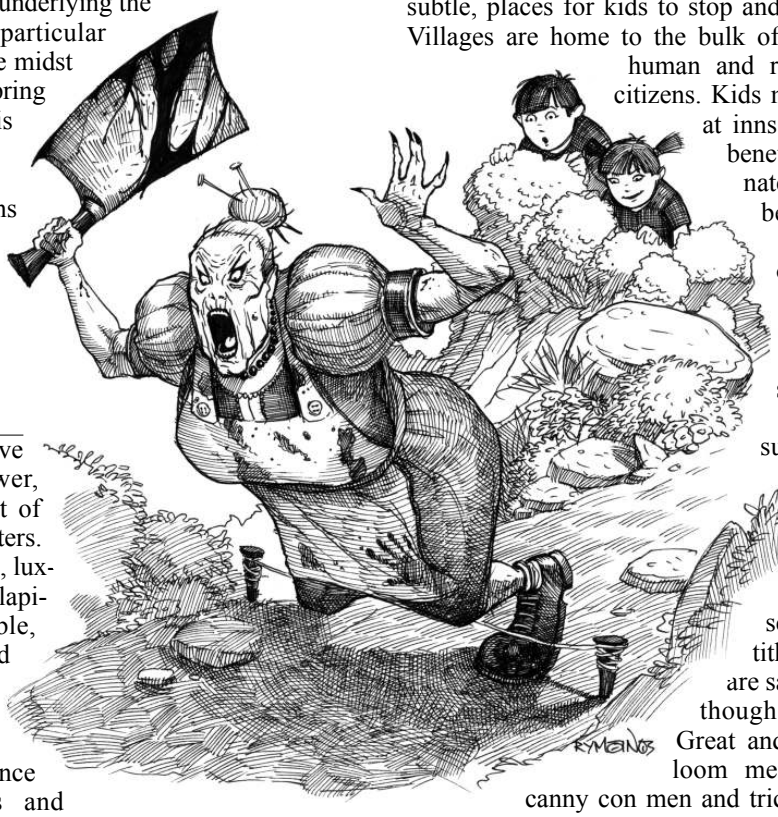
Not all quests are what they seem, and not all rewards are easily claimed. Quests that were assigned to get rid of meddlesome children might be rigged to ensure their demise, or the supposed prize being offered might not exist at all. Some royalty, spoiled and all-powerful within their own lands, may renegotiate the terms of the quest with each new completed task. Other quests may seem heroic or innocent enough at first, but end up having results that only the most callous or careless kid could stomach.

# A Kingdom Unto Itself

When a kid crosses the boundary from one kingdom to another, he might as well be crossing into a different world. The laws will probably change, the residents will probably change, and even the rules of reality itself will probably change. A few of the possible differences between the kingdoms are described below.

## Checkerboard Weather

A very unusual characteristic of the Checkerboard Kingdoms is that each one can have its own weather patterns, independent from those of their neighbors. This is particularly true of lands that are cursed, but it is also an effect of the madness underlying the Grimm Lands. A particular kingdom can be in the midst of a very pleasant spring while its neighbor is threatened by floods from torrential summer rains, the curtains of falling water stopping neatly at the border between the two lands.



## In the Center

All kingdoms have a castle, city, tower, fortress, or other seat of power near their centers. It is from these places, luxurious or humble, dilapidated or impenetrable, that the kings and queens of the Grimm Lands rule their lands with varying levels of competence and sanity. Castles and cities reflect the personalities of their rulers, to some extent. A kingdom ruled by an evil witch likely has a dark castle on a mountaintop, surrounded by a collection of hovels divided by dingy little streets where humans, fairies, and other creatures cower in fear of the queen's servants. If, on the other hand, the children arrive at a castle or city with a healthy and vibrant atmosphere, it may indicate that the kingdom's ruler is wise and benevolent. Of course, it may also indicate that the ruler is sly and deceitful, and that the pleasant surroundings are merely a lure for the unwary.

The same "reflect its ruler" effect extends to the land itself: Rich farming fields are more likely to be found in a kingdom ruled by a fair and mostly sane monarch, while barren and decaying swamps are probably the homes of wicked and sinister governors. Again, however, this is not a hard-and-fast rule. A rich and well-tended garden hides the wickedness of Bluebeard's castle, and the sinister halls of Beauty and the Beast's home hide their pained and angst-ridden hearts.

## Villages

The villages scattered throughout the Checkerboard Kingdoms are less threatening, if more subtle, places for kids to stop and catch their breaths. Villages are home to the bulk of the Grimm Lands' human and relatively humanlike citizens. Kids may find safe refuge at inns or at the homes of benevolent folk; unfortunately, they might also become enslaved by an efficiency-obsessed craftsman in need of workers or eaten by a kindly couple with strange appetites.

Villages are surrounded by farm fields and grazing land, which the inhabitants of the villages use to sustain themselves and pay their tithes. Most rural areas are safe to travel through, though stretches of the Great and Awful Forest may loom menacingly near, and canny con men and tricksters may wait for the unwary at crossroads. As with the rest of the Grimm Lands, however, children who stroll through a sunny field or arrive at a welcoming town should never, ever let their guard down. The quaint villages and fields of the Grimm Lands hold many secrets, most of them dark and dangerous.

# Sample Kingdoms

Following are but a few of the places that children may encounter as they travel the Checkerboard Kingdoms.

## The City of Kings

This strange city is clearly visible from the borders of its kingdom: Hundreds of pennants flutter in the wind, and countless pavilions, miniature castles, and diminutive minarets create a sea of colors and an amazing landscape of architecture. Unlike the other cities in the centers of the Checkerboard Kingdoms, no one castle or tower stands high above the rest. The only workers in the field are fairly intelligent but non-talking animals, who seem to be actually enjoying their jobs without any humans to whip them. If asked why there are no humans present, the animals will only gesture at the city with a look of great amusement.

A wall surrounds the city, but its gates are wide open and the only guards are two statues that, contrary to the kids' possible expectations, do not animate upon their approach, challenge their entrance, or anything of the sort. A strange sight welcomes the kids as they enter:

> Every person on the street is wearing royal garments from one culture or another, whether it be a European cloak of ermine and a gaudy crown, or Arabian robes of silk and a scepter of office, or a cape of exotic feathers and a headdress of leadership. In fact, the kids quickly realize that they are the only ones not wearing any symbols of leadership. When the rest of the residents realize the same thing, they quickly besiege the hapless visitors.

Each of the townsfolk grabs at the children, demanding their attention and clamoring for them to become their "subjects." They continually speak over one another, argue, shout each other down, make claims about their royal bloodlines, and generally make no sense. If the children do nothing, the urgent calls for attention will soon become a riot, with them at the center. A 6th-grade Cool test shuts everyone up and gives the children time to breathe and a chance to try to get things straight. Only pointing at one of the crowd and demanding that he and only he speaks, then asking him a direct question, will keep the crowd from exploding again.

Every citizen tells the same story, so it does not matter who the children pick out to explain things. Each of them is a king, queen, emperor, ruler, potentate, duke, duchess, and so on, of a minor fairy tale kingdom that the kids are unlikely to ever have heard of (a kid must pass a Gaming 10th-grade test to even barely recognize some of the names). Each of them found, one day, that the lands they oversaw were shrinking. As expansive as the Grimm Lands seemed, it was not infinite, and there was only so much room for its Checkerboard Kingdoms, particularly for those places that failed to capture the imagination of the dreamers of the Real World. Thus, each of the rulers found his kingdom shrinking ever-smaller, until at last it disappeared entirely. The people picked up and moved, or disappeared along with it, and

the ruler awoke one morning to find himself at the gates of this place: the City of Kings.

Since arriving, everyone has sought to prove that he or she was the true king of the land. Unfortunately, in a land made entirely of rulers, none are willing to be subjects.

## Choose Your King

The many kings and queens are driven to a frenzy by the children's arrival because they can finally act as subjects; and everyone knows that whoever has the most subjects will be considered the land's true ruler. Each ruler attempts to sway the children to his side, inviting them to splendid dinners, offering them gifts, and even offering to become the kids' slaves…so long as they will let the king rule them.

This wooing is really just a long-term version of the initial riot the kids experienced when they arrived, and over a period of a few days becomes a dangerous contest. Violence may be instigated as the rulers attempt to sabotage each others' efforts and one-up their rivals' offerings, and the less successful rulers will resort to kidnapping the kids. As for the kids just deciding to leave, there'll never be a moment that the many kings and queens aren't watching them, and they have no intention of letting their latest potential subjects just walk out the door. The only way the kids will be able to sort out the mess, and get out in one piece, is to demand a more reasonable method of choosing a ruler…like, say, a democratic vote.

With a 6th-grade Book Learning test, the kids can use what they learned in Social Studies to draft a way to choose candidates and hold elections, but things immediately became complicated as everyone nominates him or herself to be the next ruler. If the kids try to hold a series of run-off elections, the city become a chaotic jumble of campaigning, signs, and absurd and pointless campaign promises. Regardless of how they try to organize things, the end result will be the same: Each candidate will receive one vote, from him- or herself, for him- or herself. The kids can break the stalemate, but there's a problem: None of the kings or queens is a fit ruler. This may not be a problem for some kids, but those with any sense of social ethics should feel some guilt over leaving an incompetent in charge.

Should the issue arise, the kids will finally notice a single individual in the land who is not busily campaigning, who makes no silly promises. He simply strides out the front gates into the fields every morning, and walks wearily back into town at dusk. The other townsfolk wave off any questions about him, saying that he shouldn't truly be here, because he never really had a kingdom before he arrived; his story was all about him trying to find it!

The man is gracious enough, introducing himself simply as "Zar" (not "His most holy ruler potentate grandiose the seventh Zar," or anything like that). In answer to questions regarding why he does not seek to be ruler, he simply shrugs and says that he prefers to work the fields with the animals. Being king, he thinks, would be far too much work. However, further interrogation reveals that he is a very hard worker; the farm animals always follow his advice and act happy to see him when he approaches, for he helps them perform tasks that they cannot themselves manage. Shadowing him for a day allows the kids to watch him repair the animals' tack and harness, coordinate the spiders and beavers in performing repairs upon the various buildings in town, and negotiate a peace treaty between the land's cats and mice. It seems that Zar's behind-the-scenes work has been the only thing keeping the kingdom from falling completely apart. If the kids can convince him that he has been performing a king's duties for years already, he will raise an eyebrow and finally accept their proposal, agreeing to run as a candidate. Assuming the kids vote for him, he will win by a landslide and be granted the true crown of the city. Mysteriously, the crown has a large, empty socket in the front where a jewel should rest.

If the kids have the coal from the Duchy of Ducats when the crown is placed on Zar's head, the coal suddenly bursts into flame (potentially causing unpleasantness if it's in someone's pack or pocket). Upon stamping the flame out, the coal will have been reduced to a diamond. The diamond fits perfectly within the crown, and when sunlight plays upon the diamond, it is concentrated in a blinding beam that points directly to the kids' next clue to Babylon.

# The Clocktower

Keeping time is one of the most frustrating activities in the Grimm Lands. As the Sun, the Moon, and the stars are all quite insane, it is very hard to tell what time of the day it is by their movements. Sand clocks are a partial solution, but need constant turning. Another solution is the use of wind-up clocks, an advanced science in the Grimm Lands. The biggest of them all is the Clocktower, a whole castle devoted to keeping the correct time and fabricating all manner of trinkets and gadgets running on clockwork.

The state of technology in the Grimm Lands remains at a level around the 17th and 18th centuries, although magic allows the inhabitants to attain some of the comforts of modern science—usually in a rather clumsy and unreliable fashion. The Clocktower stands at the forefront of technological advancement, although it has been somewhat stagnant for centuries, only producing clockwork mechanisms of increasing complexity and delicacy, but not progressing any further to explore other kinds of machines.

The land around the Clocktower is covered by heaps of metallic refuse, scraps that the tower discards as they break beyond repair, waiting for their turn to be melted back into slag and reused. The people of the only village in the kingdom farm the fields to feed the people inside the Clocktower, but they claim to have never seen them. The only communication between the people in the fields and whomever (or whatever) lives

in the tower is performed by way of clockwork carrier pigeon.

The Clocktower is an ugly building; its base is the size of a castle, but it has no outer wall. Even from afar visitors can hear the noise of a thousand churning cogs from within. Although basically square in shape, the tower's faces are irregular, creating several nooks and crannies from which windows, pipes, and assorted parts jut out to give the tower an irregular texture. One massive, central clock dominates the tower's front, hovering over the gate. Several minor clocks adorn other parts of the outer wall, all of them perfectly synchronized.

The main gate opens only at noon, and stays open for exactly 33 minutes and 33 seconds. During this time, clockwork beasts of burden exit the tower from the main gate, go forth to collect the village's tribute, and then reenter the tower through smaller gates built exactly for that purpose. Supplemental balcony gates also open at noon and midnight, when the tower's bells toll and figures upon the balconies enact a strange mechanical dance.

## The Inner Workings

The tower only accepts visitors at noon when the gates open. They reveal an enclosed chamber with a high ceiling, walls lined with balconies and walkways, and doors of all sizes sealed with gears and sprockets. There is a desk near the far wall, but nobody sits there; instead, several tubes emerge from the wall behind it, greeting visitors with a dry, clockwork voice. It asks them what they want and reminds them with each new question or answer exactly how many minutes and seconds remain until the tower's main gate closes.

Despite appearances, there *are* people inside the tower, watching visitors through an ingenious system of lenses and mirrors and using the voice tubes to communicate with them. They are not interested in anything except mechanical expertise and food, so any children wishing to engage the inhabitants' attention should quickly mention either topic. The mechanics and engineers in the Clocktower can repair anything and anyone; they can even bring people back from the dead, although the final results are not exactly pretty. If children engage the interest of the tower's populace, they will be granted the honor of a real audience. A concealed door opens behind the desk, inviting the children into a dark corridor lit by the dim light of rows of gaslight lanterns.

Should the children venture down this creepy corridor, they will emerge into a busy chamber the size of a football field, scattered with desks, workstations, and machines and manned by a small army of engineers and administrators. The highest desk belongs to Clockmaster Serge, a grizzled gnome with thick eyeglasses. If approached, he happily begins a rant about the greatness of the tower, of how it is a bastion of sanity in the madness that is the Grimm Lands, and how it is run much more smoothly than that odd beanstalk plaguing the land. In a certain way, he is right: The Clocktower is a very orderly and peaceful place. However, its inhabitants are no more sane than the rest of the Grimm Lands' people. They are just far more obsessive and rational-seeming in their insanity.

Serge takes an interest in the children's plight, especially if they show him some technological trinket from the Real World. He can offer all kinds of help, including selling them first-rate equipment. If the children have already visited the Fearless King, they may notice the lamps illuminating halls and corridors; they shine with a bluish light and Serge explains that they are mechano-magical lamps that light themselves, which is exactly what the Fearless King's riddle mentioned. Serge has no problem selling them a lamp. If the children have no money or they require other types of help or information, Serge narrows his eyes and smiles wickedly. He proposes a deal for the children: If they can show him a machine he cannot understand, he will give them a very valuable treasure. If he *can* understand the machine, the children must remain in the tower for a year and a day, working in whatever fashion the Clockmaster requires. If asked about the treasure, Serge smiles and tells them that is something that will make them stronger, faster, and better, something that he uses himself and that has allowed him to live for centuries and to shrug off any illness or witch's curse.

If the children brought some gadget with them from the Real World, they are in luck. The Clockmaster is a master of mechanics, but he is totally ignorant about electronics. A laser pointer is a rare treasure to his eyes, and a portable game console is a miracle descended from the heavens. Serge can master anything else they may produce, however, and will hold them to their word.

## The Clockwork Heart

The problem with the Clockmaster's deal is that it is a lose-lose situation. Defeat carries grave consequences, as the children become slaves to the Clocktower's engineers. They are forced to perform all manner of dangerous jobs, such as greasing cogs while they continue to spin, winding razor-sharp springs, and squirming into tight spaces past whirling machinery to make minute adjustments. Clocktower slaves are fitted with collars, belts, bracelets, and anklets that are all shaped like gears. Any time the kids are not working, they are placed within a nest of gears and sprockets that spins them about continuously. The internal compasses of the slaves become so used to this constant spinning and swirling that, if they are not placed within the gear nest every thirty three minutes and thirty three seconds, they become nauseated from stillness; at this point, they must make 5th-grade Muscle tests or fall to the ground, suffering from vertigo and being unable to move or perform any actions. This obviously prevents runaways from getting very far if they manage to escape. Every 3thirty three minutes and thirty three seconds, an escaped slave must make the Muscle test again, albeit at one grade lower. After the test has been reduced to 1st grade, the fitted collar, belt, etc., crack and fall off, and the slave is freed from the nausea.

Winning is perhaps a worse option: The treasure with which Serge wishes to gift the kids might not be so valuable in their eyes. He intends to replace the children's hearts with a clockwork apparatus. All of the tower's inhabitants have one, and Serge is very curious to see if his invention works on children from the Real World. The children may note that something strange lies in store for them by paying attention to the other people in the tower. No one smiles or makes idle chatter, and no work songs alleviate the tedium of repetitive tasks. Since getting the "treasure" requires time, Serge invites the children to stay the night while the tower's gates are closed. This can give them time to sneak around the tower and admire its monstrous mechanisms. At some point they will stumble on the most secret parts of the tower, showing the children the bad side of the tower's orderly existence.

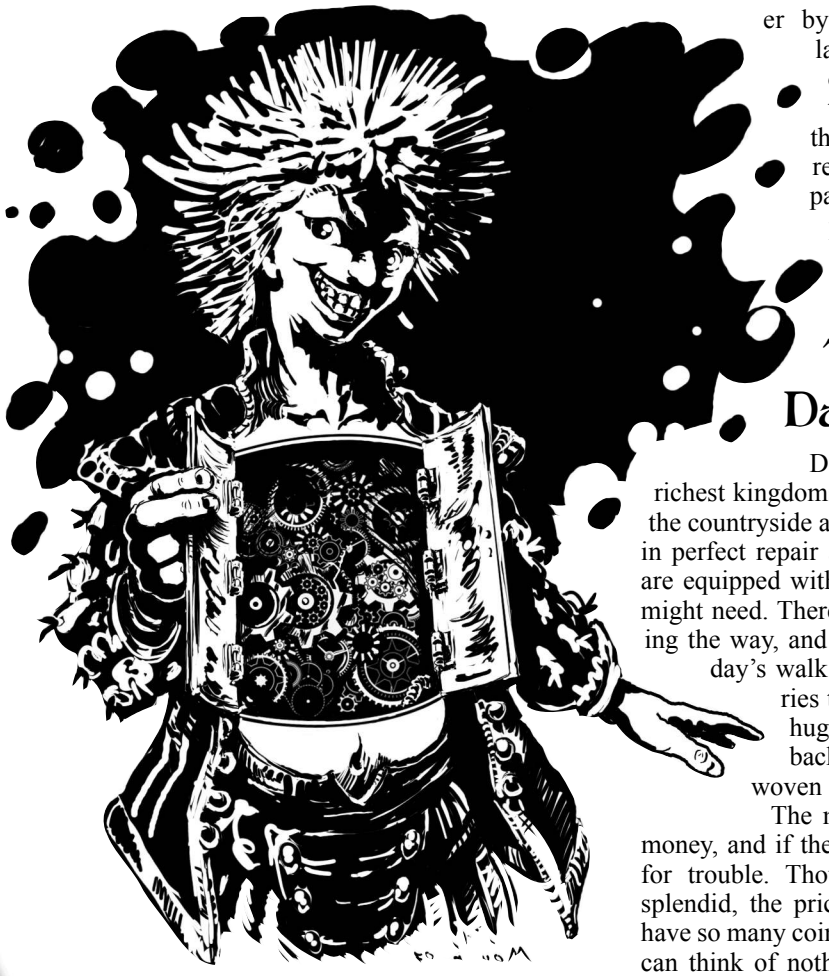
In the deeper parts of the tower, some of the inhabitants have literally become cogs in the giant machine: Their bodies are half mechanical and half living, fitting snuggly into sockets in the Clocktower's machinery. Most of these cog-people have no intelligence left in them, performing their tasks faithfully. They all have strange little knobs on their shirts, knobs that open compartments in their chests. Horrifically, the compartments reveal clockwork hearts, which expand and contract with mechanical precision, pumping blood through brass pipes.

After discovering the Clockhearted, the children may then stumble onto operating rooms and witness someone having his heart cut out and replaced with clockworks (for maximum impact, this should be someone the children have previously met in town). Serge himself performs the operation, and he puts the still-beating heart in a jar, which he carries to a room that is full from floor to ceiling with thousands of other similar containers.

If, after all this, the children still have not realized that this is the fate Clockmaster Serge has in store for them, his loud self-reflections should drive the last nail home: As he performs the operation, he mutters excitedly about how the procedure will affect visitors from the Real World.

## To Be Clockhearted or Not To Be Clockhearted

If the kids do not manage to fight their way through the clockwork forces and escape, one or more of them may suffer the terrible fate of becoming one of the Clockhearted (see page 213). Restoring someone's true heart is surprisingly simple. The children must find the heart locked in the storage room, a task made easier by Serge's orderliness. All jars are labeled and stacked in alphabetical order. The children must then open the Clockhearted's chest, disconnect the clockwork heart, and then put the real heart back inside, close the compartment, and press down firmly. This procedure requires a 6th-grade Industrial Arts test, or the kid being "operated" on is knocked out.



## The Duchy of Ducats

Despite its small size, this is one of the richest kingdoms in the Grimm Lands. The houses in the countryside are rich and well tended. The roads are in perfect repair and well patrolled, and those patrols are equipped with every tool and weapon the soldiers might need. There are signs at every crossroads pointing the way, and inns or taverns at intervals of a half day's walk. And most noticeably, everyone carries their wealth with them at all times, in huge sacks of coinage strapped on their backs, hanging from their belts, and even woven into their clothes.

The most important thing in the duchy is money, and if the children don't have any, they are in for trouble. Though everything to be purchased is splendid, the prices exorbitantly reflect this. People have so many coins in their purses, they can think of nothing to do with

them other than to spend them. On the other hand, they are so used to spending and charging huge amounts of money that they cannot imagine a human interaction that does not involve a transfer of coin from one party to another. Residents offer goods, services, favors, or even greetings and basic information as kind people would normally do, but then charge for them when the deed is done or the item delivered. If the children cannot pay (a probable outcome) they will be captured, tried for petty theft, and sentenced to work for the "maligned" party until they pay off their debt. Such children have their foreheads branded with the imprint of their new master's favorite coin.

Things are not much better if the children *can* pay, because coins from foreign lands are prized possessions. Kids with coinage will be hounded by greedy merchants trying to sell them anything they can think of, even charging them simply for the pleasure of their company. Sooner or later, the merchants will become so insistent that the children will have to make a run for it.

Children that spend more than a couple of hours in the duchy will notice that not everyone who lives in the land seems contented. Although everyone is dressed well enough, some of the land's workers have distinctly deflated coin purses. These are travelers who ran out of coin, and have been forced to pay off their debt by working. While generally grumpy and as desperately greedy as their tormentors, these unfortunates have a redeeming quality: They can make vague mentions of the source of the land's wealth. Among these are suggestions that the duchy's ruler is the source of the money, that there is a magical mint in the land's center in place of a castle, and that the freshest coins sometimes reek of vomit.

## The Duchy Mint

The single city in the kingdom is named for the mint that resides at its center. The place is prosperous and bustling with trade, and is ruled by the Grand Guild, a council presided over by the heads of every guild in the land. The council oversees the employment and exploitation of debtors from other kingdoms, as well as the training of their own ranks.

Sneaking out of an inn or house, whether the children are guests or indentured servants, is easy. Their masters know that the kids will be captured and returned to them soon enough, whether by other citizens or by indentured servants eager to shorten their sentences. As the kids get closer and closer to the center of the duchy mint, however, they find guards more and more frequently. The mint is a disc-shaped building standing on edge atop the circular building of the Grand Guild, like a smaller coin standing on edge upon a larger one lying flat. The guards at the outer layer of the guild building are 6th-grade guards, but with 6th grade in both Cool and Seek; the personal grade levels of the guards, as well as their grade levels in both Cool and Seek, increase as the kids get closer to the center. This culminates with a handful of 12th-grade guards, with 12th grade in Cool and Seek, at the entrance to the stairwell leading up to the mint itself.

The mint is a thin building consisting of a single room. Two staircases hug the outer walls, arcing first outward and then inward until they reach the disk's top at the ceiling. The room's base is filled with a mound of constantly growing coins, which fall through a trapdoor in the landing atop the two staircases. As each stream of coins comes out, the kids will hear a vague sound of mutters, groans, and heaving, as if someone is being sick.

When the children reach the top of the staircase, they will find a disturbing site. Tied to a chair is what remains of the fairy tale figure named Queen Anne. She is bound by an evil-looking harness of leather straps and iron cuffs, forced to remain in a sitting position and bent slightly forward. A chubby rat wearing a helmet leans on a spear on a platform built into the harness; its job is to extend a vial of foul-smelling stuff beneath the poor girl's nose. Every time it does so, she vomits powerfully and painfully. Instead of the normal materials that would come from such an act, the kids will behold a trickle of coins pouring out of her mouth.

If Queen Anne is not insane, she is making an excellent impression of it: Between vomiting, she will mutter random words and non-sequiturs, such as "cheese makes excellent yellow" or "the mark is up by points." At one point, she begins crying, interrupting the flow of coins, annoying the rat who promptly prods her with its spear hard enough to draw blood. "The man with no fear!" Queen Anne yells with pain. "The man with no fear and the kings who are not! The crownless head leads to Babylon!"

When she says these words, a lump of coal falls from her mouth. The rat chastises her and prods her once more. This sorry state of affairs continues until the children decide to do something. The rat (use the stats for a mouse as presented on page 185, but it is upright and equipped as a 4th-grade guard) is a poor fighter, but it is very quick, and will try to raise the alarm and bring the mint's many guards. Thus, the kids must plan carefully to silence and still the rat before it can act.

The harness holds the girl fast with straps and buckles, so the children need time, rather than a key, to free her. Up close they can see that she is wasted and anemic from the constant vomiting, as well as covered with small scratches and scars from her guard's impatience with her babbling. The girl is by now so thin that she can fit through any openings or crawl spaces that kid-sized characters can use, but she's not strong enough to walk by herself, much less sneak past guards, so the children must help her.

## The Coal Is the Real Treasure

The children must make it outside the mint, and preferably outside the city, before dawn breaks and the queen's escape is noticed. Anne remains quiet and rather unhelpful until they are all safe quite a distance from the city. She then musters up her strength to say simply "Thank you," at which point a large diamond falls from her mouth. She gives the gem to the children,

and they may fill their bags and purses with coins produced during their conversation.

The children should be curious about the words she spoke about Babylon, of course, but the queen herself does not understand their meaning. Her mind is still numb from the torments she has endured, and she will explain that she occasionally spoke nonsense; when she did, coal came forth. Should the kids have claimed the coal before rescuing her, then they are in luck. Otherwise, they will need to go back to the now alert mint and figure out what the guards did with the piece of coal (probably threw it in the rubbish bin). The coal might be a talisman or have some special powers of the narrator's choosing, but it's real value is discovered when the kids visit the City of Kings. The first piece of her enigmatic prophecy refers to the Fearless King, although Anne has no idea as to its meaning or import.

The children should escape the duchy as soon as possible. Anne will tag along and pretend to be mute, letting her mouth rest after years of forced speech. She will accept any job in any other kingdom in which the children drop her off, relieved to return to a relatively normal life. If the children made an ally of Queen Sophia of the kingdom of Tin and Spices, they can take Anne to live with her.

## The Ferret's Nest

There is a certain glamour about delinquency, particularly when it is motivated by just causes and is the recourse of clever heroes rather than hardened criminals. In the Grimm Lands, the Ferret's Nest and its diverse clientele best illustrate this principle.

The Nest is the closest thing to an international franchise in the Grimm Lands. Many villages in the Checkerboard Kingdoms feature an inn called "The Ferret's Nest," ranging from simple pubs to luxurious hostels. Whatever the size of the inn's business, it is always a front for a wide-ranging guild of thieves, highwaymen, and burglars.

The criminals of the Ferret's Nest are folk heroes of sorts, defying tyrannical or outright insane rulers, assisting people on the dangerous roads, freeing falsely imprisoned and enslaved folk, and the like. The most daring of these thieves even operate among the dark woods of the Great and Awful Forest or sail their pirate ships on the treacherous Sea. Children looking for help in acquiring something (such as gold from the Land of Gold or magic yarn from Spinnenbruch) may find assistance among the good-hearted rogues of the Ferret's Nest.

Ferret's Nest thieves tend to be flashy in their dress, mannerisms, and actions and, unlike most criminals, they are never satisfied unless they are the center of attention. Of course, they *are* criminals, and their sense of honor is a little twisted. All of them lie, cheat, and steal, and the most hardened of them will gladly commit murder in the name of their chosen causes. The rogues of the Ferret's Nest will welcome children who are on the run. Sanctuary among the thieves, however, can bring its own complications. The thieves operate on a quid pro quo basis when it comes to outsiders. They always demand compensation for their services, whether in coin or in reciprocal favors.

Owing a favor to the Ferret's Nest means that the children might be asked at any time to participate in a heist, lending their small bodies to the task of sneaking in and out of a house, learning how to pick a pocket, or simply acting as lookouts.

### The Thieves' Candles

The rogues of the Ferret's Nest have a tool that gives them a notable advantage over regular brigands. They possess the formula for a wax called Dead Man's Tears, which they prepare from the tears of a man who is about to be executed. It doesn't matter if the condemned are later found innocent (a very unlikely case), as the wax captures the intense appreciation for life that people have when they are about to lose it.

There are two types of candles made from Dead Man's Tears. Black candles burn with a flame so dark that it shrouds the rogue in darkness, giving anyone carrying them +4 grades on Hide tests while they are lit. White candles shed light as regular candles, but have the additional effect of highlighting items of value that are hidden, concealed, or disguised as some-

thing else, giving anyone carrying them +4 grades on Seek tests while they are lit. Both candles remain lit for long enough to case, enter, search, and escape a single small house (about an hour).

## The Glorious Empire

Gaiety and festivals are the order of the day in the kingdom known as the Glorious Empire. It rivals in size and splendor, if not in power, the lands of the Rotten King. There are no guards at the border, no markers, no fences, nothing of the sort. There is simply, upon arriving here, an overwhelming sense of beauty and pageantry, that all is as it should be. Even in the regions farthest from any settlement, there is a faint sound of music and activity, a feeling of comfort and welcome. Peasants sing while they work their fields, the towns are awash with humming and whistling as people go about their work, and even the soldiers do the occasional tap on the hafts of their halberds, in time to a rhythm only they can hear.

But for all its panache, the place is missing one thing: clothes.

And there's something else wrong, as well, something that a kid who makes a 9th-grade Seek test can detect, but cannot quite put his finger on. But there will be little time to worry about that before the kids will realize that their wearing clothes seems to be causing quite a stir among the townsfolk. Upon seeing the children, some locals express embarrassment and attempt to hide their nakedness; others politely but firmly suggest that the kids had better disrobe, if they know what's good for them, and then blush and stutter as they realize what their command makes them sound like; and some race off, yelling for guards to "come arrest the high criminals!"

The empire is ruled by the emperor with no clothes, a man who is in turn ruled by his own fear of being seen as incompetent. Rather than admitting his own gullibility, the emperor declared that all who were deserving of his benevolence should follow suit and immediately commission a set of clothes from the tailors who made his (supposedly glorious, and invisible to all but the most worthy) robes. The people protested at first, but a few flensings convinced them that having no clothes was better than having no skin. Now, none dare to wear clothes, for fear of inadvertently insulting their ruler.

This being no normal place, but rather a kingdom in the Grimm Lands, the story does not end there. The kingdom, adhering to the mythical truth that the king and the land are one, has followed the emperor's lead into self-delusion. In a sense, this helps the residents. Though clothes are sorely missed on cold days and when performing rough work, the land is blanketed in an illusion of prosperity. The food, the buildings, the landscape, even the people themselves, all seem impossibly beautiful and perfectly formed. All one need do is think of it, and the land will provide. All it costs you is your grip on reality.

Travelers become subject to the land's powerful illusion of prosperity the moment they cross into it, and nothing betrays this effect while the traveler accepts it. Children from the Real World, particularly Outcasts, will be hard-pressed to accept that anyone could be so happy, particularly when they're walking around naked. The moment they voice the smallest hint of a doubt, they will start noticing strange things about. A rich and beautiful wheat patch will, for one moment, appear covered by a poor and withered scrub, a delicate golden cup will feel as if it were made from rough clay, and so on.

After the first night the children sleep inside the Glorious Empire (likely in the dungeons, if they didn't immediately de-clothe before the guards showed up), the land starts seeping into their dreams. The following morning, the land knows what the children's favorite things are and presents them in a manner as coincidental as possible, producing odd local versions of things from the Real World, such as hamburgers and pizza. Kids presented with such wonders must make a 6th-grade Pluck test to resist temptation; in fact, thanks to their wide-eyed wonder, kids suffer a disadvantage on the test equal to their Imagination grade levels.

Those who partake of the food, play with the toys, and so on, are filled with a sense of euphoria. These prizes are presented to the kids everywhere they go during their stay, and require an overall Pluck test for each day. However, for every grade level by which a kid fails this test, he suffers a disadvantage of –1 grade to Seek tests. This disadvantage persists for as long as the kid remains within the Glorious Empire. If a kid ever suffers a disadvantage on his Seek tests equal to his Seek grade level, he becomes enraptured by the land, and can no longer see what is real at all. Unless his friends can find some way to break him free of the empire's grasp, he refuses to leave. Even if such a victim is forcibly removed from the empire, the illusion persists, and he must do his utmost to return there as soon as he can. The only way to break this spell is via the aid of the men who caused this mess in the first place: Guido and Luigi Farabutto, the emperor's tailors.

### The Palace of Dreams

The Glorious Empire has four villages and one large city, a magnificently cosmopolitan place where people from all over the Grimm Lands congregate to partake of the land's happiness. At the center lies the palace, where the emperor lives in his naked splendor, and Guido and Luigi live in captivity and terror.

Given the level of idiotic happiness pervading the realm, children will have little trouble gaining an audience with the emperor, who will be delighted to talk with the new visitors. He is also only too happy to introduce them to his two tailors, who are forced to pretend to constantly sew and weave new suits of clothing. If the children reveal that they believe something funny is going on, the poor men will avert their eyes and gesture them to be quiet. Later, after the palace has succumbed to slumber, one of them will cover for his brother while the other sneaks to the children's rooms.

There, the Farabutto brother relaxes visibly and reveals to the children the awful truth about the Glorious Empire. The children should be grateful that they cannot see the horrors that the tailor describes beneath the illusory facade. He speaks of streets overrun with filth, as nobody takes care to clean them; barren hills where the land shows a verdant landscape, and ugly marshes where pristine lakes appear to be; and the land's residents, though they appear full of health and beauty, are covered with scratches, sunburnt skin, ravaged feet, and other results of being forced to travel about unclothed. Worse yet, he says that only half of the land's subjects are really alive: The other half are a glamour woven over a rotting corpses, or even assemblages of mud, sticks, and grass. The land animates these sad puppets and dresses them in the images of happy citizens.

The Farabutto brothers suspect that there is a way to cure the land of this affliction. Should a suit of clothes be made for the emperor that truly *was* invisible to the unworthy, then at least *some people* would see it. And if they saw the emperor wearing some clothes, and no one else wearing any, those worthy souls would be forced to think about the fact that the whole thing had been a hoax. Once enough people were forced to admit this, the land would be forced to follow suit. And then, though the tailors might be ripped to pieces by the angry crowds, though many might lose their heads or die of despair upon seeing the reality of their land, they might then have the chance to finally rebuild.

Where such a suit of clothes or the thread to make it (the Farabutto brothers would gladly weave it) could be found, is up to the narrator. The most obvious place for the kids to look would be the kingdom of Spinnenbruch, but other ideas include searching for the threads of fate, or the sublime chord, or perhaps subjecting a cloak of invisibility to a special process that reveals it to some but not to others.

To convince them to undertake this quest, the tailors may hint that there is an archway somewhere in the kingdom that once held a gateway to the Real World, but it is currently hidden by the illusory guise the land projects.

## The Land Has No Clothes

The tailors have the right idea about the invisible fabric, but this is not the only way the land can be convinced to reveal the kingdom's true form. Children will receive a hint of this alternative the first time they start noticing the inconsistencies. If they speak out about what they think is real, they cause a ripple of surprise and shock in the people around them, and just for an instant the illusion wavers, too.

The secret is to defy the land's illusion directly, using Imagination to challenge its disguise. Each point of Imagination spent while shouting to the Four Winds about their disbelief in the land's illusions will disperse them for as long as a turn, revealing the true horror beneath the disguise. Healthy-looking people are pockmarked, gaunt, and famished. Scabby rats and mangy dogs hunt for scraps of food, and black sludge covers the canals and fills housewives' buckets. The worst sights are the walking dead. Putrid corpses walk as if they were alive, their clothes rotting away and smelling strongly of decomposition, animated only by the land's desire to put on a pleasant face.

To make the disguise disappear completely from the children's vicinity (in a radius of around an arrow's flight), they must engage the land in a contest of Imagination. The land has 12th grade in Imagination, and only characters who have chosen Imagination as their special Core trait may enter or assist with the contest. If the kids win, they may expend 1 Imagination to permanently dispel the illusion in their vicinity. If the land wins, the contest's primary participant automatically falls under the land's sway, as if she had failed her Pluck test to resist the land's temptation.

People will be aghast when confronted with the truth of their homes. Angry glares and possible violence are the usual responses of people confronted with the lie that is their lives, although others may just sit down and weep. If the children can dispel the illusion from all four towns and the capital, the land gives up. All the walking corpses and lumps of mud collapse, and the emperor dies of embarrassment. The people may try to lynch the two tailors, or may let them go, or may even turn to them for leadership; what happens to the once-glorious place is in the hands of the kids and the narrator.

# The Hollow Tree

A great tree stands dead and ominous at the crossroads between four kingdoms. An elephant could fit snugly inside its trunk, and its branches reach three stories high like grasping, tortured fingers. Locals avoid the tree, as they rightly believe it to be inhabited by spirits and ghosts. Travelers who know no better often fall victim to it, though, and there is no shortage of them, for it is located at an intersection that would otherwise make for an ideal route.

During the day, the evil represented by the tree is direct: It is a whale-sized carnivorous tree, and attempts to eat any who come within its reach (see page 187). In the cold and dark of night, the tree is more insidious. As the Sun sets, a small old lady hobbles out from within the trunk, and plops down on the tree's gnarled roots. She greets passersby politely, asking for a minute of their time. Those who refuse fall prey to the tree, whose branches and roots lash out to punish the rude traveler by rending him apart.

Those who do stop and speak with her have passed the old lady's first test. She then asks if they would do her a favor: She lost something inside the tree and she needs strong and brave children to get it for her. The travelers' safety depends on how they word their answer. A rude refusal arouses the tree's ire, just as if they had not stopped to listen to the old lady. A polite refusal will get a knowing nod and a 10-minute head start, before the travelers find themselves beset by a pack of rabid wolves.

Accepting the request is the only way to emerge entirely unscathed. She thanks the travelers sincerely, then explains that she somehow lost her magic tinder box in the branches of the tree; she was using it one day, she dropped it, and *up* it fell. All she knows is that it's caught somewhere up there, gravity be damned. But her old bones and tired limbs cannot manage the climb, so she needs spry young 'uns to seek it out for her. If the kids will venture up into the tree, she tells them that they can keep all the other treasures they find, so long as they return the tinder box to her.

If they have already visited the Fearless King and heard his riddle, the kids may recognize the tinder box as one of the things they need to find the way to Babylon. Mentioning this to the old lady changes nothing in her attitude: She assures the children that they will find more valuable things within than her silly old tinder box.

## The Three Rooms

It's easy to climb up the tree (Scamper 5th grade), thanks to all its branches. Once near the top, the kids will find that their chore is far from over. It turns out that the trunk is hollow, and the old lady will shout out to them that she thinks it must have fallen inside. Descending the interior of the trunk requires a 7th-grade Scamper test, and takes several hours of climbing; the natural chimney goes down for far longer than is seemingly possible from the outside. Should a kid fall during the climb, he need have no fear of falling down. Instead, he falls upward, shooting back out the top of the tree and being caught, if he is lucky (Luck test equal to the number of grades by which he failed the Scamper test), by the many branches there. If he is not caught, he falls upward into the sky to be snatched up by a passing eagle, or to land in a cloud kingdom, or to be subjected to one of a hundred other fates.

Eventually, the descent opens into a hole in the ceiling of an elegant, circular room. Its furniture is made from silver and gold, and a gentle fire burns in a fireplace, illuminating a few paintings and a desk. The desk contains a stack of blank paper, a quill, and an inkpot. Spaced evenly around the room's circumference are three doors, each identical to the others.

The first door that the kids open (regardless of which one they choose) is a nice but modest bedroom, with a bunk bed and a large chest at its foot. Before anyone can enter, smoke pours out from the doorsill and forms an evil-looking man with skin as black as coal and deep red eyes (he has the stats of a 9th-grade guard, but instead of weapons and armor, he inflicts wounds and gains protection from tendrils of darkness tipped with blood-red points). He claims to guard this room, and tells the children that they may ask him three questions, and that he will answer them truthfully, but that if they try to proceed, he will eat them. If asked how they can get past him, the man's answer is simple: "Just ask." Asking the demon politely for passage will result in a simple nod as the man disappears. The chest within is easily opened, and is full of silver coins; the children are free to fill their pockets with as much as they can.

The second room is elegant, adorned with silken drapes and well-done portraits, with wooden-tiled floors that feel warm and comfortable to the touch. There are two rows of beds, one for each of the children, and one large chest at the end of the room next to another desk. As with the previous room, a guardian appears as soon as the children open the door. He is larger than the first guardian and his skin is a deep purple. He has yellow eyes, white hair, and a mouth lined with razor-sharp teeth (he has the stats of a 10th-grade guard). He, too, will truthfully answer three questions, and he too will eat any child who attempts to enter the room without meeting his conditions. He is not as lenient as his predecessor; the way to pass his challenge is to trust him. One of the children must allow herself to be cradled in the guardian's clawed hands while the others examine the room. The guardian will not harm the child who trusts him thus, so long as she does not squirm or attempt to flee (10th-grade Pluck test). If the child does evidence distrust, all bets are off, and both the "hostage" and those ransacking the gold pieces from the chest are attacked.

The third door opens to a sumptuous bedroom with tapestries woven from gold. There is one four-poster bed for each kid, and beneath each bed is an ivory chest. The guardian of this room (stats of an 11th-grade guard) is the most horrible of them all: Red scales cover his body and several horns and bony ridges jut from his head. His hands are talons the length of a child's arm,

and his breath stinks of sulfur. He too allows for three questions, and the way to beat him is to love him. The children must give up something important to the guardian, and kiss him sincerely, which requires a 10th-grade Cool test to keep from shuddering. Should the children show fear or disgust, the beast attacks them. The chests in the room are full of assorted gems and jewelry, but as much as they try, the children cannot find the magic tinder box anywhere within.

If the kids have asked the guardians about the tinder box, they hint that only the last guardian knows where it is. The last guardian does know its location, but he cannot tell the children directly. Instead, he poses a riddle: "All the riches in the world can buy it, but only by renouncing those riches can you quench the fires of greed."

The answer lies in the central room's magic fireplace. The flames need no fuel to burn, and cannot be extinguished by normal means. Instead, should the kids begin to toss their newfound wealth into the flames, the coins and jewels will, one by one, turn to ash, the flame guttering with each handful. Only once every last coin and jewel is consumed by the fire will it go out completely, revealing the tinder box in a perfectly fitted hole beneath the fire's heart, flush with the fireplace floor.

Once the kids take the tinder box, the three guardians reappear and tell the children that they have a choice to make: to keep the tinder box or to return it to the old lady. They explain that the tinder box's power allows each of the guardians to be called once by starting a flame with its coals. The guardian will then perform a single task for the box's possessor, whether it be protecting him from a foe, attacking an enemy, exploring a locale, or anything else the possessor desires. The kids must each privately decide, in his own heart of hearts, what he will try to do.

Regardless of the kids' decision, the guardians nod and flow into the box, then allow them to climb (or fall) back up the trunk of the tree. If any of the kids decided to try to keep the tinder box, they will find the tree surrounded by the old lady's pack of rabid wolves. The old lady demands that they give her the tinder box in return for their lives. In this case, the children are left with no treasure and no tinder box, but at least their skin and their bones are still attached to one another. If none of the kids decided to try to keep the tinder box, they will emerge to find the old lady missing, the Sun rising, and the hollow tree crumbling to ash around them. The children, as a reward for their honesty and cleverness, may keep the tinder box.

## The Land of Fear

There is no place in the Checkerboard Kingdoms as feared as the Castle of Shudders in the Land of Fear. The castle is haunted by things as frightening as those found in the Great and Awful Forest, and people say that it is visited by the Devil himself. The kingdom belongs to the Fearless King, whose real name has been struck from any record that might have listed it. The children will know that they are approaching his lands when they hear the fearful whispers of the people who live under the shadow of the Fearless King's rampages. As they cross the border, things do not get any better. The kingdom's citizens are a very paranoid and fearful bunch, and even a child shouting out in frustration or exasperation is enough to send them trembling towards the nearest corner.

If they manage to calm a citizen down, he may whisper the tale of his liege to them. The king was not born of royal blood, but was a simple farmer, and a fairly dimwitted one at that. His only virtue, if it can be called such, was that he is too thick-headed to feel fear. So desperate was his need to learn of fear that he challenged all the forces of darkness and terror to come and visit him. Many of the spirits that abounded throughout the Grimm Lands were restricted by ancient oaths and strange limitations, but his challenge freed them of those restrictions. They flocked like clouds of darkness to the kingdom, and each in turn met with the king. None could do the job of teaching him the meaning of fear…but he was not the only one in the land, of course. Whether out of malice or by accident, the spirits and monsters, haunts and horrors, have made their temporary home into the most terrifying of all the Checkerboard Kingdoms. The land's residents are constantly given the most terrible of nightmares, forced to behold horrific countenances, and threatened by fates far worse than death. The king, meanwhile, too stupid to realize the effect the spirits have on his subjects, does nothing.

The only village in the realm is prey to at least five different hauntings every month. Some speak of the headless woman asking night travelers their names; others tell of the horde of rats that can engulf a child and eat him whole in less than a minute; others shudder and whisper of the demonic horse who tempts people into capturing it, only to ride off with them to the bowels of Hell. The irony here is that, for all of the spirits that truly travel through the Land of Fear, only about a third of them are real. One-third are the products of the villagers' overgrown fear, their attempts to fill the dark unknown of the night with terrors to which they can assign a name. The other third are neither spirits nor imaginings, but rather pranks.

Unable to understand fear himself, the Fearless King has made a hobby of watching its effects in others. To see how his subjects respond to fear, he often rides out at night in the company of mean fairies and talking animals, using costumes, tricks, and clever gadgets to create strange noises and images to haunt the people in the kingdom.

Chief amongst the Fearless King's band of accomplices are Bog, Stink, and Fetid, three wicked boggans (use goblin stats, page 196) who one night tried to scare the king and instead ended up in his service. It is these three that children are most likely to encounter if they wish to investigate the veracity of any of the tales the villagers tell. The boggans are master deceivers, resorting to magic

only in the most extreme circumstances, preferring to use pots and pans to create hellish rackets or tablecloths, ropes, and candles to simulate ghosts. As the people have become so easy to terrify, the boggans have became sloppy and reckless in their deceit. Kids from the Real World, having survived far worse than noises and spirits since their arrival in the Grimm Lands, should have no trouble recognizing all the haunting moans and apparitions for what they are.

If captured, Bog, Stink, and Fetid confess everything to the children, but will refuse to say anything with villagers present, instead making scary faces and insisting that there are indeed monsters abroad. Only in private will the boggans agree to take the children to the Fearless King.

## The Castle of Shudders

If most of the horrors of the countryside are mere fabrications, the specters who haunt the Castle of Shudders are all too real. After his beautiful young wife died of terror, the Fearless King has surrounded himself only with the dead, demons, and others with no hearts to wilt in fear. So terrible is the feeling of terror about the place that a 6th-grade Pluck test must be made just to get past the gate, and a 7th-grade Pluck test made at the manor's front door just to keep from running back out; both tests increase by +3 grades at night. If the captured boggans are with the kids, they will use the resulting terror to attempt to escape.

The king receives courageous visitors jovially, asking them about their scariest adventures and probing them to see if they know what it means to shudder. He will be favorably impressed by tales of courage and daring, even more so if the children confess to having been afraid but nonetheless doing what was necessary. The Fearless King is not an inherently bad person, but he has absolutely no consideration for people's feelings in his lifelong quest to know fear. He proposes a challenge to the children: They must teach him what it feels like to shudder, and in exchange, he will tell them a secret he learned from a demon about the way to back to the Real World.

Whether the children accept or not will determine how they will spend the next few days. If they accept the king's challenge, they receive guest rooms in the castle and are free to roam its grounds at will; the King even grants them leave to take any treasure they find that catches their fancy. If they refuse, instead of rooms the children get prison cells. In either case, they are not allowed to leave until they make the king shudder.

### The Haunted Halls

Sticking together is the best way to survive the Castle of Shudders. During the day the place is normal, if a little creepy. Only the king, his boggans, and the children are up and about, with some intelligent animals dozing off in random rooms and corridors. The place is clean and well maintained, although the children can see no sign of people working as they explore the castle.

At night, the picture is altogether different. Ghosts and devils arise when the sun's last rays disappear behind the horizon, performing the tasks that normal servants would fulfill during the day. The king holds a feast every night, at which the children will be treated to ghastly dishes such as worm bologna or breaded bat wings, served by solicitous apparitions who are all teeth and hellish glares.

The king will stay with the children to see how they cope with his castle, remaining unfazed by the random apparitions that plague the castle's halls. These are a few of the things the children will encounter during their stay at the Castle of Shudders:

Spiders and slugs crawl out of every crack, covering the floors and walls and making their way into the kids' clothes and hair.

A procession of dead men carry a coffin into the room when a kid is alone. Should the kid approach, they try to stuff him within it and then take him out into the grounds to bury him alive.

A rotting clown leers at the kids from within several paintings.

A great number of black cats and dogs appear and follow the children wherever they go, occasionally throwing up insects, blood, and hair.

Moans and scratches come from under the stairs and from under the beds, but when anyone peeks, there is nothing there.

Furniture starts moving on its own and tries to grab the children; beds and couches smother any captured child between pillows and cushions, but only a few have teeth.

Invisible hands grab children's ankles and wrists at random, leaving nasty bruises.

Mirrors appear in every hall, but the reflections show any viewer as dead.

While few of these things can actually hurt the kids, they are extremely unpleasant and can potentially permanently damage their minds. Kids who are trapped in the castle may lose grade levels in Cool or Pluck, or may even be reduced in personal grade level, should they be scared badly enough.

## Making the King Shudder

After the first horrible night the children spend in the castle, it should be fairly obvious that scaring the Fearless King will be next to impossible, and he heartily laughs at some of the more childish attempts. At some point, however, one of the players should realize that the king has not charged them with scaring him, per se, but rather with teaching him what it means to shudder…and shuddering is not necessarily caused by being frightened.

Shuddering can also be caused by being tickled, being extremely cold, or both (such as by having something cold and gooey dropped down one's back). The castle is well-stocked with all kinds of sticky, gooey, and cold things that the children can use to improvise such an ambush of the Fearless King. After years of dealing with demons and monsters, the Fearless King is a fairly capable warrior and not easily surprised, which means the children must make use of all their ingenuity and imagination to catch him unawares. If they can do so, the Fearless King shudders and stares at the kids, wide-eyed and with a smile of pure delight on his face. As this occurs, the ghosts and shadows haunting the land will finally fade away, and the people will be freed of their terror.

## Rosalind

If the kids do not come to the realization that they need something other than fear to make the king shudder, one of the castle's inhabitants may tip them off. Every night as the children endure the castle's unique brand of entertainment, a specter might be seen peeking around corners, looking as scared as the children and running away whenever they try to approach it. It appears to a little girl of their same age, dressed in a simple sleeping gown but with a gaping hole in her chest. The hole is not bloody or gross in any way; it's just there.

The third time the children try to approach her, she will relent and let them catch up, trying to cover the hole with her hands as if she were ashamed of it. Her name is Rosalind, and she was one of countless apparitions who has given up trying to scare the king. She reveals to the children that she will be free once the king shudders, as will many of the ghosts that are trapped in the castle against their will. Rosalind has no idea whatsoever how to scare anybody except by her ghostly looks alone, and has therefore not even tried to scare a man who knows no fear.

Unlike the other ghosts, however, Rosalind has watched the king during the day and is probably the person who

knows him the best. Children who are friendly and kind will learn much from the girl. She spies the on Fearless King every day and has noticed that he's ticklish, and that his sides and back are very sensitive. This clue should get the kids on the right track that there is more than one way to make a person shudder.

### The Road to Babylon

After the children successfully teach the King what it feels like to shudder, he will invite them for an early dinner, before night falls. He recounts how during one of the many haunted nights at the castle, a demon challenged him to play checkers, with the prize being the king's soul or a secret. The king cheated and won, but since he is a very simple man he had no idea what secret to ask the demon. It revealed to him a secret, thinking rightly that a man like the Fearless King would find the information useless. But to the kids, that secret could mean everything.

The clue is a riddle. The king has no idea as to its meaning, but he has managed to remember it. If the children ask to share his secret, he recites:

*Who'd be so cruel as to steal the light*
*From a man doomed to walk into the night?*
*Only who'd kindle fire in a tree's heart*
*Before the path to Babylon he'd start*

The children may recognize the riddle's components if they have traveled to other lands prior to coming to the Fearless King's domains. The instructions could refer to a special wax used by the kind thieves of the Ferret's Nest and the magical tinderbox found in the Hollow Tree. Lines of the verse may be added, or words replaced, to fit the narrator's vision; perhaps the candle needs to be placed in a lantern claimed from the Clocktower, or must first be doused in spray from the Edge of the World. Regardless, when the components are united and the proscribed path followed, the light cast by the candle or lantern bends toward the mythical city of Babylon, which is rumored to be a place of paths and gateways. If there is an opening back to the Real World anywhere in the Grimm Lands, it should be there. The light does not reveal how to get there, how far away the city is, or how they will know it when they see it, but it will least provide a clear indicator when the kids are headed in the right direction.

## The Land of Gold

The miserably gilded cage of King Midas, the Land of Gold is envied by all the other Checkerboard Kingdoms, though that envy is hardly deserved. The land is more metal than earth, and plants here can barely grow for the mineral poisoning they absorb from the soil. The streets and buildings have almost all been turned to gold, as have many of the land's tools, its clothing, and unfortunately for them, its inhabitants. The very air itself is speckled with choking clouds of gold dust, and the rivers occasionally run with molten metal. The entire place is surrounded by an impossibly large golden cage, which keeps out would-be raiders, thieves, and other seekers of gold.

Midas does not trust only the cage to protect his pointless wealth. (It is pointless because he refuses to part with any of it, even to trade for the much-needed food and resources that his poisoned land so requires.) All of his subjects must take turns on the cage watch, patrolling the borders and even climbing precariously up golden rungs along the inside of the arcing cage walls, there to act as lookouts and slingers of golden stones at any who would mount an aerial intrusion. Anyone trying to enter the Land of Gold must do so at specific checkpoints.

At the checkpoints, the border watch registers the name and purpose of all visitors, and each post has a small lizard that turns blue in the presence of a liar. It is the sole responsibility of each checkpoint commander to grant or refuse entry to any visitor, but a relay system of running messengers can help them get in contact with a higher authority if a decision is in doubt.

### The Royal Gardens

If there is anything that delights King Midas other than his own wealth, it is flowers and birds. The palace has a huge collection of birds from all over the Grimm Lands, and tales speak of a rare talking bird that is unlike any other talking birds, for it knows the secret of the Singing Tree and the Golden Water. It may even know the secrets of Babylon.

The flower garden is not exactly what the name suggests. While Midas does import many flowers from foreign lands, often promising gold in payment that he never gives up, they cannot live for long in the poisoned soil, and so wither and die. Yet, there is beauty in a flower's death, as its color brightens one last time, its leaves spreading wide in the hope of pulling sustenance from the air, it's petals opening for one last chance to spread its pollen in the air. Midas has made a game of this, patiently waiting and watching for each of his beloved flowers to die, and touching them at that precise moment, that moment of their most perfect beauty. The flowers are then added to the garden.

The gardens cover a very wide area and contain most of the features one would expect from a royal garden, only made from gold. There are several fountains and sculptures lining straight walkways, as well as twisting footpaths with many benches on which to sit and admire the maddeningly monotone grounds. The walkways frame dozens of fake flowerbeds where alchemically altered gold replaces natural stalks and petals. The golden flowers are always in full bloom, spring and winter, frozen in a moment of artificial splendor. Midas spends long hours gazing at the fake beauty, followed by sycophants, comparing the still-living flowers with the golden ones; the transmuted flowers always win the beauty contest. Should any visitors be brought before him, he always asks them the same question first: Which is prettier, the live flower or the golden one? Those who choose the live flowers are imprisoned in golden cages

## King Midas

King Midas is not a violent man or a combatant. But, still his touch is deadly: It instantly and irreparably turns anyone and anything to gold. The king has thus learned to be very reserved, most of the time. He has needed to learn to be so, lest he gag every time one of his servants insert gruel deep into his throat (even placing something in his mouth turns it to gold), or he accidentally reach out and shake the hand of a visiting dignitary, destroying any chance of good relations with the kingdom from which he hailed.

Despite this, the man occasionally finds that he cannot control himself, like a child left alone in a room full of unopened presents or asked to watch over a house of cards stacked high and tempting. He is then overcome by a need to touch everything he sees, animal, vegetable, or mineral. He runs through the countryside, drooling and laughing in his royal robes, and everyone with any wisdom at all simply gets out of his way.

hanging over a bed of golden, thorny roses, the better to contemplate the inaccuracy of their answer.

Some claim that some of the golden flowers have magical properties: that they are able to cure any disease, lift any curse, frighten any troll. If this is true, then their value would far exceed that of the gold from which they are made. Yet nobody seems to know how to tell a magical golden flower from one without any powers at all. And Midas is as loathe to give up any of his beloved blooms as he is any other bit of gold that he has made. Breaking a golden flower from its stem is a high crime, and it seems that Midas's golden clockwork birds are always watching (Seek 9th grade). Were one of the special golden flowers to be somehow found and made off with, it would slowly wither and die when removed from the Land of Gold, losing its magical properties within 1d6 weeks.

## The League of Witches and Warlocks

The Grimm Lands abound with all manners of witches and wizards, few of them up to any good. However, one lonely kingdom stands as a refuge where those who toil and trouble can find some respite from being persecuted by clever stepdaughters, self-righteous brides, or cheeky children.

The League of Witches and Warlocks was founded on the lands previously owned by a wizard who had his pretty bride escape from him by dressing up a skeleton and putting it in her place. He yearned for company and decided that he would build a meeting point for all the workers of magic in the Grimm Lands. While not exactly a jolly character, the wizard was hospitable and spread the news of his decision while he reshaped his castle with his magic and his enslaved work force. When the first curious guests arrived, they were treated to all sorts of amenities. The kingdom quickly became a favorite spot for practitioners of magic, if not as a permanent home, then at least as a vacation destination.

Nowadays, the League operates more like a social club and guild than an organization that would try to take over the world. Members owe each other no loyalty beyond the League's borders and only gather to exchange the latest tales and news. In this way, of course, witches and warlocks throughout the Grimm Lands will soon hear of the children's arrival in their world.

Any kids brave or unlucky enough to travel into the League's territory find a very dismal landscape, fitting a kingdom ruled by fairy tale witches and warlocks. The Sun avoids shedding much light in this forsaken place, and the thick canopy of black-wooded trees blocks the rest, creating an eternally gloomy atmosphere with an eerie silence broken only by strange noises amongst the hills and woodlands. The Great and Awful Forest has a significant presence here, and is even more frightening and dangerous within the lands of the League, if that is possible, than deep within its heart. Several cottages and small manors dot the landscape, hidden by the woods as much as they are obscured by enchantments that repel or attract visitors, depending on the owner's mood. These small houses are akin to summer retreats for the various witches and wizards from all over the Grimm Lands, where they conduct less pressing experiments, entertain guests, or simply get away from it all.

Clever children can enter the League's lands without running the risk of being captured by first securing an invitation. Not *all* of the witches and wizards in the Grimm Lands are wicked and paedophagus, and most are reasonable (if rather obsessed) people.

### The Black Tower

The League's land is comprised of bracken-covered hills, sprawling splotches of forest, and the occasional fetid bog or dark lake. Rising above the mist and shrubbery, and clearly visible even from the land's borders, is the Black Tower. The kingdom's founder fashioned it into a great structure capable of housing the normal population of an average kingdom; indeed, it seems to have no end. It simply rises up, and up, and up, disappearing into the clouds and, eventually, into the darkness beyond them.

The Black Tower was once a perfectly square construction, but now has all manner of additions and extensions clinging to its outer walls, as many of the League's members prefer not to have to climb the infinite stairs to reach the unoccupied quarters still available at the tower's top. Flocks of bats, ravens, and other unpleasant flying

things flutter about its heights, while a gray mist clings to its base. The door is a black-iron monstrosity with hinges in dire need of oil; when the gaggle of servant goblins pull on its chains to open it, the screech can be heard as far away as the neighboring kingdoms. The poor fellows have long since stabbed out their own eardrums in order to be able to continue their work.

The interior décor is as kids might expect from witches and wizards. Taxidermic animals, both mundane and fantastic, line the walls. Gothic and baroque architecture clash and combine into a disturbing whole. The Black Tower's main hall leads to various tea rooms, conservatories, smoking rooms, and other spaces for civilized socialization, and a large staircase leads up to the individual wings claimed by various witches and wizards, and also to one of the most recent additions to the Black Tower: the School for Inquisitive Young People.

## Back to School

It is not clear who had the idea that children might have uses other than as a food source—wizards in need of apprentices to dust their shelves and clean their labs, one would at first assume. But the witches should not be discounted. After centuries of being pushed off of cliffs, drenched with water, thrown into their own ovens, and having their own curses reflected back at them, perhaps the crones realized that such clever creatures should be made into allies rather than enemies. Together, perhaps they could all eventually find a way to escape the Grimm Lands.

At which point, of course, the children would promptly be eaten.

But until then, the school is exactly what it claims to be: an institution that teaches the art of magic to talented children. A kid crossing the borders of the League of Witches and Warlocks is likely to be caught quickly, and upon his capture is offered one of three options: become an apprentice at the school, become a slave, or become dinner. Most children choose the first option.

Becoming a witch's or wizard's apprentice is a surreal and amazing experience, in some ways. In others, it brings all the memories of tedious Real World school flooding back. Lectures are boring, but inattentive students whose eyes drift shut are likely to find their eyelids removed. Failing a test often means suffering the ill effects of whatever spell went awry. And ditching class is grounds for suspension…over a cauldron of simmering oil, that is.

That said, a child with an interest in magic can learn many things in the School for Inquisitive Young People. A driven and talented pupil can master many incantations there and may even learn something of the rules that govern the Grimm Lands. Students who prove they can be trusted are given a special black candle that burns with a cold light; the tip of its flame points ever-so-subtly in the direction of the location within the Black Tower that the child wishes to find. These candles also work anywhere within the borders of the League's land, though any witch or wizard scrying upon the bearer can manipulate the candle at will, leading unwary apprentices exactly where he wants them.

As with many things, however, there is a very subtle danger in studying at the Black Tower. The dark magicians here offer nothing out of the goodness of their hearts. They want the children to become like them. For this purpose, classes are carefully tailored to strip a child of his humanity. Studying magic with the witches and warlocks of the League is a slow spiral into the depths of madness and depravity, and causes a disadvantage of –2 grades on tests to resist estrangement.

# Rapunzel's Tower

This lonely tower stands as a testament of what happens when magic goes astray and is left untended for too long. Rapunzel is long since escaped, her jailer long since dead, but the tower itself, the oft-forgotten star of the stories, lives on. While Rapunzel was imprisoned there, the tower sympathized with her plight and helped her pass the time. It couldn't defy Rapunzel's jailer by letting her go, but it could at least make life more amenable for its guest. The tower called for birds to sing for her, and chased away dark clouds that would ruin her

mood (or brought them when she was feeling melancholy). In time, the tower came to love Rapunzel, and its stone heart keened with anguish when she left it.

The tower remained abandoned for decades, and eventually spiders became its only occupants. The tower made friends with the vermin, and focused its good intentions on providing them with a good home for their broods. The tower's interior became a tangle of cobwebs, and the vermin thrived, growing disturbingly large and maliciously intelligent. The spiders provided a sort of company and a unique brand of maintenance for the tower, doing what they could to bind it together with their webs and prevent its decay. The tower, meanwhile, protected them from the elements, made sure they were always warm, and attracted food in the form of the selfsame birds that it once called for Rapunzel's pleasure.

After years of this arrangement, the tower received an unexpected visit. Rapunzel, having gained a measure of wisdom with her years of maturity, returned to the tower to express her gratitude for its efforts and its company. Unfortunately, the tower was slumbering when she came to visit, so it could not warn her of its new residents. The girl climbed to the window, leapt in, and was promptly swarmed and sucked dry by the spiders within. Too late to stop them, the eldest of the weavers recognized the girl by her long, beautiful hair. She knew that the tower, should it awaken to find its beloved dead, would destroy itself and them in its throws of despair. Thus, a dark plan was hatched and enacted.

The spider matriarch directed her many young to fill the husk of Rapunzel and give it a semblance of life, stirring its limbs when appropriate, creating vocal chords from their webs, and the like. The tower, overjoyed at the unlikely prospect of its beloved Rapunzel returning, let itself be fooled.

Now, the spiders use Rapunzel's body as an additional lure for their victims. They let her long hair down from the highest window, tempting unwitting heroes to climb up and find a princess to save. Boys who see the hair must make 4th-grade Pluck tests to resist temptation, or be overcome with the urge to climb it and rescue the beautiful girl who they believe to be at its end. The spiders have woven strands of their sticky webs into the hair, making it an easy task (Scamper 3rd grade). However, upon reaching the tower's only window, would-be rescuers find no princess to rescue. Instead, they behold a grisly, desiccated husk, jerking about erratically and spewing spiders from every orifice, all of which are intent on eating the poor boy (see page 214 for the Spider-Filled Rapunzel's stats). Worse, the hair they climbed is nearly entirely made of spider webs at the Rapunzel-husk's scalp, requiring a 5th-grade Muscle test to pull free. Those who fail are considered to be wrestling as if with someone of their own stature.

The tower is a little disturbed by what it thinks is Rapunzel's new diet, but thinks little of it. Defeating the spider-animated corpse shows the tower the horror that the arachnids committed against its precious girl. It then destroys itself in order to crush all of its ghastly tenants.

## Riddle Manor

A large mansion rests in a tiny kingdom that consists only of a couple of other mansions, a few cottages, and some tiny fields surrounding them. The few peasants here are rather disinterested in the children when they arrive and pay them little mind, insisting that any questions will be answered by their mistress. Even asking for the time of day will elicit this response. The peasants remain enigmatically quiet when asked for their lady's name; if forced, they simply reply with an "I don't know." They hint that she is a woman of deep understanding and great wisdom, and insist that consulting with her would not be time wasted.

From the moment they set foot in the mansion, the children will notice that all of the adornments are puzzles or enigmas of some kind: Paintings have one element out of place, locks are a series of tumblers that can be flicked with a finger, and even the patterns of the carpets seem to hint that there is some secret hidden there. Servants with elegant uniforms attend the manor proper, and they all cover their faces with elaborate masks of cloth and gold filigree. A butler wearing a mask with feathers on it announces the children's presence and their desire for an audience, and then the lady walks down the central staircase. She is a beautiful young woman whose age seems to hover indeterminately between 16 and 30 years, and her purple eyes are deep as well as penetrating. Her voice is like the whisper of the wind upon the hilltops, and sounds as if it contains the deepest secrets in the world. In fact, she is a sphinx who long ago realized that her natural form was likely to attract only riddling experts, rather than the common person and his approach to riddles; it is that experience of human nature that the sphinx craves. Thus, she made an agreement with the Grimm Lands to trade her form with the riddling princess, who by contrast had grown so sick of riddles, despite her compulsive need to ask them, that she never wanted to hear one again. The riddling princess became a sphinx, and retreated to the World's Edge mountains, while the sphinx forever after took on human form, the better to trap or kill those (most likely kids) who could not answer her questions correctly.

The lady greets visitors and invites them to have tea in her sitting room. She leads them through a maze of hallways and doorways, staircases, and rooms, engaging them as she walks with her beauty, her wit, and questions regarding the children's travels. She will favor the girls with friendly advice and understanding, and the boys with a pleased affection that veers between maternal and sensual. She assumes that the children are looking for a way home to the Real World, and will mention that Babylon is one such path (though that is all she will say on the matter).

Anyone who enjoys the lady's hospitality is in for a surprise. In the middle of tea she walks out of the room, and the guests can hear the door lock once she closes it behind her. She speaks from outside, posing the challenge that whomever escapes from the house shall receive a reward in addition to freedom. She does not say

what this reward is, and laughs when asked what must be done to escape.

The entire house is a giant riddle. Opening each door requires the children to answer a riddle or solve a puzzle correctly. Some of these can be represented by Imagination tests ranging from 2nd to 11th grade, but the narrator should prepare at least a half-dozen detailed puzzles for the players to solve directly. The first few puzzles are harmless, and failing to answer a riddle carries no other consequence than a door not opening. Some of the lady's favorite puzzles involve switches that, if manipulated incorrectly, rotate the room to face in another direction. As the children near the exit, puzzles that are manipulated incorrectly cause deadly traps to be revealed, including pits with the bones of other unfortunates at their bottom, scything blades and impaling spikes emerging from doors, poison gas, and the like. Spoken riddles that are answered incorrectly result in keening laughter that causes blood to come from the kids' ears and noses (inflicting 1 or more wounds).

The maze of riddles and puzzles eventually takes the children to the front yard, where the lady is waiting with another cup of tea. She congratulates them for escaping her house, and tells them that they are free to go. Should they wish their reward, however, she has a final challenge for them: They must present *her* with a riddle she cannot answer, and they have one day to come up with it. The lady is incredibly intelligent and knows all the riddles common in fairy tales, but she can be defeated with riddles about things from the Real World. The only rule for making a riddle is that it must include the clue to solving it in its phrasing, so open questions (what is in my pocket) don't count, and the lady will be angry if the children try to take advantage of her sportsmanship.

The riddling lady's recompense is…another riddle! It is the only one she has ever heard that she could not solve. It is written on a tied and sealed scroll, which the lady gives to the children with the advice to keep it sealed and unread until they feel that they have exhausted all other means to get home.

If the children give in to curiosity and open the scroll before the time is right, they find nothing written on it, and the scroll disintegrates into ash. If they open it with the sincere belief that it is the last recourse they have to return home, the scroll contains the following words: "I open doors yet I am no key; I fly over the lands but have no wings; I am there when you sleep and when you are awake; I create and destroy for your sanity's sake."

The answer is "Imagination." If a kid comes up with the answer, her Imagination increases by one grade and she receives a vision of the saga's primary gateway back to the Real World, including visual clues as to its likely location.

# The Rose Garden

The Rose Garden covers acres of land, occupying most of the kingdom in which it lies. Its single village is a small collection of houses built on the garden's periphery. There is supposedly a bower at the center of the garden, but no one has ventured far enough within to see what it looks like, let alone to know who or what lives there. Despite its name, the Rose Garden boasts all manner of flowers and herbs, and the people survive by cutting and harvesting them. On the other hand, nobody knows who plants the seeds, prunes the stalks, clears the weeds, or waters the grounds; the people know only that they are allowed to cut the plants in the outer garden, marked by arches in the walkways and signposts in the flowerbeds. People can travel to and through the middle garden for commerce or simple recreation, but they are not allowed to cut plants there. And, no one is allowed in the inner garden, where a labyrinthine hedge maze promises to trap even the canniest of travelers.

No one truly remembers who told them about the rules, but they are definitely enforced. Fools occasionally test the limits of the agreement, cutting flowers and herbs from the middle garden or venturing into the inner one. The former disappear from their homes in their sleep, and the latter never return. The truth of the place is that it is home to one of the most tragic love stories of the Grimm Lands: that of Beauty and the Beast.

The two lovers did not live happily ever after once the Beast's curse was lifted. Beast had been a gentle-souled monster, a creature whose primal exterior and savage rages belied his deep and placid love for Beauty. The pale, pitiful prince who appeared when Beauty kissed him was not the person that she had learned to love. He was drab, boring, even pathetic. Beast, on the other hand, had fallen in love with Beauty's scent, with the sound of her skirts rustling, with the feeling of her hand brushing against his whiskers. Now that he was human once more, he found his senses inadequate for experiencing the many ways that he had learned to enjoy her presence. The woman he beheld with his human eyes, that he smelled with his human nose, was not the Beauty that he knew.

The two persisted in this miserable state for some time, growing to hate one another, until one day the Rotten King caught wind of their desperation. He sent an emissary to promise them their heart's desire: a return to the way things were. In trade, the two needed only to promise the bulk of their kingdom to Humpty Dumpty, allowing most of it to be swallowed by the Great and Awful Forest. All that remained were the acres of the rose garden that Beast had lovingly tended for so long.

Humpty Dumpty fulfilled his end of the bargain, and the Beast was returned to his previous state. He embraced his feral state wholeheartedly, knowing that it was what had made Beauty love him. She, in turn, became almost purely physical, focusing only upon her body and the way she could use it to affect her beloved Beast. The two now barely remember how to speak, preferring instead to use growls, scents, and body language to convey their intentions to one another. They continue to hold outsiders to the Beast's original rules regarding his garden, if only to keep themselves entertained. Beast, as the ultimate tracker, predator, and stealthy hunter, tracks down those who steal from the middle garden. Kids might become his targets if they need one of the garden's plants for an antidote, magical ingredient, or to fulfill a quest. Beauty, meanwhile, uses her painfully sensual presence to lead men and women alike to their dooms, should they trespass within the inner garden's hedges. Kids might run afoul of her in search of even rarer plants, or simply because they are kids, and a labyrinth is a hard thing to resist for those of adventurous mindset.

Regardless, the inner garden is a maze of dangers and delights, of succulent fruits, beautiful flowers, and carnivorous plants aplenty (see page 186). Those who make it all the way to the center without alerting the Beast or succumbing to Beauty's wiles may find their bower, a place of great natural beauty and peace where even the most troubled sleeper can supposedly find a night of peaceful rest.

# Spinnenbruch

This little hamlet is famous with many of its neighbors as the producer of the finest yarn in all the Grimm Lands. Every house in Spinnenbruch is devoted to the textile crafts, from the rich pastures that feed the wool-bearing

sheep, to the countless spinsters who toil at their distaffs to produce thread and yarn, to the dyers who color the material, to the weavers who create fabrics of all kinds for the tailors to fashion into clothing. But it's not so simple: The sheep are fairly talkative, the spinsters have their own ideas about efficient methodology, and the dyers have brutal methods for getting just the right shade of red.

When children arrive in Spinnenbruch, the first to greet them are the sheep, grazing lazily in the fields. Some produce wool that is already colored, and a few of the most prized have patterns on their coats. Tales are told of sheep with wool of steel or even gold, but these are kept in hidden dales or guarded closely in private barns. The sheep are friendly and lead a life of leisure, revered by the villagers as the source of their prosperity and living without the worry that they will become mutton. The occasional wolf or absent-minded shepherd can create some trouble, but in general the sheep are content with their lot.

Most of the Spinnenbruch sheep are intelligent, but not all of them can talk, and even the ones that do rarely sustain an interesting conversation for long: All they wish to talk about is the taste of the grass and the latest fashions in the village. Some sheep can tell if a garment has been made from their wool, and depending on the clothes' quality, will either boast of that fact to their fellows or sniff contemptuously at a poorly tailored outfit.

Within Spinnenbruch, visitors can find any kind of yarn, fabric, or clothing imaginable, whether mundane or magical. The town's weekly market is an explosion of colors and textures that entices buyers from all over the Grimm Lands. There are balls of yarn that can withstand any labyrinth, threads so fine as to cut the wind, flying carpets, robes fit for a king, and more.

Spinnenbruch is the only real settlement in its kingdom. There is a small castle at the land's center, but it functions more as a trading post than as a true seat of government. King Dieter, son of a brave little tailor who smote seven flies with a single strike, has become the ruler here. Like his father, Dieter is very cunning, but he is outright malicious in his business dealings, possessed of a sharp wit and a ruthless sense of governance. He appears friendly and amicable to visitors, but exploits any chance he has to dupe the gullible. He delights in saddling children with quests whose real objective is far removed from the stated goal, instead serving any of the hundred plots he has cooking.

Helping him manage the kingdom are the Three Spinsters (see page 215), a trio of strange old women who are the best spinsters in all the Checkerboard Kingdoms. These hideous women personify the work of spinning thread, as one has a huge right foot to spin the wheel, the other a swelling lip to lick the thread, and the other a monstrously large thumb for cutting. The three supervise the activities of all of Spinnenbruch's weaves, stores, and workshops, reporting directly to King Dieter.

The Spinsters were once helpful and well-meaning advisors, but the monotony of spinning has driven them mad. When they are not metaphorically (or literally) whipping the village's workers into greater efficiency, they travel the lands in search of new apprentice tailors and seamstresses. The Spinsters operate the largest weaving and spinning house in Spinnenbruch, and the not-so-secret secret of their success is their employment of stray children who wander inside the kingdom's borders. If they find children traveling through the kingdom, they act kindly towards them, offering help along with food and a roof to sleep under. If the children accept their help and follow the old women into Spinnenbruch, they soon find themselves chained to a spinning wheel along with dozens of other unfortunate children, both native to the Grimm Lands as well as other visitors from the Real World.

Breaking the chains requires a 10th-grade Muscle test, which is almost impossible for any kids to perform, so they must find other ways to escape or to free the other children. The kids eat, sleep, work, and even go "number 1" and "number 2" at the spinning wheels, never given reprieve. After his first week of work, a kid must make a 1st-grade Muscle test or suffer a wound; each week thereafter, the difficulty of the test increases by 1. Despair is also likely to set in. The Thumb Spinster keeps the workshop's keys dangling from her belt, but obsessively fingers them as she walks about, counting them by feel with her oversized digit. The Foot Spinster is in charge of waking the kids up and setting them to work every morning, tromping back and forth across the workshop, while the Lip Spinster threatens and ridicules them each night as an unpleasant variation on bedtime stories; after each such story, a kid must make a 6th-grade Pluck test or suffer from despair until morning.

## The Cursed Spindle

Rumors tell that King Dieter keeps a rare treasure in his castle, something that the Three Spinsters would be very glad to own: the cursed spindle that put the original Briar Rose to sleep. The Spinsters will gladly free all the children in their employ (they are not worried, since they can always get more) in exchange for the cursed spindle, but liberating it from King Dieter's castle is quite an adventure in and of itself. The wily king knows that the three women covet his treasure, and he has taken many precautions against them.

The spindle is kept in the highest tower of King Dieter's castle, accessible through one of the lesser used corridors. There are no guards anywhere around the tower, which consists only of winding stairs leading to a windowless room at the top, hundreds of steps up. The room's floor is strewn with hay, and at the very center rests the spindle, a simple but sturdy item with no adornment to betray its unique nature.

Any girl entering the room must make a 5th-grade Pluck test against temptation or immediately walk toward the spindle and touch it. Those who do so immediately fall asleep, not to be awoken for 100 years. They can only be woken by a kiss from a boy who expends 1 Imagination; thereafter, the girl will have an overwhelming crush on the boy for a year and a day.

Any unaffected characters who approach the spindle cause its guardians to awake: a host of flying needles (see "Animated Flatware," page 198) hidden amongst the hay. With high-pitched battle cries in outrageous accents, they launch themselves at the intruders. Each kid who approaches the spindle is attacked by 1d6 needles each round.

## The Stray Kingdom

The Stray Kingdom owes its name to two strange characteristics: It never stays in one place for long, and it is inhabited and governed by stray animals who have found a home amongst their peers.

Nobody rightly remembers what the kingdom was like before the Night of Caterwauling. It was called Bremen, but little more is known. On that horrible night, the castle walls were assaulted by an army of animals in a ruthless application of psychological warfare. Imagine being woken from a deep sleep by thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of animals of all kinds, causing such a ruckus as to out-ruckus anything heard before or since. They brayed, they barked, they howled, they mooed, they hissed, they cawed, and together they made the most hellish din the humans had ever heard. Days passed, then weeks, and it became obvious that the animals were not going to leave. So, the humans did, and the animals grew quiet, looked at one another with pride, and moved into their new homes.

After the kingdom was completely overrun by the animals, neighboring rulers feared the beasts' desire for expansion. They asked a witch to curse the land so that the animals could never mount an assault upon them. The witch, who collected her payment in the form of the kings' and queens' firstborn children, placed a powerful spell on the kingdom, forcing it to move about like a stray animal, never finding a solid mooring for as long as an animal sits on the throne. This prevents the animals from being able to mount a supported expedition into others' lands, for no sooner would the army begin its assault than it would find itself abandoned by its home. On the other hand, this makes the kingdom nearly impossible to invade, which suits the new citizens just fine.

At sunrise of every Sunday, the Stray Kingdom finds itself bordering new lands, with no discernible pattern to its travels. Attentive residents of the soon-to-be-neighboring kingdoms get a week's warning of the Stray Kingdom's imminent arrival, as cows in the fields take to bursting into song and grass along the kingdom's edge takes on new and strange colorations. Once the Stray Kingdom arrives, the new neighbors find their border being endlessly patrolled. These border watches are commanded by Director Schlossen, a black stallion with a strict, militaristic bearing, and his pack of fierce hounds. To be allowed inside the kingdom, humans must show appreciation for fine "music"; any child that joins the cacophony of howls and assorted animal noises with which Schlossen's hounds great them will be treated as a fellow musician, and treated with respect and deference before being taken to meet the Council. Those who do not, or

who evidence any disdain or displeasure at the discordant howls, will be escorted back to the border from which they came.

The only village in the kingdom is in a terrible state of disrepair, for there are none with opposable thumbs to perform maintenance on it. Only rats, cats, and a few dogs inhabit the ruined cottages, the rest of the animals preferring to walk or fly freely under the sky. Commoner beasts are grateful to children who repair stables and roofs, since the rain continues to be a bother.

## A Musical Court

The Stray Kingdom should ruled by the Bremen Musicians, except for one problem: They were on a mission abroad to save and recruit mistreated slaves when the curse was laid upon the land. They have been trying to catch up ever since, but every time they get close the Stray Kingdom, it disappears once more. Needless to say, having worked so hard to create a home for themselves, the quartet is a wee bit pissy.

In their stead, two animals have taken over, based supposedly on the musical merit of their singing voices. These are State Baritone Rolph, a large male English Shepherd dog, and State Soprano Rausch, a fat female Angora cat. Ideally, their rule would be balanced by a State Tenor and State Bass, as well, but the two greedily veto any new petitioners to the council on claims of inadequate singing skill. While these two congratulate themselves on their fine edicts and drink only water from the finest of mineral springs, the actual job of running the kingdom falls on the hardy back of Director Schlossen (a talking horse; see page 185), a veteran of many monster hunts whose princely rider died in the Great and Awful Forest.

Until Schlossen decides to make a bid for power, however, or until the Bremen Musicians somehow make their way back, the State Duet continue to rule from their court in the castle. The structure, which lies in the center of the village, is in better repair than its neighboring buildings, if only because stone deteriorates more slowly than wood. Visitors are taken directly to see Baritone Rolph and Soprano Rausch; the reigning dog and cat question visitors at length about the lands abroad and are particularly curious about musical styles. Children who prove themselves entertaining will be highly regarded by the Stray Court. The State Duet are very sensitive, however, and any mockery or criticism may be met with outrage, attack, or banishment.

## A Humane Society

Kids who travel to the castle cannot help but notice the terrible disrepair of the village, as well as the bedraggled appearance of many of its inhabitants. The humans of the Checkerboard Kingdoms look upon the Strays with equal parts fear and disdain, but the animals of the Grimm Lands, even if they are not intelligent or cannot talk, all know at least something about the Stray Kingdom. To them, it is a sort of Mecca, their own Babylon, a place where animals can run off to live in freedom amongst other animals with no fear of being whipped for not working hard enough, drowned in a bag for having too many kittens, or eaten when the winters are rough. As such, children who have the gratitude of the Stray Kingdom can expect to find allies in the most unexpected places.

Children who perform an extraordinary service for the animals or prove themselves talented musicians receive a token from the State Duet in the form of a sloppy chicken wishbone. A kid who breaks the wishbone while yelling "Throw me a bone, world!" receives

## Once Upon a Time: The Bremen Musicians

Once upon a time, there were a donkey, a dog, a cat. and a rooster, all mistreated by their masters. They left them and met at a desolate crossroads. Together, they all resolved to flee to Bremen, known for its freedom, to live without owners.

On the way to Bremen, they happened upon a cottage occupied by thieves, counting their ill-gotten gains and eating a luxurious meal. The animals stood on one another's backs and began to sing, hoping to please the men with their performance. The din was so cacophonous and otherworldly that the thieves, not knowing what could make such a racket, fled for their lives. The animals accepted their good fortune, finish the men's meal, and bedded down for the night.

Later that night, one of the thieves returned to investigate. He saw nothing more than the eyes of the cat reflecting the light of his candle before all hell broke loose. His companions saw him tearing out of the cottage, and when they finally caught up with him, he told a horrid tale of being beset by monsters: A witch who scratched him with her long nails (the cat), an assassin who slashed at his leg (the dog), a giant who clubbed him (the donkey), and worst of all, a terrible demon who screamed in his ear (the rooster). The thieves abandoned the cottage to the strange creatures who had taken it, where the animals lived happily…for a time.

But nothing is happily ever after in the Grimm Lands, and abused animals are not few and far between. Many a stray sought out the Bremen Musicians for aid, advice, and succor, and it eventually became clear that one cottage would not be enough for them. And so, with an army of like-minded critters in tow, the Bremen Musicians finally completed their journey to the town.

the aid of any common animal in the area. Frogs may dive to the bottom of a pond to retrieve lost treasures, horses may carry the children away from danger, rats may gnaw the ropes binding a friend or steal the keys from a jailer's belt, etc. As it can only be activated by breaking it, this token can only be used once.

# Tin and Spices

A lost princess happened upon this kingdom years ago, and her honesty, courage, and most of all, her sensitivity, convinced the land's rulers that she was fit to marry their son. Yet, the princess's sensitivity played havoc with her married life. There was not a night when the prince did not hurt her even with the gentlest of kisses, not to mention the somewhat rougher activities of intimate life. However, instead of retreating to a life of chastity, the young monarchs opted to make the best of their fortunes and began to enjoy it. Over time, King Heinz and Queen Sophia have grown more adventuresome in their pursuits, and their kingdom has changed to reflect this.

The people that populate the only village in the kingdom receive visitors cordially, treating them as guests would be treated in other lands. Visiting children will quickly notice that the way villagers treat one another, however, is altogether different. An innkeeper will alternate kind words to the children with very vicious remarks to the scullery maid, and neighbors exchange scathing insults with the warmest of smiles.

The people of Tin and Spices are consummate sadomasochists, mirroring the attitudes of their rulers, inflicting physical and psychological pain on friends and neighbors just for the joy of it, and taking pleasure in what they receive in kind. While not inherently dangerous to the children, these activities are sure to test their comfort zones.

## The Sense of a Princess

Even when traveling in other lands, the children will hear talk of Queen Sophia's sensitivity as the ideal of womanhood, and how it helps make her a better ruler. Some of the rumors suggest that she can even sense subtle things such as the magical nature of any object, its authenticity, whether somebody is lying or telling the truth, and so forth. She might not possess vast stores of knowledge, but Queen Sophia is a very sensitive and sensible person, her enjoyment of pain notwithstanding.

Gaining an audience with the king and queen is relatively easy. King Heinz remains one of the most hospitable rulers in the Grimm Lands, for it was hospitality that allowed him to meet his wife in the first place. The monarchs receive the children with some curiosity and listen to what they have to say. At random moments the king may pinch the queen, making her sigh with pleasure—a display of affection that most kids will find quite gross.

Before answering any question or acceding to any request, the monarchs will insist that the children stay for dinner and sleep. They will be given their own quarters as they see fit (all girls in one room and all boys in another, everyone to his or her own room, etc.), and dinner is plentiful and delicious. It is also poisoned.

Fortunately, the poison in the food and drink is not lethal. Instead, those who fail a 7th-grade Muscle test find their every sense enhanced. The benefit is that they receive +5 grades to all Seek tests. The drawback is that they get headaches from the beating of a mosquito's wings, are distracted by the slightest of breezes, and so on.

The king and queen watch the children through a magic mirror during the night, noting how they react to their newly acquired hypersensitivity. In fact, they put them through the same test that Queen Sophia had to pass to marry Heinz: to sleep on mattresses beneath which lie peas. The children affected by the poison will have a horrible night and be unable to sleep at all; their senses are so high strung that every hour they must pass a 7th-grade Muscle test or suffer a wound, just from tossing and turning in bed. Damage from this sensitivity cannot knock a child out, but he will certainly feel as if he were dying. The monarchs will be amused if the children sneak out to explore the castle, but they will not react kindly if they try to steal something.

The morning after, the poison fades, along with any damage accrued from its effect, and the queen will ask the children how they spent the night. If the children are truthful and describe how terrible it was, the queen will smile and nod, and will give them any aid within her power. If they lie, the queen smiles nonetheless, but refuses to help the children because of their dishonesty and brown-nosing. She orders the guards to escort the children outside, and all the courtesy and hospitality are off; all the citizens are as mean to them as they are to each other. The children will be randomly stoned, spat at, soaked in dirty bath water, shouted at, and thoroughly made miserable until they leave the kingdom, most probably in tears.

## The Queen's Blessing

Sophia is a beautiful young woman, dressed as a queen is expected to dress, although with a touch of modesty in the adornments of her dresses. She is a green-eyed blonde who prefers to wear her hair loose, for tying it up in any hairdo gives her headaches.

Because even the softest caress can send needles of pain up her spine, she has learned to live with her hypersensitivity and even to enjoy it. She does not seek pain actively, but in her mind many forms of pain become pleasure. This little quirk has allowed her to survive with her mind mostly intact. Aside from this trait, or perhaps thanks to it, Queen Sophia is kind and very aware of other people's suffering. She likes to help others to the best of her ability, and she loves children with an honest and selfless heart. She is no fool, how-

ever; she can instantly tell when she's being lied to, and she dislikes the sensation.

Children will find quick and earnest hospitality in Queen Sophia's castle, and she will be sweet and kind to them, especially after they pass her overnight test. She can help children with honest advice, and she will not lie about the hardships and dangers the children will face in their travels across the Grimm Lands. She will even offer her kingdom as a place where the children can return to rest, regroup, and recover their strength for their continuing adventures

The reason behind Sophia's eager helpfulness is that she cannot have children of her own. She is not barren, but a wizard told her and her husband that, due to her hypersensitivity, the pains of labor would kill her and probably take her child with her. As the children spend more time in her company, she will begin to consider them as her own children. There is even a slight danger that she will grow too possessive of them and start imposing curfews and even punishments. A serious and honest talk with her will return her to her senses, although she will be very depressed for several days afterwards.

Queen Sophia automatically succeeds at any test that has something to do with noticing things, and she has the magical power to discern whether an object is magical or not only by touching it. She can also identify any curse or magical effect active upon any person she touches.

# The Great and Awful Forest

The Great and Awful Forest stands in sharp contrast to the somewhat ordered environment of the Checkerboard Kingdoms. The sprawling wood is present in some form or another everywhere in the Grimm Lands; even lone copses of forest surrounded by open fields, which are quite obviously separated from the forest's main bulk, can still somehow lead the unwary deeper into the wood's dark heart. As an outcast from the Checkerboard Kingdoms, this is where Humpty Dumpty lived in exile until he put himself back together again and became the Rotten King. As a would-be tyrant over all the Grimm Lands, this is the vast fortress within which he marshals his armies and makes his plans. As the Rotten King's power grows, the tendrils of the Great and Awful Forest slowly and insidiously spread into the Checkerboard Kingdoms, defying any amount of axe and flame.

Despite the Rotten King's rule, the wood is a vast, ungoverned territory harboring a wide array of horrors. Its gloomy bowers conceal a host of malignant creatures seeking shelter from more civilized regions: hideous monsters waiting to feed on unwary travelers, witches practicing dark magic,

seemingly innocent creatures luring others into traps. Some creatures constantly wander its paths, hunting their victims, pursuing their hopeless quests, or seeking a way back to more civilized lands. Others settle into ruined castles, meager cottages, or habitable caves, living a solitary, immobile existence, ignorant of their neighbors a few clearings away.

The dismal environment itself cultivates hazards like dangerous animals, carnivorous plants, and enchanted streams. Twisted inhabitants from well-known fairy tales also make their homes in these murky woods: the Big Bad Wolf, Little Red Riding Hood, Hansel and Gretel, the three bears, Little Bo Peep and Little Boy Blue, and others. The remains of Checkerboard Kingdoms that run afoul of magical curses, are obliterated by war, or succumb to other disasters are also found here, consumed by the forest's growth. Their ivy-covered remains provide shelter for unsuspecting travelers, but they often harbor malevolent forces, cursed outcasts, sly witches, and other dangers.

The forest's shadowy borders provide a surprising refuge from the insanity of the Checkerboard Kingdoms. Here, small communities of woodcutters, herbalists, trappers, and other independent-minded folk eke out an existence, caught between the ridiculous societies of the "civilized" kingdoms and the primal threats of the arboreal nightmare.

Despite its dangers and the well-meaning warnings of those who live upon its periphery, the Great and Awful Forest still tempts people to enter its dark boundaries. Some seek refuge, some seek wealth, and some hope to find ends to their quests. More often than not, these latter adventurers succeed, but not in the manner they had imagined.

# Dangers

Wicked forces, malevolent spirits, and wantonly miscast black magic have twisted the very nature the Great and Awful Forest. Oversized leaves blot out sunlight, while twisted tree trunks conceal dangers hiding just around the next corner. Pools and streams might look refreshing, but contain water with deleterious effects. Hidden cave entrances emerge from the hillsides, disgorging dangerous creatures at random. Constant exposure to the forest's overwhelming sensations of fear and dread turn normally benign woodland plants, animals, and terrain into frightful hazards.

The only way to avoid most of these hazards is to remain, no matter what, upon the path. Paths in the Great and Awful Forest rarely seem to be the most direct route to a destination, and might even be more overgrown than the gentle woodland terrain to either side. They might double back in circles, pass dangerously close to scary locales or threatening trees, or even seem to pass directly through dank caves and dark lairs. One thing holds true, though: No matter how unpleasant a trail seems, the fate of a kid who steps off it is far, far worse. All of the creatures in the Great and Awful Forest are barred from harming anyone upon the path, so they do their utmost to trick, cajole, tempt, and frighten the kids into stepping off of it.

## Carnivorous Plants

The forest's dark energies have infected many of its plants with malicious life forces. Trees have been known to come alive, snatching unwary kids and stuffing them into suddenly gaping, thorn-rimmed maws. Less powerful plants settle for strangling kids with their vines, suckling on the blood they draw with their thorns, or taking advantage of the unfortunates who die nearby and decompose into the soil.

Several features distinguish carnivorous plants from the other twisted flora of the forest. They tend to have gray bark, blood-red leaves, ochre-colored sap, and other abnormal coloring. The trees conceal great maws at some point on their trunks, with ragged bits of clothing from their last victims sometimes still visible. Most plants will settle for whatever comes within reach, but they aren't completely random in their selection of prey. Some trees are particularly loathing toward those carrying axes, while others would much rather consume the occasional bird or squirrel than harm a human. The deeper one goes into the forest, the more aggressive the plants become, and also the more conniving. Plants near the outskirts tend to rustle or even lash out uncontrollably as soon as they sense prey, giving ample warning to the cautious. Plants near the heart of the wood, by contrast, are savvy enough to wait until prey is well within the radius of their branches, vines, roots, and the like before striking. The most devious of them salvage trinkets from past prey—often a shiny bauble, weapon, satchel full of bread, or other tempting object—and hang them in their uppermost branches to lure children into climbing their limbs. They then strike suddenly and silently, trying to snatch the child up and stuff it in their maw before anyone else notices.

### Strangleweed

This tall yet sickly looking grass grows in clumps along streams and pathways, wherever it can find a small ray of diffuse sunshine. It preys on animals, birds, and children who wander along its border or even through it. Strands of grass quickly twist together to form strong tentacles that whip out from rigid stem casings near the roots and attempt to strangle unwary victims. A typical patch of strangleweed can create 1d6 tentacles, with which it usually concentrates on restraining and choking one victim. If attacked by others, all but one of the tentacles (the one grasping the prey's throat) disengage to defend itself and its meal.

Strangleweed cannot be defeated as if it were a normal combatant, as it has no central body to attack. A victim's best bet is to simply get away. The weed has Muscle 5th grade and can only spend its turn wrestling. Once it subdues its prey and fends off any attackers, the strangleweed draws the victim to the ground, where it slowly consumes corpses—even the bones—in the digestive acids secreted from the rigid stem casings near its roots.

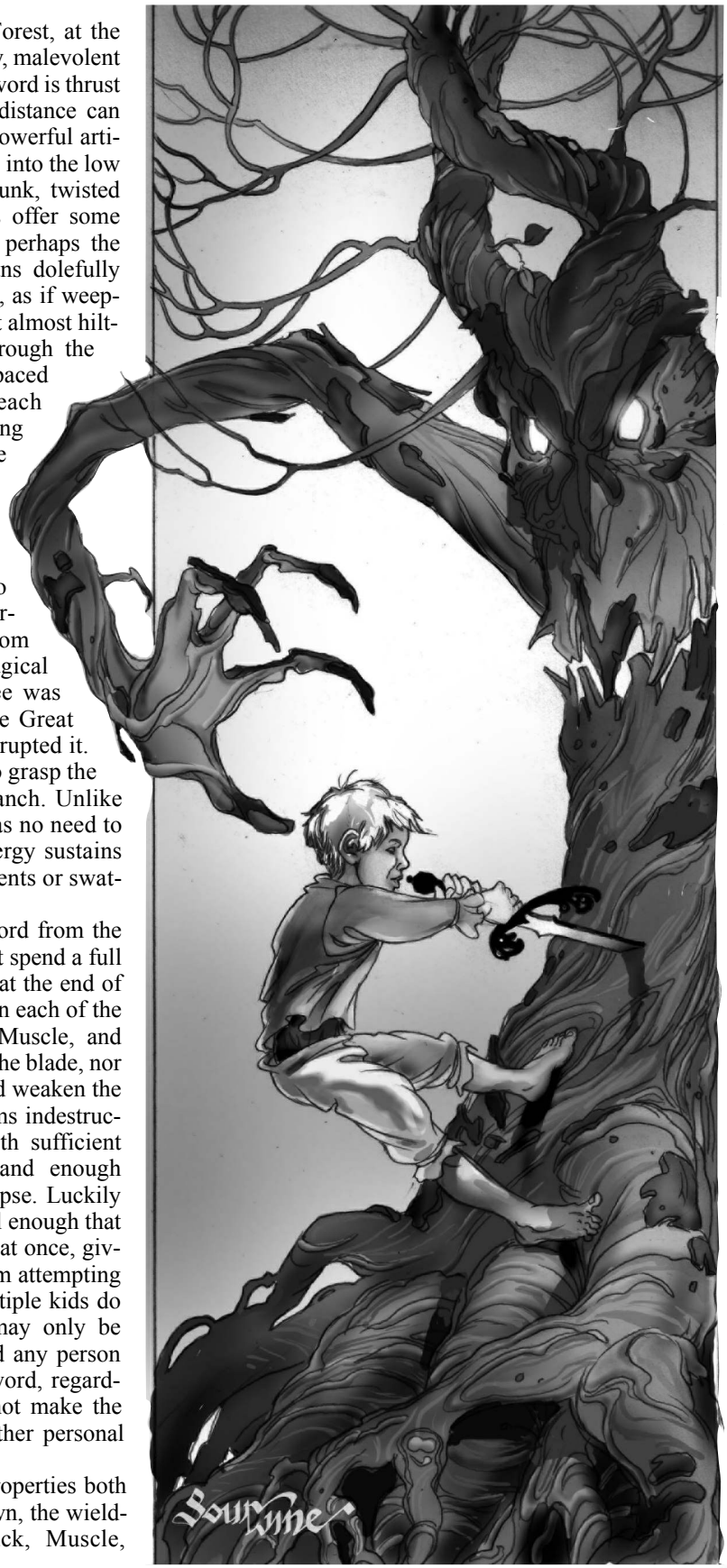
## The Sword Oak

Deep within the Great and Awful Forest, at the center of a small clearing, stands a mighty, malevolent oak tree like no other. A finely wrought sword is thrust within its trunk, one that even from a distance can obviously be seen to be an ancient and powerful artifact. The sword oak's gnarled roots snake into the low hillock from which it rises. Its thick trunk, twisted branches, and broad, dark green leaves offer some indication of its ancient heritage—it is perhaps the oldest tree in the forest. The tree moans dolefully when a breeze rustles through its foliage, as if weeping in pain from the brilliant sword thrust almost hilt-deep into its body. Anyone digging through the nearby underbrush uncovers six stones spaced evenly along the clearing's edge, each inscribed with mysterious runes warning travelers to avoid the tree and to leave the sword alone.

The oak serves as the sword's guardian. Rumors claim that a god, sorcerer, or master dwarven smith thrust the magically endowed blade into the tree to ensure that only the most worthy warrior—one who could draw it from the sturdy trunk—could wield its magical power. Nobody really knows if the tree was enchanted to protect the sword or if the Great and Awful Forest's malignant forces corrupted it. The oak waits for anyone approaching to grasp the sword, then strikes with a powerful branch. Unlike other malevolent trees, the sword oak has no need to eat its victims (the sword's magical energy sustains it), so it concentrates on crushing opponents or swatting them away.

Any mortal seeking to draw the sword from the tree—assuming he defeats the oak—must spend a full minute straining to pull it out, and must at the end of that minute succeed at a 12th-grade test in each of the Core traits (Cool, Imagination, Luck, Muscle, and Pluck). No axe can cut the wood around the blade, nor can any amount of fire burn the trunk and weaken the wood. The oak sheathing the sword seems indestructible. The blade only yields to one with sufficient courage to defeat the guardian oak and enough strength to wrest the sword from its corpse. Luckily for the kids, though, their hands are small enough that up to five of them grasp the sword's hilt at once, giving it a mighty pull and with each of them attempting a different test, should they wish. If multiple kids do participate in the retrieval, each test may only be attempted by a single individual. Should any person ever fail at attempting to retrieve the sword, regardless of the test he attempted, he may not make the attempt again until he graduates to another personal grade level.

If recovered, the sword's magical properties both help and hinder the children. When drawn, the wielder gains +2 grades in Cool, Pluck, Muscle,



Scamper, Scrap, and Throw, while his allies gain +1 grade in all of those traits. However, any person who wields the blade, even once, becomes chosen by it to perform its quest. The wielder must attempt to complete that quest as if he had sworn an oath to do so, and must do everything within his power to see it through, whether it be killing innocents, sacrificing his own friends, or becoming something that he despises. That quest, which cannot be known until the sword is drawn, is nothing other than the complete and utter destruction of the Rotten King.

## Stream Effects

| 2d6 Roll | Effect |
|---|---|
| 2 | **Tainted:** Make a Muscle test (grade variable) or suffer 1d6 wounds. |
| 3 | **Refreshing:** Regain 1 expended grade level in your special Core trait. |
| 4 | **Cursed:** Suffer a –1 disadvantage on all tests until this time tomorrow. |
| 5 | **Healing:** Heal one wound. |
| 6 | **Soporific:** Fall into a deep sleep lasting 1d6 hours. |
| 7 | **Empowering:** Gain a +1 advantage on all tests until this time tomorrow. |
| 8 | **Altering:** Gain some vestige of an animal's appearance (long snout, bushy ears, tail). |
| 9 | **Imbuing:** Gain the ability to smell good and harmful magic, and differentiate between the two, as if it were an odor. The range of this ability is affected by prevailing wind conditions, masking smells, and so on, just as scent would be. |
| 10 | **Transforming:** Turn into a small talking animal (fox, deer, rabbit, goat, pig, raccoon, squirrel, or opossum). |
| 11 | **Inspiring:** Gain a cryptic vision of the near future or regarding a challenge or quest that you're currently facing. |
| 12 | **Poisoned:** Fall into a permanent enchanted slumber. |

Not all effects of enchanted water manifest themselves immediately. Children might only sense a funny taste or tingly feeling and might not truly comprehend the results until later.

## Enchanted Streams

Many streams run through the Great and Awful Forest, formed by storm runoff from the ever-moving World's End Mountains. Most brooks simply provide water, but some have detrimental or beneficial magical qualities acquired from cursed places, powerful sorcerers, ancient ruins, or foul monsters lairing along their paths. Drinking from a previously untested water source always carries some risk.

If the narrator determines that a body of water is enchanted, roll 2d6 and consult the "Enchanted Stream" sidebar to determine the random outcome of drinking from it. Water from that source always produces the determined results. Most deleterious effects require a cure acquired with the aid of a guardian spellcaster (like a fairy godmother) or other knowledgeable individual. Since enchanted waters gain their powers from the stream, brook, or pool through which they run, bottling them for transport elsewhere negates their effects by the next sunrise.

### Talking Fish

The magical powers of the Great and Awful Forest's waterways affect not only those drinking there, but those who call the streams and ponds their home. Talking fish are one result, offering information to passersby that can be helpful, deceiving, or both.

Since fish can't leave their environment, they usually verbally accost travelers who wander near their streams and ponds. Some seem quite curious about the world of land-dwellers, leaning as far out of the water as they can to converse with strangers. Others reveal their ability to speak only when caught with line and hook, pleading for their lives and offering favors if returned safely to the water.

Talking fish have different personalities, just like people. Chatty fish seem glad to offer information to those with questions about the Great and Awful Forest and its strange inhabitants, but they often require others to answer innumerable queries about their identities, destinations, and motives. Suspicious fish might not speak immediately, carefully observing land-dwellers first until they feel safe in conversing with them.

Unfortunately, a talking fish's knowledge remains limited to what it has seen on its travels up and down stream, and what it has learned by talking with other land-dwellers. Some seek favors in return for information, advice, or other assistance. Such kindnesses might include unblocking a dam in the stream, retrieving some treasured bauble stolen from the fish's pond home, or entertaining it with an amusing story. Clever fish pose riddles to children to test their worthiness and wits. Others hope to play devious pranks on wanderers, sending them off on hopeless quests, into dangerous territory, or toward some wicked forest dweller with false information or tantalizing rumors of riches.

The fish living in forest brooks and ponds cannot grow large enough to pose a threat to children, but more mischievous fish can leap far out of the water to snatch small objects in their mouths.

## Woodland Caves

The Great and Awful Forest doesn't possess as much rocky terrain as the World's End Mountains, but caves still appear among its hillsides, boulders, and stone outcroppings. They frequently serve as homes to animals, monsters, and dangerous humans. Some of them are even entrances to the Underworld. Some are simply dank holes, their occupants' presence revealed only by piles of bones, if at all. The lairs of more civilized beings might hold a table, chair, bed, chest, cauldron, or other personal belongings. Crafty cave-dwellers conceal their domiciles behind movable stones, secret passages, or dusty curtains that look like rocks to the untrained eye. Such entrances can be detected by the well-traveled path leading directly into what seems to be a featureless rock face. The more socially or magically adept cave dwellers may convince nearby animals, particularly talking ones, to act as guards and lookouts.

# Forest Locales

Many intelligent creatures call the Great and Awful Forest their home, and they stake out their territories with defiant contempt for trespassers. Some favor the anonymity the dark woods offer, allowing them to carry out their contemptible activities without judgement from others or interference by more civilized society. Others have simply always been woods-dwellers, and could not imagine any other life.

## The Big Bad Wolf's Hanting Grounds

The Big Bad Wolf doesn't have a specific home in the Great and Awful Forest, but he is such a notorious creature that he might be considered a local in and of himself. Wolves have long been a threat to farmers, woodsmen, and shepherds, but a talking, whip-smart trickster of a wolf is dangerous and deadly on a whole different level. The wolf's home is wherever he roams, and that tends to be right alongside the paths throughout the forest. He does his best, via trickery and threats, to scare kids off the path so he can eat them; if they refuse, he takes advantage of shortcuts to beat them to their destination and set up traps there. Though he cannot harm kids upon the path, he is not prevented from digging pits on both sides of it, building mechanical booby traps that knock kids off of it, and so on.

## Castle of the Snake

Deep within the forest stands the crumbling ruin of a small fort. Its walls, towers, and hall surround a cozy courtyard. It seems to offer a comfortable place to spend the night, especially in inclement weather. The doors to the towers and gatehouse seem stuck fast, but the main gate is wide open, and the front door to the great hall swings on silent hinges. Inside, children can find cobweb-covered tables and benches, moldering tapestries, and a huge fireplace with a stack of nearby wood ready to make a homey blaze. Those searching the attached kitchens find some cupboards with a few dusty jars of jam, old salted meats, and a few bundles of dried herbs.

Visitors are not alone in finding the hall a comfy home. Just as they settle in, a large serpent slithers around to get a good seat by the fire. It rears up to speak with the children, but instead of a serpent's head, it has the face and flowing hair of a beautiful young woman. She claims that she is a princess bound to this ophidian form by a potent curse. To free her, she needs a champion to retrieve her tunic, skirt, and shoes from the castle towers. The princess promises to reward the children for their help, but warns that to reach each item of clothing they must defeat daunting foes.

Children undertaking this short quest must first open the sturdy door to each tower. This requires a 5th-grade Muscle test. The princess suggests they begin with the gatehouse, and then move to the smaller and finally the larger tower.

The gatehouse tower contains the princess's tunic. It hangs on the wall, apparently unguarded. Any child who steps forward suddenly notices the clothing's magical sentries: Seven large disembodied fists appear out of thin air, and immediately begin to fly about and bash away at intruders. The children must somehow vanquish, capture, or immobilize the fists before they can retrieve the tunic and return it to the princess. When she puts it on, her torso returns to that of a young woman, but her legs and feet remain in the form of a snake.

### Disembodied Fists (1st grade)

**Health:** 1 **Shape:** Hands **Stature:** Cat
**Speed:** Fast **Protection:** 2 **Wounds:** 5

Muscle 2nd Seek 3rd Scamper 3rd Scrap 4th

***Unarmed Attackers:*** Although the disembodied fists are roughly cat-sized, they have the strength of the adult-sized arms that they supposedly came from. This means that they are considered adult-sized for the purposes of inflicting wounds and for Muscle tests when wrestling. However, the hands are helpless as normal creatures of their size when netted, captured in sacks, and the like.

***Flyers:*** These hands flit about without needing to touch the ground, and fight without seeming to need to exert any leverage.

The smaller of the two towers holds the princess's skirt, folded neatly in a chest on the second floor. To reach it, the children must battle seven kid-eating giant toads with razor-sharp teeth, who spontaneously appear at the top of the stairs.

### Razor Toads (1st grade)

**Health:** 1 **Shape:** Animal **Stature:** Cat
**Speed:** Average **Protection:** 2 **Wounds:** 2

Muscle 2nd Seek 2nd Scamper 4th Scrap 3rd

***Weapons (Razor Teeth):*** Each turn that a razor toad successfully attacks the same target, the number of wounds it inflicts with its bite increases by +2.

***Hoppers:*** Razor toads can leap as far, whether vertically or horizontally, as they can move during a turn. This allows them to, for instance, jump over and past one row of enemies to attack those who are hiding in the back of a group.

The princess's shoes sit on a pedestal in the highest room in the largest tower. To reach them, the children must defeat seven sinister stone goblins who emerge from the walls with steel hammers.

### Stone Goblins (1st grade)

**Health:** 1 **Shape:** Person **Stature:** Cat
**Speed:** Slow **Protection:** 5 **Wounds:** 4

Muscle 4th Seek 3rd Scamper 2nd Scrap 3rd

***Weapons (Steely Hammers):*** With a successful hit, a goblin's hammer shatters a single defensive item in the following order of priority: a weapon used this turn to provide an advantage to Scrap defense, a shield used this turn to provide a advantage to Scrap defense, or a piece of hard (not leather or hides, for instance) armor. Each time an item is shattered, its wielder or wearer suffers three wounds (regardless of size).

***Sturdy:*** Stone goblins do not suffer movement restrictions when they are being wrestled; they can always move. However, they literally grow from the stone floor, and cannot leap or jump in any way, as that would break their connection to the stone that gives them life.

When presented with the shoes, the princess returns to her fully human form, with no vestiges of her formerly snakelike appearance. But instead of granting them a favor for successfully performing her quest and freeing her from the curse, the princess, in truth a deceitful young sorceress, declares that one of the children must take her place. With a wave of her hands, one child's clothes whisk off to the different towers and the child's body transforms into that of a snake. The princess disappears in a puff of smoke, perhaps returning later in the children's adventures to further torment them. To retrieve their compatriot's clothes and lift the curse, the children must face three different and more powerful perils in the castle's towers. These may take the form of more dire foes, puzzles requiring mental acuity to solve, or sheer tests of strength, courage, and willpower.

## Cottage of the Three Bears

The coziest-looking cottage in the entire Great and Awful Forest belongs to three savage ursine predators. The wood-beam, thatched-roof home sits in a small clearing near a bubbling brook. Flowers bloom gaily in window boxes, tidy shutters and curtains frame windows, and a woven reed mat near the front door invites visitors to wipe their feet before entering. Light gray smoke gently wafts upward through a hole cut in the center of the roof thatch. An axe leans against a huge chopping block near the perfectly stacked woodpile. This home seems well kept and welcoming.

Those entering during the daytime find the interior just as neatly maintained as the exterior. A massive fire pit dominates the center of the cottage. Warmly glowing embers keep a huge cauldron of porridge simmering. Three chairs stand at attention at a table, with carefully laid place settings before each: meticulously folded cloth napkins, ironed cloth placemats, bowls, and spoons. Each bowl contains an ornate decoration painted into the glaze incorporating the name of the owner: Papa, Mama, and Baby. The rest of the room is in similarly precise order: Jars line the shelves evenly, a ladle hangs from its place on the side of the water barrel, a broom stands upright in a corner, dish towels hang perfectly aligned on racks, and cookware and dishware are stacked in order from largest to smallest within the cupboards.

A door leads to the cottage's second room, a bedroom just as scrupulously kept as the first. Three beds (one large, one small, and one just right) stand against one wall, their covers made so tidily that it seems as if nobody has ever slept in them. An armoire contains clothes perfectly folded and arranged by size.

The three bears who live here are fastidious and precise perfectionists of homemaking. They spend the daytime hours foraging for food, collecting berries, leeks, truffles, and any other edibles in their baskets, and catching some occasional game. When they return home in the evening, Mama bear mashes and cooks everything into a pottage (a form of porridge) in the cauldron, ensuring a continuous source of hot meals. They expect to come home to an immaculate house for a hearty dinner and good night's sleep, without any signs of or interference from intruders.

As immaculate homemakers and animals with keen senses, the three bears know every spotless inch of their cottage: If anyone has entered, even if they haven't touched anything, the bears will probably notice it. Should they find anyone in their house, eating their porridge, sleeping in their beds, nosing around, putting things out of place, or messing up anything, they attempt to chase them out. Papa Bear grabs a frying pan and swings wildly, Mama Bear beats them with the broom, and Baby Bear assaults them with the water ladle. They have stats as moose-sized, adult-sized, and kid-sized bears, respectively, but they are of the walking and talking and clothes-wearing variety.

With the bears gone all day, children might think they can get away with sneaking into the cottage, enjoying a hot

bowl of porridge, catching a nap in a comfy bed, and leaving before anyone comes home. Yet the house has a guardian even the bears don't know about. The porridge cauldron, ever simmering over the glowing embers, has magical sentience. The pot waits until nobody's looking, then lobs a steaming gob of porridge at an intruder. The spitting cauldron has 7th grade in Throw and inflicts one wound; if the victim does not spend her turn removing the hot porridge and soaking the wound in water, she suffers another wound on the next turn. In the case of a miss, a puddle of porridge splats against the wall, floor, or furniture, creating a mess that's difficult to clean (Home Ec 8th grade per mess, and each splotch takes 10 minutes to clean completely). Children won't realize that the pot is throwing porridge at them until someone pays specific attention to it—in which case the whistleblower receives a burst of hot porridge to the face. The only way to stop the porridge pot from attacking is to upend or empty it, predictably by tipping it off of its supports with a 9th-grade Muscle test…and making the biggest mess the bears have ever seen by dumping the porridge all over the floor.

Should the bears return after the children have an encounter with the spitting cauldron, they assume that the trespassers willfully made the sticky mess by tossing their dinner out of the pot. Given the severity of any porridge-related mess within their home, the bears forget about chasing intruders out: They want blood, and assault the kids with gnashing teeth and slashing claws.

## Gingerbread House

The paths leading to the gingerbread house are always scattered with chunks of sweetbread. Kids who find the tasty morsels on the path must make 5th-grade Pluck tests to resist temptation, else they begin stuffing themselves with the treats and following them. Those who continue down the trail top a rise and behold a child's dream within the clearing before them: a house made completely of candy, gingerbread, and other sweets. It has a frosted roof with nonpareil shingles, pure sugar windows, gumdrop trim, thin-mint siding, and a great big chocolate-chip cookie door. The cottage sits upon a little hillock in a small clearing within the forest, framed by a candy-cane split rail fence. A walkway of cookies set into the ground leads to the front door. This view requires a 6th-grade Pluck test to resist temptation; those who fail must head straightaway to the house and begin munching.

Unfortunately for the weak-willed, every last surface of the house is slathered in a weak poison. Those who eat any of it must make a 4th-grade Muscle test or become too weak to do anything for the rest of the day but spend their turns moving, and even then can only manage a meager crawl. Once they succumb to its effects, the kids are greeted by the house's residents: Hansel and Gretel.

The official tale of Hansel and Gretel often ends with the pair pushing their nemesis into an oven, but fails to mention what happened to the two abandoned, imprisoned, and almost-eaten children. The odor of the witch roasting to death in her own oven further

disturbed the already traumatized brother and sister. As so often happens with kidnappings, the boy and girl coped by identifying with the one who held them prisoner. They now continue the witch's predations, using the gingerbread house just as it was used against them: as bait. The kids themselves are so disgusted by sweets after all this time that they cannot bear to eat any of the Gingerbread House—a good thing, since they've slathered its entire surface with a weakening poison. The boy and girl, their growth stunted by all of the sugar they ate and their forms permanently pre-pubescent, now prefer fresh, red, raw meat.

Hansel and Gretel are described on page 207. Merely defeating them in battle is not enough to avoid a terrible fate, however. The true villain of this tale is none other than the Oven. Perhaps it became possessed by the witch's soul when Hansel and Gretel pushed her in, or perhaps she had merely been its unfortunate slave all along. Regardless, when one owner or group of owners of the gingerbread house is defeated, the Oven happily chooses the victors to become its new feeders. A potential slave must make a 7th-grade Pluck test to resist the Oven's control, with a –2 grade disadvantage on the test if he has eaten from the house, and a –2 grade disadvantage on the test if he killed the oven's previous feeders (rather than just knocking them out, chasing them off, and so on). Each time the new feeder delivers another victim to the Oven, he may make another Pluck test with a difficulty one grade level higher. If the difficulty reaches 12th grade and the feeder fails, he is forever after bound to the Oven, and knows nothing beyond succumbing to its evil will.

## Hans the Hedgehog's Hut

Although shunned in the more public life in the Checkered Kingdoms, the half-man, half-hedgehog creature named Hans (see page 207) enjoys the sheltered life that the forest border offers. He lives in a meager hut, but allows his ever-growing herd of pigs to roam free, foraging for truffles and other sustenance. They return every night to wallow down amidst the trees near the hut. Hans spends his days riding his giant rooster, watching over the herd, and playing music on his bagpipes to entertain himself and his pigs. Living only a few miles inside the forest border, he remains close enough to civilization to occasionally bring his herd to market.

Besides calming his herd and passing the time, the tunes from his bagpipes attract wayward travelers lost in the woods who seek some route back to the Checkered Kingdoms. He's more than happy to show wanderers the way out of the forest, but he has a price. To ease his loneliness, he requires a potential wife to keep him company. Besides knowing the easiest way out of the forest to the Checkered Kingdoms, he can also provide information about nearby border dwellers, or give pigs to those who need meat.

## Mother Holle's Hovel

An abandoned hovel stands in a neglected corner of the Great and Awful Forest. The kindly Mother Holle once lived here. Some claim that she simply passed away, but odds are good that she fell prey to the Big Bad Wolf, a carnivorous plant, or the curse of some rival witch. Regardless, anyone approaching the area immediately smells the savory scent of fresh-baked bread wafting through the air. They reach a small meadow filled with tall grass and wildflowers.

The first thing a traveler finds is an oven with a dome built of brick, mortar, and mud. It has a brick chimney in the back and an arched opening halfway up the front. A metal door hangs forlornly from one of its two hinges. Despite the seeming age of the unused baker's implements nearby—a bread paddle, block table, rolling pin, bowls, and wooden spoon—smoke still drifts up from the chimney and a welcome glow issues from the front opening. Should anyone approach, two tiny voices from the oven cry out: "Take us out! Take us out, or else we'll burn. We've been baking long enough." Five loaves of bread inside are on the verge of burning. Those who don't use the bread paddle to retrieve them suffer one wound from reaching into the hot oven. Once removed, the bread remains silent. The loaves do not protest if anyone tries to eat them. Anyone foolish enough to taunt the bread rather than remove it from the oven must dodge a fiery blast from the furnace, making a 6th-grade Scamper test or suffering three wounds.

### The Cottage's Blessing

| d6 | Effect |
|---|---|
| 1 | The kid gains 3 bonus grades' worth of expendable Imagination. These grade levels have no effect on Imagination tests, and disappear when they are expended. |
| 2 | The next time the kid wants to purchase something, he finds that he has money exactly equal to that thing's cost in his pocket. |
| 3 | The kid gains 2 bonus talents for which he qualifies. These talents disappear the first time they are used in an action scene. |
| 4 | The kid becomes impervious to all harmful magic for 1d6 days. |
| 5 | The kid gains 1 bonus health level. This health level disappears when he takes his next wound. |
| 6 | One of the kid's mundane items becomes enchanted such that, when thrown up in the air, it always lands pointing toward the next clue leading to Babylon. |

Farther on stands a bountiful apple tree, its branches bowing heavily under the weight of juicy, red fruit. Anyone approaching it hears the tree call out: "Shake me! Shake me! My apples are all ripe." No harm befalls anyone shaking the tree, and several apples fall to the ground, perfect for eating. Should travelers ignore the fruit tree's pleas or taunt it, the tree roars and flails about. It has the stats of an average moose-sized carnivorous plant (see page 186), but has grade levels in Throw instead of Scrap. Its apples have a range of a stone's throw, and inflict wounds as if they were rocks.

Finally, last along the path is the cottage itself. It stands forlornly, with a few holes in its thatched roof, cobwebs covering the windows, and several bricks missing from its chimney. The interior contains unremarkable furniture and other implements: a table, chair, bed, water bucket, and cupboards. A broom and dusting rag sit lonely in a corner. With a little work, it might serve as a cozy home for a while. There are no dangers here other than dust mites.

Those who tend to the oven and tree, as well as do their best to clean up and repair the hovel, receive a gift on the day they choose to leave. Upon exiting the cottage, the first character is showered in gold-glowing pixie dust as a reward for his good and courteous service. The dust sinks into the child's skin and clothes, giving him a momentary golden sheen before disappearing. The child receives a particular blessing that, unbeknownst to them, aids him in the future (see sidebar).

Those who in any way abused their privileges at the hovel—failing to aid the oven and apple tree, or further ruining the cottage—receive a nasty surprise when they leave. Instead of receiving a shower of pixie dust on leaving the hovel, they become covered in gooey pitch that blackens their skin and clothes, requires extensive and laborious measures to clean off, and inflicts a –2 disadvantage on Cool and Scamper tests until it is removed.

## Old Woman Not Living in a Shoe

There once was an old woman who lived in a shoe, with so many children she didn't know what to do. But a passing giant changed the situation entirely by assuming that the home was actually footgear perfectly suited for his immense size. He slipped into the shoe-home, laced it up, and walked off. The old woman was so devastated by her children being turned into toe jelly that she wandered the Grimm Lands for years. In her deranged state, she finally settled on the edge of the Great and Awful Forest in a ramshackle cottage.

The hovel looks just as the old woman found it: a one-room cottage with loose shutters, a half-unhinged door, a crumbling chimney, cracking plaster, a dilapidated roof, and an unkempt yard overgrown with weeds. If the old woman isn't sitting forlornly at the window, staring off at the horizon, she's avidly tending to her well-organized garden with a particularly large hoe. The plot consists of several neat furrows in which sit half-buried, dirt-encrusted shoes of all kinds. The old woman diligently digs out the weeds, tidies the furrows, and waters the shoes with a leaky bucket.

The old woman greets travelers with unbounded enthusiasm. She entreats them to take a seat on an old log she's fashioned into a crude bench, and then fetches water and bread. All the while she covetously eyes their shoes. As they enjoy a rest, those taking a closer look at the old woman's shoe garden may realize (Seek 7th grade) that the dirt encrusting the shoes is really dried blood, and that actual feet remain within each piece of footgear! No sooner will this be noticed than the old woman grabs her hoe and attempts to hack off her guests' feet! Those who manage to flee reach safety, for the old woman doesn't have the energy to chase them very far.

Should anyone take pity on the old woman after escaping her murderous rage, she explains how she lost her shoe house and all her children, and that she hopes to re-grow her house-shoe from those in this garden. Of course, she requires the feet that inhabited the shoes to serve as fertilizer to ensure that they grow large enough to serve as a home. The old woman is quite mad, and is as liable to break down in tears as she is to fly into a berserk, foot-severing frenzy.

## The Rotten Kingdom

It is hard to say what the Rotten Kingdom, domain of Humpty Dumpty, is truly like. For one thing, what is and is not under his control changes more often than the weather. His horses might ride their men right into Spinnenbruch one day, declare his complete control over all things thready, and drive the entire town to produce purple silken bows for their manes for a week. Then, one day, they'll be gone as if it had never happened. And even afterwards, no one will know if the occupation or withdrawal was actually ordered by Humpty Dumpty, or ordered by him and then forgotten and rescinded, or was just something that the cavalry decided to do themselves. What with the victims all claiming to have been heroic defenders and stood up to the Rotten King's troops in this or that amazing display of martial prowess, the tales of the egg's marches become even more difficult to piece together.

The same holds true for the Rotten King's castle in the heart of the Great and Awful Forest. Any who venture near there and stay for any length of time become as mad as he is (which is to say, as mad as a fish and then some), so getting accurate reports from those who wander away is impossible. Likewise, the very place itself changes on a regular basis according to Humpty's whims, thanks to the impressive power of his own cracked Imagination.

A few things are consistent about the Rotten Kingdom. First, it smells terrible. The stench goes straight up one's nostrils and into the heart and brain, coiling and squeezing until it occupies not just smell but, all of the rest of one's senses. This has effects as described under Humpty Dumpty's stats (see page 208). Second, there's nothing high here. Ever. No matter what imaginings the Rotten King causes to take place, no matter what odd flights of fancy he takes visitors on, the flights are never literally very far above the ground. Even the castle that his friend the king once ruled from and the protective wall that surrounded it have been reduced to rubble. Now the shattered egg rules from a labyrinth of ruins, from piles of rocks within which his followers, willing and unwilling alike, create ever-changing encampments and hovels, playgrounds and torture chambers, gardens and grottos.

Any kind of creature might be found here in the heart of the Great and Awful Forest, whether good or ill. Foul monsters serve the Rotten King eagerly, while even the noble-hearted can be corrupted by his soul-staining stench. The castle and the clearing around it are a random hodge-podge of everything the Grimm Lands has to offer. At its center, or perhaps parading around its edge, or even leading hunts through the Great and Awful Forest, is Humpty Dumpty himself, often accompanied by his court. The court consists of several guards of all grades (upright horses) and their mounts (men cursed to behave like horses), pages and heralds (goblins and corrupted kids), advisors and craftsmen (usually gnomes and dwarfs, as well as a few dotty practitioners of magic), and of course his favorites: Cinderella (his queen), Jack the boy (his champion), the Ugly Duckling (his torturer and head of security), and Mother Goose (his messenger).

## Slave Camp of Bo Peep and Boy Blue

Little Bo Peep and Little Boy Blue are an effective and sinister couple. Both child shepherds had problems keeping their flocks alive. Upon arriving in these fairy tale lands, they met, decided to combine their efforts, and merged their flocks. Absent-minded and sleepy as always, however, the pair soon lost all their sheep to the Big Bad Wolf. Rather than give up, the two redoubled their efforts. The animals were far too vulnerable roaming free, so they locked the herd in sturdy, well-defended cages. Since sheep aren't very profitable in the Grimm Lands, the duo have repopulated their flock with a more valuable commodity: humans.

Today the malicious Peep and Blue are slave masters who rule over a forestland concentration camp. Hundreds of iron cages dangle from sturdy chains attached to thick tree branches in their section of the Great and Awful Forest. Most of the cages hang between 10 and 20 feet from the ground, with huge padlocks securing the door grates. Peep and Blue feed their prisoners once a day and leave them exposed to the elements. Most die from exposure within a few months, though some survive by creating sheltered nests out of available materials and catching supplemental food and water. The slavers care not whether their charges live or die, as long as they don't go anywhere. The flock consists primarily of children, although one also finds talking animals and even some adults among the prisoners. Snare, pit, and net traps set in the forest around the camp capture new "livestock" for the herd; Peep and Blue check the traps and round up captives once a day, lest they escape from their snares. The pair culls their flock from time to time, selling individual captives to other denizens of the Grimm Lands for their own foul purposes in exchange for food, gold, and other necessities.

## Sleeping Beauty's Bower

The legendary Sleeping Beauty rests in a bower amidst the ruins of a vast castle, only bits of which emerge from the forest's thick undergrowth. It is unclear whether this slumbering maiden is actually Sleeping Beauty, or perhaps Snow White (of the Seven Dwarfs fame), or some other unfortunate lass. Regardless, her true love never came to wake her, and she lies waiting deep within the Great and Awful Forest, sleeping in her glass coffin, preserved forevermore. She is not simply sleeping, however: She is quite dead.

Potential suitors must brave numerous obstacles to even glimpse the sleeping young woman. To initially deter intruders, a pack of wolves (see page 186) patrols the perimeter of the sprawling ruins. They descend on anyone approaching the area, leaping out from caves and crevasses in

the ancient castle's outer walls. They use the rugged terrain to their advantage, circling behind prey and ambushing them from unexpected quarters. Should they meet a superior foe, the beasts simply retreat to some other portion of the ruin out of harm's way; they know that the ruin's other denizens can handle stronger trespassers.

A dense bramble of thorny rose bushes slows movement through the castle ruins. Most seem like troublesome plants, snagging their thorns on clothing and twisting their thick stems around legs as travelers twist and turn in their grasp. Among these relatively harmless specimens, however, stand several large rose bushes situated atop prominent mounds of rubble, their luscious blooms pale white instead of the rosy red of the other bushes. These carnivorous plants (see page 186) actively seek to entwine their vines around unsuspecting children, sinking their thorns through clothing and into flesh to suck their blood. Although they exsanguinate victims slowly, their thorny tentacles have a strong grip that doesn't release until the plant itself sustains enough damage to put it down.

Past the thorn-bush brambles are several open clearings, possibly the remains of the castle's courtyards. Massive stones loom over the area, once portions of the castle's masonry towers, walls, and bastions. Some of these rocks are animated, corrupted by the forest's power and the evil that resides within the ruins. They rise to attack any trespassers (use the stats for animated furniture on page 198, but they have protection 10 and a speed of really slow). These stone hulks smash at anything that isn't infused with the ruin's malevolent spirit.

Only once intrepid explorers pass the stone men do they reach the center of the ruins, the hidden shrine in which Sleeping Beauty reposes. A crumbling cupola rises on weathered columns, with thick vines and roots grasping the steps and stones. A low, glass-walled bier within holds the recumbent princess. The vengeful blood and bitter spirits of her would-be rescuers have soaked into the soil around the shrine over the centuries, imbuing a large mass of the neighboring plant life with a dark sentience. This devious entity, still burning with a hatred of the maiden that killed its former selves, and reveling in watching others even more foolish than they, has killed the sleeping beauty while maintaining her perfect form. She is now nothing more than a beautiful lure in a deadly trap.

The root system of the plant long ago worked its way up through the bottom of the maiden's coffin and penetrated her flesh, spreading throughout her body and claiming it for its own. The sides of the box and the cushions beneath conceal the invading growth from most eyes, which are almost always drawn to the radiant beauty above them. Any males who fail a 10th-grade Pluck test to resist temptation must attempt to kiss the lovely young woman in hopes of waking her and making her their own. In doing so, the kisser releases a cloud of spores that have nested in the sleeping maiden's lips. These spread within a cricket's hope of the coffin, forcing anyone in the area to make a 9th-grade Muscle test or fall asleep for 1d6 hours. The roots of the plant then

rise through the cracks in the shrine's flagstone floor, burrowing into the new victims and feeding on them. The burrowing roots inflict one wound each hour, killing those who suffer any wounds after already being knocked out. This makes the duration of the sleep effect a life-and-death matter. Any who awake during this slow but painful process can free themselves and their allies without a struggle.

The kisser, however, having set off the trap, endures a separate ordeal. As soon as the spore cloud erupts, a second attack comes from the maiden's mouth (those adventuring princes tend to be strapping young men who can resist the spores, after all). A root tendril snakes upward and grabs the kisser by the tongue.

### Tongue Tendril (9th grade)

**Health:** 9 **Shape:** Vine **Stature:** Adult
**Speed:** — **Protection:** 4 **Wounds:** 5

Muscle 10th Scrap 10th

***Weapons (Tendril):*** The tendril attacks by grabbing hold of its victim's tongue, effectively wrestling it and preventing it from fleeing if successful. Every round that the tendril succeeds at wrestling with its target, it inflicts no wounds, but pumps a minor poison into his system, temporarily lowering his Muscle by one grade level. When a target's Muscle is reduced to Kindergarten level, he is knocked out. Not only is the target then potentially drained by the roots as described above, but after his death is then animated by the roots as a zombie. The animated corpse is subservient to the evil vegetation's will, and is often directed to perform chores, like spreading corpse parts among the plant's roots to act as fertilizer, or to act as lures, drawing hapless adventurers into the plant's domain.

As long as the victim remains awake, he can resist by attacking the tendril or by trying to escape from the wrestling with a Muscle test. This latter course of action is not without its penalties, however: If the victim wins the Muscle test, he may pull away from the plant, but his tongue is left behind.

## The Seven Kids' House

A fortified cottage with a short tower looms on a hillock overlooking the Great and Awful Forest. The hovel seems sealed up, yet battered. In places, the plaster has fallen away from the wattle-and-daub filling in between the timber frame, exposing the latticework smeared with mud beneath. Most look like they resulted from damage made by claws, arrows, or other weapon hits. No doorway exists in the cottage, and most of the windows have their shutters closed, though each shutter has what appears to be an arrow slit in it. A short but well-fortified tower looms at one end of the cottage (at the opposite side from a sturdy brick chimney). The tower has arrow slits, an iron-bound oaken door, and battlements on top. Those who've encountered the Big Bad Wolf before know that this portion of the woods lies

within his hunting territory, which might explain the home's military appearance.

Seven goat kids live in the cottage with their mother, who seems always out gathering food for them. The kids were once victims of the Big Bad Wolf, who tried several times to masquerade as their mother to enter the cottage and eat them. He ate chalk to soften his voice and dabbed flour on his black paws to make them white like the mother's. Convinced the wolf was truly their mother returning with food, the goat kids opened the door; the Big Bad Wolf caught and consumed all but one clever kid who escaped. When the mother returned and found her home in disarray, she grieved for her lost children. But the one who escaped consoled her and led her to where the wolf had collapsed in a post-dinner nap. The mother slit open his belly, freed her children, filled the wolf's stomach with stones, and sewed him back up.

The kids have since taken to heart their mother's warnings about allowing strangers to enter their cottage. They constructed a fortified tower to watch for danger and protect their home. They reinforced the shutters, and made allowances for actively defending the cottage. One always stands guard atop the tower, armed with a crossbow he can bring to bear against aggressive strangers. A pile of rocks stands ready for the kids to hurl down at anyone foolish enough to besiege the cottage. Arrow slits in the window shutters allow other kids to shoot at enemies from within. The iron-bound oaken door requires a small battering ram to break…and the kids know from their previous traumatic experience not to admit anyone unless they can confirm that it is in fact their mother knocking at the door.

Those seeking shelter in the house receive a cold response. The sentry atop the tower challenges anyone approaching with a call of "Who goes there?" and assumes that even the friendliest-looking person poses a dire threat. After warning strangers to go away, the kids fire some warning shots and hurl a few stones at trespassers until they leave. Those who persist meet a concerted attack. The kids are walking and talking kid-sized goats, having the stats of 1st-grade through 7th-grade guards along with headbutt attacks that inflict +1 wound.

Those intent on actually entering the cottage must withstand the defensive attacks from the tower and arrow slits, and then find a suitable battering ram to smash the door. This requires at least two people, each of whom must be able to manage a 12th-grade Muscle test, carrying a log or similar ramming object between them. Once inside, invaders face seven short but angry goat kids armed with crossbows, spears, and short swords. They fight bravely, but take every opportunity to escape, regroup, and return in force later with their mother. The cottage offers little treasure other than a well-stocked larder and a comfy place to sleep.

## Tower of the Birds

A small tower stands upon a rise in a vast clearing, a bubbling brook running past its base, and the calls of hundreds of birds filtering through its windows. It is a tempting objective for lost children seeking food and shelter.

A powerful witch holds sway over the tower and the surrounding clearing. She has cast a potent spell that transforms anyone stepping over an invisible boundary into the open. Boys turn into stone, becoming quaint statues at the clearing's edge. At nightfall those turned to stone return to fleshly form, but cannot proceed toward the castle without becoming so petrified again until dawn. Girls transform into small songbirds; they maintain their mental faculties, but lose the power of speech. Should the witch be present, she transforms into a giant owl and captures the transformed girls. Assuming that she isn't hungry, she brings them to the tower, where they join other unfortunates in the cages hanging from the hall's rafters. Those who pass an 8th-grade Luck test can avoid the spell's full consequences, but suffer some side-effects: Boys have a hand turned to stone, and girls have their hair transformed into feathers and their nose changed into a bird's beak. These side-effects last until someone breaks the spell or finds some alternative remedy.

Rescuing the witch's captives proves a difficult mission. Children must first find some way to circumvent the protection spell, often with the aid of a speaking animal or a girl in bird form who has somehow managed to escape the witch's talons. Only those who wear a magical blood-red flower with a pearl the size of a dewdrop at its center can pass the boundary spell unaffected. The bloom can also transform captive birds back into their human female form. Finding such a flower might take the children through numerous hazards and encounters with other forest denizens.

The tower itself is quite dilapidated. The witch makes her home at the room in the top, which is approximately five stories up. Wicker bird cages hang from the room's hall's rafters, with feathers and straw littering the floor. Once a day, the witch feeds her prisoners with seed thrown into the cages. The other levels of the tower remain, but stand in a state of disrepair and abandonment. The stairs are so warped that they are almost sure to squeak if someone uses them; 9th-grade Seek tests are also necessary to notice rotted-out steps that, if stepped upon, send the stepper stumbling or plummeting to the floor below. The witch hardly ventures into these rooms, preferring to spend her time brewing potions, studying her magical manuscripts, patrolling the skies in owl form, and listening to the futile cries of her avian prisoners.

# The Rioting River

Just as there is one Sea in the Grimm Lands, and one mountain range, there is only one wide and fast-flowing river: the Rioting River. It is famous for its wild temper and unpredictable currents, and it speaks volumes about the state of the Grimm Lands that many people prefer to brave its waters rather than make their way on foot.

The Rioting River has only a very few tributaries, as most of the smaller rivers and lakes are afraid of it…and with good reason. Like many things in this world, the River is sentient and not particularly nice. Normally, the River is too large and too busy minding its own madness to notice the creatures swimming or sailing in its body, and said creatures pray continually that they can continue to avoid its attention. When it does notice travelers upon its surface, it delights in capsizing boats, disorienting swimmers, splashing the already cold with its icy waters, and the like. It never intentionally harms anyone, but nonetheless its activities lead to many an inadvertent death.

Physically, the river flows between a cave in the World's End Mountains and a delta that opens to the Sea. "To" and "from" are very relative terms when it comes to the Riotous River, as it can change its direction without warning. Another of its peculiarities is that its course is inconstant. Only a handful of riverside towns actually stay on the river's side for long; the riverbed moves as if the water was confused about, if not where it is supposed to go, at least how it is supposed to get there, like a snake writhing while its head and tail are secured.

## The River's Ways

The Rioting River has no need for the laws of physics, choosing the meaning of "upstream" and "downstream" as befits its whim. Many people believe that the River's moods are somehow influenced by the Sea's own, since the two constantly interact in the delta.

When the children first encounter the River, randomly determine whether it is currently flowing from the Mountains to the Sea, or from the Sea to the Mountains. Every morning thereafter that the kids spend near or at the River, roll 1d6 and subtract 2. The result is the number of times that day (minimum 0) that the river will change its course.

When the River decides to change course, which happens at the most inopportune moments, it changes violently. The current simply stops suddenly, then rushes in the opposite direction, yanking anyone who is standing on a boat off their feet and sending watercraft out of control unless a 9th-grade Boy Scouts (for rafts, canoes, rowboats, and the like) or Country Club (for fancier sailing vessels like yachts) test is made. Failure by more than 3 grade levels means that the boat capsizes.

## Wild Tempers

Sailing the River is an adventure even when the waters are calm, for nobody knows when it will change its mind and become a series of rapids. If it were within its power, the River would turn into waterfalls all along its course (as it does in the parts crossing the World's End Mountains), but the gentler slopes of the Great and Awful Forest and the Checkerboard Kingdoms prevent this, so the River is content in creating whitewater and dangerous rapids.

For every hour of travel along the river, roll 2d6 and look up the result on the "River's Temper" sidebar.

It is virtually impossible to make an accurate map of the Rioting River. Sailors do not commit to memory the location of whirlpools or

shallows, as it is simpler and more reliable to learn to interpret the River's personality from the way that it sings when flowing around rocks and over the land. Children can try to learn to understand the River too, either while on a boat or from the safety of land. They must stare at the River and make a 6th-grade Imagination test. Success means that they interpret its mood correctly and can guess what the next hour of travel will be like; a 9th-grade result even allows a kid to predict when the next change in direction will be.

## Unpredictable Path

Just as the River can change its direction and its conditions, so can it alter its actual course. Every time that the River changes direction, its writhes on its bed, shifting sideways, growing wider or narrower, stretching its surface to drown anything near its shores or trickling down to a narrow brook when it feels lazy.

Such movements are very hard to track or predict, but luckily they seldom affect travel on the river per se, even if they can interfere with land travel as the River floods roads and creates impassable mud fields. To be safe, people living near the Rioting River leave a clear buffer space at least a hundred feet on each side. Marker posts indicate the farthest point that the River has reached in its writhing, surmised by decades of observation. It's still anybody's guess whether the River respects these boundaries because it simply cannot reach them or because it amuses it to do so.

Ironically, it is the River's own rages that have condemned it to its course. The faster the river flows at any given point, the deeper the riverbed is carved into the ground, and the harder it is for the River to lurch from the trough and deviate its course. While the speeds at which the water can flow through these spots will test the mettle of any sailor, the River's course is relatively stable there. Travelers can also breathe a little easier in these sections, knowing that the River is more likely to leave them alone in the stretches where it takes it more effort to move.

## Crossing the River

Crossing the River is just as difficult as traveling its length. Something about the idea of a traveler moving lateral to its current really raises the River's ire, and even if the River doesn't notice the would-be interlopers, one of its many minor currents probably will.

The safest ways to get to the other side are shallows, fords, and bridges. Shallows occur naturally and randomly (see the "River's Temper" sidebar), becoming a curse to sailors but a blessing to land travelers. The problem with shallows is that, as with anything related to the River, it is impossible

### River's Temper

| 2d6 | Effect |
|---|---|
| 2 | **Whirlpool.** Sailors and swimmers must make an appropriate test at 8th grade each round. Four successes in a row allow the vessel or swimmer to escape; four failures in a row mean that the vessel or swimmer is sucked to the River's bottom to an unknown fate. Any series of successes that are interrupted by a failure, and vice versa, simply maintain the vessel's or swimmers presence in the whirlpool. |
| 3 | **Rocks.** The River decides to travel over rocky terrain. Failing an 8th-grade Boy Scouts or Country Club test (as appropriate) results in the ship scraping against the rocks and beginning to take on water. Failing by three or more grade levels results in the ship crashing against the rocks and becoming unseaworthy. |
| 4 | **Dangerously Fast:** Travel speed is doubled, but failing a 6th-grade Boy Scouts or Country Club test (as appropriate) results in a loss of control. |
| 5 | **Whitewater:** The River becomes violent and very hard to navigate. Failing a 7th-grade Boy Scouts or Country Club test (as appropriate) results in a loss of control. Failing by three or more grade levels results in capsizing. |
| 6 | **Calm:** Easily navigable. |
| 7 | **Swift:** Travel speed is doubled for that stretch (or halved if traveling against the current). |
| 8 | **Calm**. Once more, just because the River felt like it. |
| 9 | **Undertow.** A strong current flows beneath a deceptively calm surface. Navigation is easy, but swimming requires a 9th-grade Scamper test to avoid being sucked under and pulled with the current for one round. |
| 10 | **Really Sharp Tug.** Roll for another water condition and, in addition to its effects, there is a very strong undercurrent yanking at a single person with a limb dangling in the water, a single oar, the boat's rudder, or the like. The affected individual must succeed at a 7th-grade Muscle test or be pulled in, lose the oar or rudder, and so on. |
| 11 | **Shallows.** Any vessel that is not a raft runs aground, and must wait for the River to change its course or change its temper. |
| 12 | **Oh, no.** Boats and swimmers just attracted the River's full attention. Boats are capsized and one in five swimmers will disappear to an unknown fate, no test about it. |

to determine where one will form at any given time, and so walkers must take great detours in search of one and, when they are found, must waste no time in crossing them.

Fords are more stable versions of shallows, usually consisting of rock formations or collapsed bridges that the River has not quite managed to erode away or to cover completely. Water seldom reaches higher than a child's hip at fords, which still can pose danger to small creatures who cannot resist the current (Muscle 2nd-grade to Muscle 8th-grade, depending on the River's temper).

Bridges are the most reliable but potentially the most dangerous, method for crossing, given that they are usually manned by trolls (see page 201). Only London Bridge (see page 156) is guaranteed to never have a troll; it always appears to be about to fall down, so no troll worth his salt thinks it's worth setting up shop there.

The sturdiest bridges have spans that at first sight seem too long for the actual width of the River over which they pass. The bridges' design becomes evident after the River twists and turns under them, their unusual length allowing them to remain functional even after one of the River's tantrums. The trolls beneath the bridges' spans charge those who want to cross their bridge, though the toll required varies greatly from troll to troll. Some ask for money, while others ask for money from a specific kingdom because it's the only type missing from their coin collection. The more violent do not ask for payment at all, but simply charge from under the bridge and eat any trespasser that tries to cross. Many trolls are prone to bargaining, which is unfortunate for them, since they're such lousy hagglers. Luckily for those who would trick them, trolls are fairly powerless when not on or under their bridges.

## The River Unto the Sea

One of the reasons that the River is so moody is that it is madly in love with the Sea, "madly" being the operative word. Unlike the Sea, however, the River has no kindly and serene facet. It is always its violent, chaotic self, which causes the Sea to accept its advances at times (when the River flows towards the Sea) and reject it at others (when the River flows towards the World's End Mountains). Given the mercurial nature of both bodies of water, the sailors of both salt and sweet water in the Grimm Lands are courageous, accepting, and sometimes simply stupid.

# People and Places of Note

These are but a few of the people and places that children may encounter as they travel the length of the Rioting River.

## The Cursed Ferryman

There is a lesson to be learned about defying the Rioting River, and the one who teaches it is the Cursed Ferryman. Bound eternally to the River, never able to age and never able to set foot on dry land, the Cursed Ferryman plies the River's length with a malaise that only the immortal can know. His skin is weather-beaten, his frame gaunt, and he can only occasionally summon up the energy to convey with his eyes the desperation that he feels.

The Ferryman has no one to blame but himself for his predicament, for it was his own pride that brought on the curse. Once a skilled but mundane bargeman, he enjoyed nothing so much as a rousing battle with the Rioting River. So great were his skills that he was able to cross the Rioting River on any kind of barge, raft, or boat, using pole or oar to navigate the treacherous waters with skill and finesse. He never capsized or fell into the water, and anyone traveling with him was ensured a safe, if rough, journey. The River enjoyed competing with the Ferryman…at first.

Problems began when the Ferryman grew cocky, bragging that he was stronger than the River. During a night of celebration, the Ferryman drank so much that he accepted a dare from his neighbors and relieved his bladder in the River's waters, proclaiming that he was the River's master. The Rioting River did nothing at the moment, but decided that playtime was over. Now, things had gotten serious.

The next day, the Ferryman found the waters strangely calm. He set about carrying some goods to the other side, and the River attacked. The man used every ounce of skill and strength he possessed, but though he avoided sinking, he couldn't make headway. The fight lasted for three days and nights. "I will defeat you," proclaimed the Ferryman, to which the River answered, "You are but a man, and I am the River. Turn back, and never seek to cross me again!" The Ferryman puffed up with pride. "No! I can do this forever!" The River chuckled, and replied "Then forever it is." The River grew calm once more and the Ferryman grinned proudly as he reached the other side, but discovered with horror that he could not leave his boat. "We will play this game forever," said the River, "Just as you wished."

The Cursed Ferryman attempts to distract himself by doing what he's always done: ferrying folks across the Rioting River. He does this in exchange for food (he may not be able to die, but he can still get hungry), clothes, and if the traveler has nothing else, coin. Meanwhile, he keeps an eye open and an ear attentive for anything that might break his curse, though he cannot bear to feel much in the way of hope that it will ever be undone. The Ferryman has 12th grade in Boy Scouts for the purposes of navigating his barge across the River.

There are two ways in which to break the curse. The cruelest one, which he has not yet been able to bring himself to do, is for the Ferryman to pass his pole to another braggart who claims that he can either outnavigate the Cursed Ferryman or overcome all of the Rioting River's challenges. The second is unthinkable for the Ferryman's pride: He must fall into the water while battling the River. Children can learn about this curse from a number of knowledgeable sources, including talking fish, the mice of London Bridge, and the Sea herself.

## The Fifty-Fingered Delta

When it reaches the Sea, the Rioting River breaks up into 50 smaller waterways, each of which breaks up into 50 even smaller waterways, and so on and so on until the River reaches the Sea. Nobody claims this land, not even the Rotten King who, in his madness, is still sane enough to realize that he cannot defy the Rioting River.

The fingers of the delta do not shift their currents or their courses as quickly as the rest of the waterway, and they are as likely to be controlled by the Sea as they are by the Rioting River. Nonetheless, the islands that make up the delta are deserted except for a few animals: All who have tried to build permanent structures upon the bits of land find their work ruined by the next morning, although sometimes the River allows construction to proceed until almost total completion before wrecking the work.

Though it may seem less active and powerful here, the truth is that this is the place that much of the River's mischief begins and ends. This is where it concocts its plans and gathers its power, or where it brings its victims in a mad display of pride so that it may court the Sea. In return, the Sea washes all sorts of oddities into the delta, which the River takes as gifts and guards jealously. Unbeknownst to the poor waterway, the Sea treats every inch of her shoreline the same way.

## The Sand Castle

The lack of structures on the delta has one exception: a huge castle build entirely from the delta's sand. The castle is a feat of architectural fancy, the work of a determined and thoroughly obsessed Peter Pan, aided by all of the mermaids, water nymphs, and pixie girls who had crushes on him. It is entirely constructed of sand, down to the drawbridge's chains, the doorway's hinges, and the seaglass windows.

The River and the Sea were in the middle of an unusually long period of loving relationship when the sand castle was erected, and their good moods allowed the builders to finish without problems. When they are amicable, they cannot help but see it as a symbol of their love, built on their mutual shores with materials drawn from both. When they are in the midst of a tiff, one is likely to see it as a representation of the other's resentment, and does its utmost to destroy it.

The castle's inhabitants bear the tempers of the River and Sea with aplomb and dogged obstinacy, but the builders were more clever in their choice of location than most give them credit for. The spit of land on which the castle is built is accessible both to the River's current and the Sea's tides. When the River and the Sea love each other, they help in the rebuilding and maintenance of the sand castle; when they are indifferent, both leave the castle alone. Finally, when they are at odds, the efforts of one to destroy the castle are immediately countered by the other. While one is busy smashing away at the castle walls or wearing away its foundations, the other is likely to be shoring it up. Thus has the sand castle tenaciously clung to existence in a place that no others have.

## London Bridge

The Rioting River is famous for being dangerous to ford and for its unreliable temper. Shallows at which to cross are rare and hard to find, and the footbridges are all inhabited by trolls who demand anything ranging from a few coins to a first-born child. Nearly the only bridge large enough to allow passage for carriages or wagons, and the only one that guarantees safe passage, is the London Bridge.

London Bridge has the look of something that is distinctly unsafe cross. Bricks fall regularly into the River and beams creak dangerously, seeming to rot before a viewer's eyes. Children who wonder why the bridge has not already fallen need only look closer to see thousands of little white shapes scuttling on the walls and under the bridge itself. This is an army of white mice, whose ceaseless efforts just barely keep the bridge from collapsing.

The bridge is managed by Greta, a widow who bought the structure with the remains of her husband's inheritance. She is a commoner, but she possesses a practical mind that has allowed her to turn a potential fiasco into a workable venue. London Bridge's toll is modest and always payable in coin or livestock, although Greta is willing to negotiate a fee in the form of minor goods or even services. She is particularly fond of items from the Real World.

The secret behind Greta's success is her workforce. Anyone paying attention to the repair-mice will notice that none of them has a tail, and also that their eyes have been stabbed out with pins. Although not a witch, Greta is conversant in the ways of folklore and hearth wisdom. She knows many minor spells and remedies that work just like magic, but are nothing of the sort. She also knows everything there is to know about oaths, quests, and the hundred little laws that govern the Grimm Lands. Her most useful bit of trivia is that, if you cut off a mouse's tail, it will be forced to serve you until it finds the tail once more. And the best way to keep a mouse from finding its tail is to take out its eyes.

Greta is not an unreasonable woman, but she thinks of herself as just a little bit cleverer than she really is. She is obviously enthused by and familiar with Real World objects, which should tell the kids that others from their world have come this way before. She feigns disinterest in the objects so as to drive a hard bargain, but her front collapses quickly if the kids threaten to turn back and find some other way of crossing the

River. Greta has the stats of a common folk (see page 199), but knows the first two circles of each magical spell list. She never needs to perform Gaming tests to complete her spells, but rather must use some mundane-seeming method to bring about the spell's effects, such as applying a poultice, hanging a charm over the subject's door, dancing for three minutes and throwing salt over her shoulder, and so on.

The children might take pity on the blind mice swarming on the bridge as they fix it; once the mice explain their predicament, the kids might wish to sneak into Greta's house to steal the tails. The best way to manage this is for at least one kid to haggle with her for one of their keepsakes, or perhaps use a talent to fascinate and distract her, while the others do the skulking.

Greta keeps the tails in her cupboard, tucked all the way back in a breadbox. The mice cannot offer much help to the children as a reward, other than to spread the word about their good deed to the Grimm Land's animal ears. The problem with rescuing all the mice is that, without its caretakers, the London Bridge deteriorates due to a lack of maintenance. The kids may be able to cross to the other side with their new mouse friends, but it will quickly collapse behind them, leaving them trapped on their current side of the River.

## The River Styx

Despite the chaos and unpredictability that are the trademarks of the Rioting River, it is still held in place by two very important features: a delta on one side and a cave in the World's End Mountains on the other. When the Rioting River burrows to or from that ominous mountain chain, it ends up in a dark cave, its rambunctious personality stilled and quieted. This subterranean segment is the place where the Rioting River connects with its dread cousin, the River Styx.

A rumor says that the River Styx passes through Babylon, but this is false. The Styx only passes through the countless lands of the dead, whatever their names and wherever their cultures of origin. Gehenna, Hades, Hell, Nark, the Underworld, the Winterlands—regardless of the name, the living are not welcome there. Boats carrying living souls stop hard against the current and cannot be moved by any means. Those who wish to continue, foolish as it may seem, must do so on foot.

The cave is vast. Its ceiling extends several hundred feet above the children's heads, and darkness is absolute. Once they walk for a couple of minutes they should start hearing soft moaning coming from far ahead. Kids who remember their classics may identify the moaning as coming from the souls of the dead, who are waiting for their turn to pass into the Underworld via Charon's boat. Others may remember that the River Styx is just one of the rivers in Hades or Hell, and think to travel via those waterways instead. However, most of them join up with the Styx deep in the Underworld. The most that kids may ever see of those are rogue currents traveling upstream.

### Don't Drink the Water

Temperamental as it is, the Rioting River's water is clean and nourishing; not so the water of the Styx. Those who drink from the underground river will lose their voices for seven years as if affected by a curse; luckily, drinking more does not add time to this affliction. The only way that a person who drinks from the River Styx may recover his voice is to drink a cup of blood spilled from a friend or loved one.

Other rivers have different effects, which may be felt on the off chance that one of their currents ventures upstream into the Styx. For example, drinking or even touching the Lethe erases one's memories completely, supposedly as preparation for souls to enter their new existences; a victim of the Lethe loses access to all archetype abilities and talents, and is considered to have Kindergarten level in all Study traits. Those who succeed at a 10th-grade Imagination test can either recover their memory or, if they wish, may completely reimagine their pasts, trading scores between any traits they wish, selecting new talents, and even taking on a different archetype. Currents from the Phlegethon, meanwhile, burn as if they were oil instead of water, but the fire only affects living things. Currents from the Cocytus are extremely cold and freeze anything that they touch, though the currents themselves never create ice. Acheron and Eridanus are the only rivers of the Underworld with water that is safe to drink, although the Acheron reeks of stagnation and putrefaction.

### Stirring Up the Dead

There are a handful of reasons for a sensible child to attempt to travel up the River Styx and to the Underworld beyond it, but none of them are very compelling in the face of what must be done to get there. In the cavern where the Rioting River joins with its dreadful cousin, the spirits of the dead become tangible, as if they were alive. The children might want to find the spirit of a particular person, or even go to rescue a friend who fell to one of the many dangers of the Grimm Lands and bring him back before he crosses over in Charon's boat.

Ghosts wait their turn at the shores of the Styx to cross over into Hades, some with the belief that they will be reborn in the Real World, although no one has ever returned to confirm or deny this belief. The members of this throng carry visible reminders of the way they died; the sight of people half-digested by the Big Bad Wolf or stomped flat by a giant is likely to require a few Pluck tests. If the kids befriended and freed Rosalind when dealing with the Fearless King, chances are that they will find her there, waiting for her turn to cross. If they don't know her, the girl will nonetheless approach them and ask them what their business with the dead is.

The ghosts hold a lot of collective wisdom, and sooner or later, if such is their goal, the children will find someone who tried to find Babylon. The individual obviously failed, but may nonetheless be able to point seekers in the right direction, and perhaps to warn them

of the dangers they'll face along the way (hopefully they will fare better than the ghost). Most ghosts are a rather indifferent lot, very much absorbed at the task of being dead. It takes the smell and taste of blood to stir their attention and focus it long enough for them to answer any question, requiring the self-infliction of one wound. Even the normally sweet Rosalind will get a hungry look in her eyes if the children do offer blood as payment for information. There is a danger in offering up such morsels, however: Should any of the other dead see the offering, those nearby will begin clamoring that they, too, have valuable information, if only the kids will trust them and offer a tiny taste. The dead who do get a taste are unlikely to be satisfied with just one; a dead person who has consumed one wound worth of blood gains the stats of a 1st-grade guard, and each additional wound consumed advances the dead person to the next grade level of guard. Rather than guarding something, of course, the dead want what the children are guarding: their life's blood.

# Adventures in the Rioting River

Paying a visit to the Rioting River is an adventure all by itself, but its changing moods and waters, as well as the things that grow inside it and on its borders, can offer children the opportunity to pursue many paths.

## The Ultimate Medicine

One of the children is poisoned or falls ill from one of the many threats stalking the uncivilized reaches of the Grimm Lands. This condition is slow but ultimately fatal, and the kids must find a cure for it as soon as possible. The children hear of a miraculous herb that grows by the banks of the Rioting River, but only the Cursed Ferryman knows where it is. He'll tell them, if they can help him get rid of his curse. There are certain to be other factions, though, who do everything they can to stop this from happening. After all, the Cursed Ferryman is an important asset to inter-kingdom trade.

## The Wishing Fish

The river delights in snatching some of the wise fish who swim in the Sea and tossing them about up its course. Children can find one of them, who asks them to take him back to the Sea. In exchange, the fish offers a wish.

## The River Race

The children come upon a town that is hosting a riotous party near the River: It is the inaugural celebration for a yearly race down the Rioting River, from the Fifty-Fingered Delta all the way to the World's End Mountains. Competitors from all over the Grimm Lands travel to learn the secret of how the town manages to keep the River compliant with their race, as well as to win the prize: a golden barge that can shrink and fit inside a pocket and can sail on its own, driven by simple command.

Racers must sail up (or is it down?) the river in any boat they can build. The first one to reach the cave from which the River emerges wins the race and becomes the mayor of the town. The River delights in pitting teams against each other, giving underdogs a helping hand, and generally defying everyone's expectations…except when they expect it to defy their expectations, in which case, it doesn't. The winner of the race is usually not the best sailor or the captain of the most skilled crew, but rather the one who can best bribe, befuddle, or the blackmail the River into helping him.

# The Sea

Before the Brothers Grimm began their work, the boundless Sea could effortlessly contain all of her myriad tales. Sea monsters and sunken cities, ships' graveyards and islands filled with wonders, they all piled up without measure or constraint. Whatever mankind could imagine and create, the Sea encompassed.

The Brothers' efforts changed all of that. As they forced the creatures of tales and the lands of legends into an ever-increasingly defined space, the Sea found its own expanses bounded. The Brothers' power, by its nature, worked by fencing things in; in so doing, they unintentionally constrained something that had never before been caught in nets.

As the Sea awoke to her plight she fought, however ineffectually, for her freedom. In doing so she unleashed storms and destruction upon the fair and foul things trapped within her newly emerged borders. Storms swept fleets apart, great waves pounded down islands, and vast currents shattered underwater cities. Even the fish in the Sea, her loyal servants, found themselves tossed high into the air or broken upon sharp rocks.

When the Rotten King came into this chaos, he offered the confused and frightened creatures security. In return he asked for their service, or at least their complacence as he brought together the Sea's treasures for his own use. With one voice they agreed, ushering in an era of darkness unlike anything they could have imagined.

## Above and Beneath the Waves

In the Grimm Lands, the Sea functions as both a personality and a place. She possesses intelligence and wisdom, whimsy and anger, in equal measures. Within her borders lie some of the most fantastic things the children could encounter, as well as some of the greatest perils outside of the Rotten King's court.

The children will quickly find that their relationship with the Sea governs most of what they can and cannot do in this region. The more the Sea likes them, or feels that they will help her, the more helpful she is. Conversely, if they anger her or make it clear that they do not wish to help her, she lashes out at them. Those with sufficient strength of will and skill at oar can cut their way across her physical form without her blessing, but they do so at considerable risk to life and limb.

Endless beaches of rock and sand form the Sea's coastline. Children favored by the Sea can find treasures and help washed up on the shore from time to time; those who earn her enmity find this region hazardous, thanks to all of the strange things she brings forth from the waters to torment them. Travelers may also find strange places, such as small fishing villages filled with people who are both fish and men, coves peopled by pirates who died long ago, or spots where the Devil comes to drink the saltwater from a stony bowl.

Once the children venture away from the coast, they place themselves at the Sea's mercy. She may sweep them to any of the numerous islands dotting her surface, or drive them deep down into her depths. If she chooses to take them to the islands, the children will discover a thousand and more creatures, each more wondrous than the last. Each island is a world onto itself, separated from the rest of the Grimm Lands by the Sea's waning power. Only a few of the islands' inhabitants remain loyal to their mistress. The rest swore themselves to Rotten King's cause long ago.

Should the Sea choose to drive the children underwater, they find many who heed the Rotten King's twisted words. The once-great cities of legend, from Atlantis to Tir na Nog, lie choked with seaweeds and clumped together in a jumbled mass on the ocean floor. The great Kraken, once a free-roaming creature who wielded the waves in his mighty arms, now oversees the cities and defends them from "the Sea's petty dictates and treachery," a phrase undoubtedly taught to the simple-minded Kraken by Humpty Dumpty.

Particularly obnoxious or treacherous children may find themselves swept to the very edge of the world. Here the Sea flows endlessly out and down a vast waterfall cascading into infinity. Rocks dotting the edge provide an anchor point for crazily-shaped trees and vast nets strung by the unfortunates who cannot escape from this inhospitable place, and at one point the end of the Beanstalk hangs damp and limp over the falls' edge. The people here live off the flotsam from the Checkerboard Kingdoms and all of the strange places in the Grimm Lands, or at least as much of it as they can catch.

## The Faces of the Sea

In order to understand the Sea, to move about on her and to judge her moods, the children must first accept that she is both a place and a personality. Like the Moon and the Sun, the Sea has both face and voice, as well as likes, dislikes, and flights of whimsy capable of upsetting the entire world. Dealing with the Sea requires the children to exert considerable patience and restraint. She acts like a cross between their affectionate mother and a spoiled younger sister, with traces of an angry young woman and a cackling old crone mixed in for good measure.

How the Sea presents herself to the children, and how they perceive her, depends entirely on how they approach her. If they treat her well and assist her, she will shower them with as much affection as she can manage. Should they cross her fickle will, however, they will quickly find themselves on her bad side. Once they fall out of favor, it can take quite a bit of work to regain her trust, during which time they suffer the worst she can throw at them.

## First Impressions

The Sea always puts her best face forward when someone first meets her. Thus, the first time the children see the Sea, no matter where they are or what they may be doing, they will see her in all her glory. A fine sun shines down upon blue waters, beaches of freshly swept sand roll gently down to where white-kissed waves play among tidal pools. Gulls circle overhead, crying out for a bit of bread or another scrap from the children's lunch.

So long as the children do nothing but relax and play and enjoy the scene, the Sea does not change her face. However, if they ignore her or insult her, she quickly becomes angry. Moment by moment the scene darkens, clouds gather, and the cries of the gulls become ever more demanding. The waves begin to pound the sharp rocks on the coast, while damp winds reach for the children with chilly fingers.

Later, the children will encounter the Sea in one of her human forms. This encounter always takes place before they reach whatever destination brought them to the coast, and happens no more than a day after their first setting foot on a sandy beach. Which of the Sea's four primary faces they encounter during this fateful meeting depends entirely on how they acted during their first encounter with the Sea's wider self. Children who acted like children, setting their cares aside to laugh and play, meet one of her more benevolent faces. Those that acted like little adults, remaining practical and unfazed, or who deliberately spoiled the beauty she presented for them, will meet her in one of her darker moods.

## The Sea's Four Faces

The Sea, like her sister the Moon, has four faces. These faces do not always know one another, or even share the same memories of the children's adventures. They all, however, wield powers far beyond anything the children could possibly manage.

### The Maiden of Gulls

If the children acted like children when they first found the Sea, laughing and playing in the warm water, then she presents them with her most innocent face: a young girl with blond curls, wearing a white dress over a light blue shirt. She has white and red flowers in her hair, brought to her by the gulls that constantly circle in the air around her. In her hands she holds a basket that contains flowers, peaches, apples, and apricots. The maiden speaks with a quiet, whispery voice that is full of wonder and delight. Her blue eyes rarely focus on anything for long; she will look at the children when they speak, but otherwise her gaze darts from waves to sky to the beach and back again without any rhyme or reason.

### The Maiden's Basket

When the maiden shares an item from her basket, roll 1d6 to determine what it is:

| Result | Item | Effect |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Apple | Will cure any minor ailment if completely consumed. Stays fresh until something pierces its skin. |
| 2 | Apricot | Ask a question and consume the fruit. If you could know the answer, you automatically do (+2 grades to a Book Learning test). |
| 3 | Doll | If the child is targeted by a curse or spell and fails to resist it, the doll accepts the consequences. This destroys the doll but protects the child. |
| 4 | Knotted String | The string has three knots. In order to use the item, the recipient must be at sea and untie one of the knots (7th-grade Boy Scouts test). The first contains a wind that will blow the recipient toward his destination for 24 hours. The second contains a gale that will rage for 1 hour, driving away any sailing vessel that contains someone who wishes to harm the child. The third contains a breeze that will blow the child towards a safe location for 24 hours. |
| 5 | Peach | The child gains some of the strength of a peach-pit boy. His Muscle increases to 12th grade for one day. |
| 6 | Pinwheel | Blowing on the pinwheel causes the wind to turn in the direction the child blows. Once the wind shifts, it seizes the pinwheel from the child's hands and flings it high into the sky, disappearing. |

Each time the children encounter the maiden, she teeters on the brink of disaster: scrambling on the edge of a tidal cliff, sinking into a patch of coastal quicksand, or skipping obliviously over slippery rocks. If the children help her to avoid the impending calamity, she rewards them with something from her basket. This object has some minor magical power of its own and can be used as a favor when dealing with the Sea. Should the children allow the maiden to meet her inevitable fate, the difficulty of all their further encounters with the Sea increases by one grade level, and they are unlikely to meet a benevolent face the next time she takes human form. If the children actually threaten or endanger the maiden, the gulls swoop down to protect her, lashing out at the children with their wings. This attack obscures the maiden for a few moments, at which point she vanishes, leaving behind nothing but a few gull feathers and a faint scent of flowers.

When she wears the maiden's face, the Sea knows very little, but her words carry the wisdom of those who have no preconceptions. She sees and speaks the truth, regardless of what others wish for her to see and say.

## The Woman of the Waves

If the children wished to linger among the waves, but felt they could not because of their pressing responsibilities, the Sea will present them with her gentle face: a pretty young woman dressed in a simple white frock. She binds her black hair into a single long braid down her back. Anyone looking close enough may see the blue veins under her pale skin. She usually wears a long shawl of varying colors (mostly red or green) draped over her shoulders. Her long-fingered hands trail though its luxurious fabric, a motion that leaves most youngsters uncomfortable but unsure as to why.

The children encounter the woman lounging on the beach or wandering aimlessly along it. She always seems slightly lost, as if she wished to go somewhere but cannot remember how to get there. Should the children show her kindness by sharing their food with her or by trying to help her find her way, she will bless them with a smile and a kind word. If they ignore her, play tricks on her, or mock her forgetfulness, she will lash out at them with anger and dismay.

Under no circumstances will the woman allow anyone, boy or girl, to touch her shawl. She will do anything, even fight, to keep it with her. If the children somehow trick her into setting down her shawl and manage to grab it, they can force her to give them a single wish. Doing this may grant their desires, but it also enacts a terrible price: Any further attempts to deal with the Sea have their difficulty raised by six grades, and guarantees that the Sea will only show the kids her stern faces going forward.

When the woman speaks in her singsong voice, boys cannot help but listen. Girls, on the other hand, hear her voice as a harsh shrill not unlike that of seagulls. Regardless of what she sounds like, the woman speaks with the hope and anticipation of a young person about to set out into the world. She knows much of dreams and their meanings, but little of practical matters. She can also help the children decipher riddles, create poetry, or learn how to dance.

### The Woman's Shawl

The woman's shawl is the original garment that gave rise to the legends of shape-changing women from the sea. Anyone who holds it can assume the form of a seal or a swan at will. While in this alternate form, the child cannot speak human languages but can communicate with other animals.

To trick the woman out of her shawl, the children must pass a 12th-grade Cool test.

## The Mother of Fishes

If the children behave badly but not maliciously (for example, teasing the gulls or stomping though the tidal pools), the Sea presents them with her stern face: a tall, broad-hipped woman wearing an embroidered blue smock over a sensible white blouse and heavy hose. Bags and pouches filled with a wide variety of strange things hang from her embroidered girdle. Her long, salt-and-pepper hair is usually drawn back into a bun, but she sometimes braids it up so that it looks not unlike a crown.

The children always encounter the mother working hard at some difficult task. She may be singlehandedly hauling a massive net from the sea, lifting a heavy sail cloth from where she sits mending it, or stirring a kettle of "overnight stew." If the children choose to help her with her tasks, she will gladly accept their aid. If they make to move on or offer excuses as to why they cannot help, she calls after them stridently, insisting that they stay and help. If they start to run, they had best not stop: She follows them non-stop for three days and three nights, even overland. Should she catch them, she makes the children work for at least a week before relenting.

Regardless of their behavior, the mother never allows a child working with her to come to harm. She does not directly confront aggressors, but spirits the children away at the first opportunity. If she can do this without revealing her powers as the Sea, so much the better. However, if need be, she calls down storms or summons up hosts of birds and fish to do her will.

The mother's voice is alternately soothing and railing, depending on how the children treat her. If they are helpful and show respect, her words can calm even the worst terrors. Should they choose to be rebellious or cause undue trouble, her sharp tones can inspire fear in even the stoutest heart. In either case, the mother knows everything she needs to know and can answer any question about the Sea or the things dwelling within her bounds. She always does so in the clearest, most no-nonsense manner possible.

### The Mother's Belt

The mother's belt contains everything from a rowboat to an infinitely long string of twine that she uses to mend nets. If the children successfully ask her for a favor, she can draw any normal item they request from one of her many pouches.

## The Old Fishwife

If the children behaved badly, intentionally marring the beauty of the scene or tormenting the creatures they find there, then the Sea presents her most baleful face: a withered crone wrapped in rags of many colors. Her tattered garment contains fragments torn from the clothing of drowned sailors and naughty children. Wisps of once-black hair are tied back by a strand taken from the ropes that failed to hold a mainsail against a gale. She flashes toothless gums in mirthless grins, usually accompanied by giggles that sound like ice breaking.

The children encounter the fishwife pushing her handcart along the beach or down a coastal road. Regardless of the surface she walks on, the turning of its wheels always sounds like tiny bones being broken under a heavy weight. It is filled with the bones of children and fish; neither have any value to her other than as amusement. As soon as she spots the children she begins to laugh, as if she knows some horrible joke and has no intention of sharing it.

The fishwife only appears when the Sea wishes to deal out punishments for some infraction. She has the power to inflict bad luck on those who displease her or to call up the most horrible things found within the Sea's borders. Her malice does not extend to direct confrontation; if the children take her to task for bringing danger with her, she points out that they first brought harm on others, then vanishes.

The fishwife's voice carries with it the ice that coats her heart. No one can listen to it for long without feeling a chill creep over their skin. However, she knows the truth of everything that was in or near the Sea in times past. She is, therefore, an invaluable source of historical information, if the children can convince her to stop cackling long enough to speak.

### The Fishwife's Cart

The fishwife's cart contains the fish-cleaned bones of drowned children and the skeletons of fish whose bones choked men to death. She can, if it amuses her, pull a fresh fish from the cart. Anyone eating from the fish dies, choking on thousands of little bones that claw at his throat on the way down.

## The Sea's Moods

The Sea's mood varies depending on how well the children maintain their relationship with her, on events taking place in her vast expanse, and on the amount of damage inflicted on her lately by the Rotten King's minions. This mood affects how easily the children may contact her and bargain with her. Her four basic moods are:

| Mood | Face |
|---|---|
| Happy, playful | Maiden |
| Pensive | Woman |
| Stern | Mother |
| Vindictive | Fishwife |

When the Sea feels happy and playful, she manifests as the maiden. Clear skies and gentle waves abound, perhaps marked with puffy white clouds and great flocks of screaming gulls. In this mood she provides freely of her bounty; finding food and shelter requires little more than a 2nd-grade Boy Scouts test, while swimming requires a 2nd-grade Scamper test.

Her pensive mood shows a slightly more sullen side. In this mood she manifests as the woman. The skies become foreboding, laced from one horizon to the other with fast-moving dark clouds. Cool winds blow, but only in directions contrary to the way the children wish to go. The sea's surface is choppy and rough, making travel in small boats difficult. Doing anything on the sea requires a 5th-grade Boy Scouts test, while swimming requires a 5th-grade Scamper test.

When the Sea moves from pensive to stern, the weather takes a turn for the worse. Iron-gray clouds dominate the sky. Cold, wet winds claw at the children's clothes while simultaneously covering everything they touch with a chilly mist. Rain may fall from the clouds, but if it does it brings no relief from the humidity; the air stays damp. Great waves tear the sea's surface, dashing ships about and plowing swimmers under. Doing anything on the sea requires an 8th-grade Boy Scouts test, while swimming requires an 8th-grade Scamper test.

The Sea's transition from stern to vindictive can happen in an instant. Once her ire begins to rise, it can sweep aside any vestiges of mercy the instant that something hurts her or someone crosses her will. The clouds release torrents of rain, accompanied by thunder and lightning the likes of which have not been seen in the Real World since the Brothers Grimm chained it away in these lands. Waves the size of office buildings tear across the sea's choppy surface, breaking boats and drowning islands. For as long as her fury rages, the Sea lashes out at everything she can find, whether it was responsible for her pain or not. Merely staying alive in a sea at this state requires 11th-grade tests the first turn that the sea is vindictive, 12th-grade tests the second turn, and so on until the tests are impossible to make.

# Entreating the Sea

In the Real World, naval travelers rely on motors, computers, and GPS instruments to tame the waves. Children trapped in the Grimm Lands must rely on diplomacy, flattery, and outright trickery to persuade the living Sea into allowing them to find what they seek. Children in her good graces can travel quickly from place to place on the Sea. Those who incur her dislike must fight for every inch, struggling against seemingly impossible odds just to travel a few miles.

## Calling to Her

Once the children meet the Sea in one of her human forms, they can call to her by making an Imagination test at 5th grade if they met her as a maiden, 6th grade if they met her as a young woman, and so on. This test requires that the child place himself in a situation where he could meet Sea: walking along a beach alone, playing in the waves, or lying back on a sand-dune and dreaming about life on the waves.

Assuming that the kids have not upset or impressed the Sea since they last met her, she is likely to appear to them with the same face as before. If the child making the test succeeds in calling her up, he rolls 1d6. If he rolls a 1, the Sea's face "ages" by one level (for example, from happy to pensive). If he rolls a 2 to 5, the Sea appears wearing the face he last encountered. Should he roll a 6, the Sea's face "decreases in age" by one level (for example, from vindictive to stern). The Sea appears fairly close to her caller, but not so close as to be easily seen or interacted with. It may take some time for her to attend even a favored child; she has many duties and is more than a little shy.

Should the Sea ever encounter a servant of the Rotten King when she comes to visit with a child, she immediately flees for her life. The difficulty of any further attempts to call for her is increased by three grades, and she always appears with an older face.

## Of Favors and Fishes

Once the child calls her up, he must persuade the Sea to help him accomplish this task. He can do this in one of three ways: trick her, trade in one of her favors, or convince her to help of her own volition. If the children received a gift from the maiden's basket, they can give it back to the Sea and remind her of her promise to help them if they needed it. Whatever face she wears, the Sea will always repay the favor, though the Fishwife will do so with ill grace. The difficulty of talking with or tricking the Sea depends on which face she wears. These two tasks share an inverse relationship: She is easiest to trick when she is hardest to persuade. Either method requires a Cool test, but the narrator determines which the method the kids are using, based on their arguments and approach.

## Aid of the Sea

| Face | Information | Power |
|---|---|---|
| Maiden | Knowing if anything spoken to the kids by someone within the past day was true or false | Gifts from her basket |
| Woman | Knowing the surface thoughts of any adult currently on or near the Sea | Blessing (+1 grade to all of the kids' Imaginations for the day) |
| Mother | Knowledge of practical ocean-going skills, current locations, or current residents | Any one physical object |
| Fishwife | Knowledge of anything that happened a generation or more ago in the Sea, or of any location or creature of the Sea that is now dead or destroyed | A curse on one person, often leading to his death or at least major discomfort |

| Face | Convince Difficulty | Trickery Difficulty |
|---|---|---|
| Maiden | 5th grade | 11th grade |
| Woman | 7th grade | 9th grade |
| Mother | 9th grade | 7th grade |
| Fishwife | 11th grade | 5th grade |

The maiden, with her child's wisdom, is difficult to trick, but her kind heart means she will usually help those who ask politely. Conversely, the wicked fishwife will almost never help anyone, but her malice and eagerness to inflict pain makes it easy to trick her, provided she thinks she will have an opportunity to make others suffer. The young woman and the stern mother both take a fairly fine touch, as both have enough worldly experience to see though sweet words or simple deceptions.

If the child succeeds, he may ask the Sea for any one action or effect within her power. She will grant it, though she may ask the child to do something for her in return.

### What She Can Do

The Sea's powers, at least within her physical boundaries, are impressive. They include: The use of any of the abilities listed in her face descriptions, the ability to wash anything within her bounds to the kids' location on the coast, the transportation of the children (assuming they can find a vessel, even a makeshift one) to any destination within her bounds, or the location of a single person or object within her bounds.

Each of the Sea's four faces has a unique power and access to a specific type of information, either of which can be used on behalf of those who approach her properly. For ease of reference, these abilities are listed in systemic form in the "Aid of the Sea" sidebar.

### Finding Things at Sea

If properly persuaded, the Sea can tell the child the location of any person, place, or object within her physical borders. This information will always take the form of a rhyme or riddle, rather than a straight answer. In the case of the stern mother, even though the answer is eventually revealed to have been completely straightforward, it requires that the questioner find the answer for himself.

### Passage

When the child asks for passage, he does not necessarily ensure an easy time for himself or his companions. Instead, he sets the difficulty level of the task lying ahead of them. Once the journey begins, the children will still have to make appropriate trait checks, based on their mode of transportation, to achieve their goals.

### Wash an Oddity to Shore

The child may ask the Sea to wash any specific oddity to shore. She will not volunteer information about what kinds of oddities exist; the child will have to use logic and intuition to determine what she can provide in this manner.

If the child asks for an oddity that the Sea cannot produce, she will grant them a random oddity, possibly a dangerous one. The maiden never sends a dangerous oddity.

## People and Places of Note

Most children do not start their relationship with the sea by setting sail on the ocean blue. Instead they explore her beaches, coves, and sheltered grottos looking for everything from food to buried treasure. As their adventures draw them further and further afield they will find the coast's warm shores a welcome sight after long months trapped on the ever-shifting waves.

## Oddities

If the children do not spend much time on the Sea, but do have to wander her shores occasionally, they deal mostly with the oddities she sends to the shores. As outlandish as these monstrosities may seem, the children will probably just take them in stride as yet another example of the absurdities abounding in the Grimm Lands.

Every day the children spend on the coast they may encounter one of the oddities described below. The narrator may have one of them wash ashore, or the children may specifically request such an oddity for their assistance or amusement. Oddities always appear at dawn, just after the highest part of the tide. They may be beneficial, dangerous, or simply strange. Sometimes, oddities that seem to be one thing are, in fact, another in disguise. For example, something that appears to be a shipwreck may in fact be the discarded headwear of some aquatic giant, while a giant shell might be a mermaid's bower that was dislodged from the sea bottom.

If the narrator does not wish to plan an oddity occurrence, he may roll 1d6 each dawn. On a result of 1, the Sea sends the children an oddity. If the children's last encounter with the Sea did not go well, she sends an oddity on a result of 1 or 2.

If a random oddity appears, roll another d6. On a result of 1, the Sea sends a strange oddity. On a result of 2 to 5, the Sea sends a dangerous oddity. On a result of 6, she sends a beneficial oddity. The odds of a beneficial oddity are better if the maiden is the face who is asked; a beneficial oddity appears on a result of 4 to 6, while a strange oddity appears on a result of 1 to 3. The maiden never sends a dangerous oddity, even if the children threatened her.

### Beneficial Oddities

Beneficial oddities are helpful, but are not without a level of danger. The benefits are simply likely to outweigh any risk they pose. A beneficial oddity may be selected or randomly rolled via 2d6 and selected from the list below.

2 A helpful denizen of the Lost City. This individual will offer to take the kids with him to his home in Atlantis. Should the kids be willing to do him a favor there, he offer them his protection.

3 A neutral denizen of the Lost City. This individual will answer one question about the present state of affairs in the Sea, then return to his home.

4 A giant sea turtle. It will answer one question about the future, then depart back to the ocean depths.

5 A working boat for 4 to 6, covered in seaweed and mold. If the children repair the boat (a 6th-grade Industrial Arts task), it will carry them to one destination of their choice. Thereafter, it becomes a normal boat.

## Giant Peaches on Sun-Kissed Beaches

Giant peaches occasionally wash up on the Sea's shores, and with them come peach-pit boys and girls. These diminutive beings look exactly like normal fair-haired boys and girls with blue eyes, but are no larger than a man's thumb (mouse-sized). Despite their small size, they have fierce hearts and are willing to take on foes far stronger than themselves. Peach-pit boys and girls have the stats of commoner kids (see page 199), but have Gaming 5th-grade and know three 1st-circle spells, two 2nd-circle spells, and one 1st-circle spell. These spells must be selected from the artisan, guardian, and seer lists.

Far more common than their benevolent kin, though, are rotten peach-pit boys and girls. They are as rotten-hearted as their peach homes are rotten-fleshed, and though they don't serve the Rotten King directly, their behavior often inadvertently accomplishes his goals. They love to trick, hurt, and inhibit others, particularly kids.

A child born of a rotten peach is no larger than his uncorrupted brothers and sisters, but he has dark hair rather than their peach-blonde, and dark eyes in place of their sky blue. A rotten peach-pit child holds as much malice as a normal peach-pit child has kindness, as much cowardice as his kin have courage. Their spells must be selected from the enchanter, witch, or wizard lists.

6 A message in a bottle. The message is for someone the children know. If they deliver it, the Sea will grant them a favor the next time they successfully call to her.

7 A large talking fish. The fish can answer one question about the past, then it will either die (if not put back in the water) or depart (if the children put it back in the Sea).

8 A giant peach with a peach-pit girl or boy.

9 A whale. The whale can leave at any time, but wants to test the children by seeing if they will help him clean off the barnacles and parasites on his back. If they do (a 6th-grade 4-H task) he will carry them on his back to any location they wish, even undersea.

10 A white pearl about the size of the tip of a child's finger. A child who swallows it can breath

underwater until he takes a breath of air. It can also be traded to the fish in the Rioting River for their assistance or a wish.

11 A golden seashell. The child who holds it can cast it into the water to calm the Sea. Regardless of her current condition, she reverts to her Maiden face and mood.

12 A compass with no needle. If the children place a needle in it and name an island, the needle will point to that island. They may name one of the six named islands, or an island with specific properties from the random list. Once they arrive at this island, the compass ceases to function.

## Dangerous Oddities

Dangerous oddities, like ghost ships and rotten giant peaches, are far more common than beneficial or simply strange oddities. As the Sea struggles to recover from the Rotten King's corruption, she expels those things that are tainted by his touch. Unfortunately, they can be dangerous to those who might wish to help her, leaving her bereft and alone in a world increasingly gone mad.

2 A bag with 2d6 polished rocks (marbles) inside. Each rock is a curse. When the child carrying the bag makes a successful trait check, roll 1d6: If the result comes up 1, the task automatically fails and one of the rocks shatters.

3 A seemingly sound shipwreck. However, if the children try to explore it, the wreck begins to slide into the sea. Escaping from the wreck requires a 5th-grade Scamper test. Children trapped on the ship can breath underwater so long as they stay on board, but the wreck returns with its "cargo" to the deep bottom of the Sea.

4 A map to "pirate's treasure." This map leads the children to an island with the "haunted" and "treasure" attributes.

5 A seemingly well-preserved boat. If the children inspect it, it takes a 10th-grade Industrial Arts check to notice subtle flaws that make it untrustworthy. If they push it out to sea it will float for a day, then sink, taking them to the Kraken's Tower down in the Lost City.

6 A seemingly innocuous message in a bottle addressed to someone the children know. If they deliver the message, this person will immediately fly into a blind rage, lashing out at the children for unknown reasons.

7 A rotten peach with a rotten peach-pit boy or girl.

8 A raft that appears to be made of thin slats of wood. If the children use it, it will head for a random island.

9 A large talking fish. If the children help it back into the Sea (a 5th-grade Muscle task), it answers one question put to it. However, this answer is always a lie wrapped in a partial truth to make it more palatable. It takes an 11th-grade Imagination test to detect the falsehood.

10 A child one personal grade level higher than the kids and of the opposite gender of, and extremely attractive to, at least one of them. The child will try to charm his or her target away from the other children, and then pull the target child down into the sea. Once in the water, the victim holds together for three rounds before his or her body drifts apart into foam and moonlight, and becomes a captive of some unknown entity of the Lost City.

11 A lustrous black pearl about the size of a child's hand. Any adult or monstrous creature in the Grimm Lands who sees it feels a compulsion to possess it. They try to take it from the children by whatever means seem expedient.

12 A seemingly dead land-based monster. When the kids investigate, it is miraculously resuscitated, and attacks.

## Strange Oddities

Strange oddities are neither beneficial nor tainted, but serve as a reflection of the Sea's growing madness. Many of them were once distinct fairy tales, but in her confusion she threw them together without any real appreciation for their former lives. These oddities rarely exist for long; most disappear by noon on the day they appear.

2 A raft made of living snakes. The snakes stay together and swim out to sea if the children try to approach. If the children know magic capable of charming beasts, they can try to use it to control the raft, which will take them to one destination of their choice before dispersing into its component creatures.

3 A large fish with legs, waddling along the beach at really fast speed. If the children can catch it and wrestle it to the ground (a 7th-grade Muscle test), they can pry open its mouth. There they will find a ring or other small, valuable item that the fish stole from a fishing village within one day's walk. If they return the item and convince the villagers that they did not steal it in the first place, they are likely to receive some form of assistance from the villagers.

4 A crab about the size of a house. The crab ambles about looking for something. So long as the children stay away, it picks through the rocks for an hour, then vanishes. If they bother it, the crab scuttles down into the Sea, then shadows them for the next 1d6 days. So long as the crab follows the children, they cannot catch

fish from the Sea, no matter how hard they try.

5 A large green soapstone with a strange, curvilinear five-pointed star on it. If the children have the stone and one of them is ever in danger of being stolen away by a sea creature (such as the Kraken), the creature miraculously ends up with the stone in place of the child, and the child finds himself where the stone was.

6 An innocuous message in a bottle, with a blank where the addressee should be. The kids may fill in any name they wish, and whatever minor facts are in the message become true for the recipient.

7 A map to an island that doesn't exist. If the children use it to select a destination, they eventually end up at the Edge of the World.

8 A non-talking turtle with a different Chinese character on each facet of its shell. If the children adopt the turtle, they may use it to perform the **Fortune Telling**, **Vision**, and **Find** seer spells without needing to make Gaming tests, suffer from weakening or estrangement, and the like. Performing a spell in this way requires an expenditure of Imagination equal to twice the circle of the spell.

9 One of the Kraken's black tentacles, torn off during his daily struggles with the various free denizens of Sea. It has no special properties.

10 A single large gull feather. If the children take it with them they will, within a day, find a gull searching around for one of his pin-feathers. If they give the gull back his feather, he agrees to help them with one task, but does not carry though on his bargain.

11 A lustrous gray pearl about the size of a child's eye. If it ever comes in contact with the waters of the Rioting River, the pearl dissolves, and one of the River's fish will come to see who brought it…apparently, the pearl was a gift from the Rioting River to the Sea, and the River is likely to be upset should it learn that someone "stole" it. The fish is willing to pretend he didn't see the pearl, if the kids can offer him something worthwhile.

12 An earthenware pot filled with fresh fish stew. If the children take it with them and go down to the undersea, they will find a family who lost their pot around the same time the children found theirs on the beach.

In addition to these seemingly random events, the children might encounter one of the stable communities or places that rest on the coast like a string of pearls.

## Fairwater Bay

This crystal-clear bay is about a half-mile across at its widest point. Giant palm trees line the shore, their bases bound together by exposed roots as wide as highways. The trees themselves reach almost 100 feet into the air, and are as big around as houses. Each tree produces leaves approximately ten feet across, which are suitable for use as roofs for small houses or as the frame for small rafts. Each tree contains several small structures made from a variety of materials: hollowed coconuts, origami-folded giant leaves, hoisted-up boats, and the like. The houses are connected with an elaborate system of wood-and-rope bridges, knotted climbing ropes, and counter-weighted elevators. Huge rubbish mounds, containing a mixture of discarded toys and everyday garbage, have piled up throughout the once-pristine setting.

The bay is home to dozens of nearly feral young boys. The xenophobic lads have devoted considerable time to rigging vicious traps and defenses. Surrounding the landward edge of the bay is a classic wooden palisade, lashed together with vines and with sharpened tops. Even inside the bay, every walkway and rope connects to at least one deadfall or swinging log trap. A few

also have particularly juvenile but effective curses placed on them, ranging from a rope that puts pimples on the climber's palms to a sliding pole that deposits its passengers into the Sea when gripped by any creature with blood on its hands.

The boys of Fairwater Bay come from all kinds of places and walks of life. Most are runaways from unfortunate home lives in the Checkerboard Kingdoms, but some are children from the Real World who have stopped looking for a way home. After all, dangerous though the Grimm Lands may be, they also allow children to act out their dearest dreams. A child in the Grimm Lands never need grow up or grow old. He can play, fight, laugh, and swim as much as he might like. A smart child, or one with smart friends, can learn avoid the adults and the monsters, especially if he finds a nice place far away from everything else, like, say, a sheltered bit of beach guarded by the Sea's gentle hands.

The maiden long ago made an agreement with the founder of Fairwater Bay, a boy named Peter. She agreed to protect and provide for any children who chose to live there, so long as they agreed to live by three simple rules. First, they could never allow an adult of any sort to come into their haven. Second, a child who left the sanctuary for more than a fortnight could never return. Third, the children would always have to watch the lands around their sanctuary for signs of the Rotten King's influence, and attempt to stop it.

The maiden filled the bay with fat, lazy fish that even the least skilled child can catch. She shelters it from storms, turns aside boats seeking it, and turns a cold eye on any adult or monster who tries to enter the bay via water.

## The Lost Children

Over the years, more and more children have joined Peter's original motley band. Initially, they spent their days and nights in idle pleasures, meandering around the bay, fishing, and playing among the great trees. They made boats of palm leaves and fought one another in play battles using sticks for swords and arrows made from reeds. Alas, those halcyon days have faded, so that even the original boys wonder if their memories are merely dreams. As the Rotten King's corruption has spread throughout the Grimm Lands, more and more children have come to Fairwater Bay, and more and more of them are hardened, jaded, merciless, flint-eyed survivors. Once they found a place of safety, these desperate kids began to defend it with a vengeance.

Now, somewhere on the order of 100 children, mostly boys, live in and around the bay. They still fish in the bay, and spend occasional days walking though the woods. Most of their time, though, they spend creating crude weapons from the palm trees, fortifying their homes, and organizing for a battle that may never come. This constantly building paranoia makes the inhabitants of Fairwater Bay wary of outsiders. They do not trust anyone who might have the taint of the Rotten King on them; in truth, they do not trust much of anyone else either, even each other, which leads to a great deal of squabbling and bickering over everything from who caught which fish to who should tend to the chores.

It was the result of these constant squabbles that led the children to agree, after a long period in which nothing at all got done, to establish ever more elaborate rules for "proper" behavior. These rules change all the time, usually

at the whim of whoever has risen to be the local leader for this week. If Peter were still around, he would surely be able to unite the lost children, but none have seen him since the bay's founding. His disappearance is a mystery to them all.

## Dead Man's Cove

Dead Man's Cove lives up to its name in more ways than one. It not only contains the safest, least accessible harbor in the Sea, but also acts as a congregation point for ghosts, pirates, and the worst of them all, ghost pirates. Ships both working and long-since sunken sail into the cove looking for a place to hide their treasure, a few scalawags to join their crew, or an old enemy upon whom to exact vengeance. Sometimes, they look for all three at once.

Dead Man's Cove, like many places in the Grimm Lands, is deceptively large. In fact, if one did not know it was really one place, one might think that stories of it referred to dozens of different, yet nearly identical, coves. The seaward entrance is a narrow channel cut into towering cliffs. This channel opens into a smallish bay capable of holding perhaps four sailing ships. Additional channels, each as narrow as the first, lead out of this cove into eight other areas. At night, this bay shimmers with shadows cast by the ghosts and ghost ships that congregate in its still waters. No wind ever blows here, so ships rarely linger if they can help it.

These coves, each one quite a bit larger than the original smallish bay, have sandy beaches leading up to tall, craggy cliffs riddled with deep caves and more buried treasure than anyone could possibly haul out in a thousand lifetimes.

The eight larger coves (or nine or possibly ten; the number changes from time to time) can contain as many as six ships. Unlike the cove leading out to the sea, these coves also receive generally good winds, so it is possible to set sail from them, coast through the "entry foyer," then move out into the greater sea.

The caves of the coves twist endlessly into the cliffs. Half of them are only accessible during low tide; the other half sit high above their respective beaches, accessible by any hardy sailor willing to climb like a monkey.

The cove is impossible to find and impossibly difficult to approach from the landward side. Huge rocky cliffs topped with spires of sharp stone block the way for all but the most dedicated climbers. Agile children can, however, scale the seaward side of the cliffs, either to leave the cove or to move around it without having to use a rowboat.

### Pirate Treasures

The sad truth is that no one, not even the pirates, has any idea how many coves there really are or how much treasure is buried here. A pirate fleet can sail into the cove, bury its treasure, then come back the next day and find that the cave is completely empty. Some pirates have devised elaborate methods for finding the same cove again, including walking in strange patterns, asking permission of certain landmarks to pass by, timing their arrival to specific times, tides, and astrological patterns, and so on. All of these are marked in cipher on their treasure maps. Unfortunately for kids, if a map is lost, stolen, or destroyed, there's another way for pirates to find their treasure: by forcing kids from the Real World to lead them, expending Imagination to make the journey conform to what the pirate remembers of the path to the treasure. The more valuable the treasure, and the more complicated the route, the more Imagination must be expended.

## Ghost Pirates

Ghost ships are a very common sight at Sea, for they and they alone can weather any of her moods with equal aplomb. More of them are made every season, as the Sea sends ships howling to the depths and the Rotten King's taint gives them the malevolent will to rise again. Yet, not all ghost pirates were actual pirates in life; the allure of "a pirate's life for me" seems to apply to the dead, as well as the living! Many ghosts of the Grimm Lands, bored with their landlocked fates and their rattling chains, give up their regular haunts and retire to a life of seafaring savagery. These nouveau pirates are easily identified, as they are often wrapped in chains, dressed in gowns and bedclothes, and bear similar trappings of the traditional land-based ghost. The non-ghostly bandannas on their heads, material eyepatches over perfectly whole ghostly orbs, and peg-legs superimposed on ghostly feet, rather than making them look terrifying, merely make them look silly.

Most of the nouveau pirates have no idea how to sail, and have no ships in which to do so. Unable to catch the unfelt winds of the afterlife to drive their rented ghost ships through the night, they congregate instead among the hulks at the bottom of Dead Man's Cove. As night falls, the cove is filled with the sounds of ghostly drinking, ghostly singing, and ghostly fighting, all with no apparent source. Only those who look beneath the waters will see the cause of the commotion. Hundreds of souls, both ghost pirates and would-be pirate ghosts, throng along the sandy bottom, rambling from shipwreck to shipwreck in a constant brawling, staggering celebration.

## The Devil's Punchbowl

Among the coastal cliffs relentlessly pounded by the Sea's waves is one of the Grimm Land's unnatural wonders. The Devil carved himself a fountain in a shelf of rock, a pretty little bowl with a cunning arrangement of tubes funneling the surf into it. The surf goes spraying high into the air as it comes in, sometimes drenching even the cautious gulls who fly 100 feet above.

The Devil comes to drink the salty seawater from his punchbowl at least once every month. If the children need to speak to him or, even more foolishly, bargain with him, they may wait and he will eventually arrive. After the children leave, though, the Devil will convince the Sea to help him move his punchbowl to a new location.

## Strange Fishing Villages

Scattered along the coast at irregular intervals the children may find small, squalid villages filled with taciturn men and equally close-mouthed women. These villages squat on the sea's edge, from which their denizens creep out onto the water in rickety boats to cast rotted nets into the dark depths. They limp home with what fish they can catch, boiling everything to make weak broth barely capable of keeping skin and bone together. Each village has its own dark and strange secret; the one described here is just one example.

The men in some villages have a somewhat "fishy" look about them. They have little hair, skin that sheds flecks like a fish's scales, and hard, webbed hands calloused by years of working net and oar. They rarely come to shore, instead spending most of their time out on the waves looking for more fish.

The women, sometimes called fishwives, also have a subtle taint of the sea. Long, lanky black hair curls wildly out from beneath the checkered kerchiefs tied over their heads. Their heavily weathered skin and gnarled hands peek out from under thick dresses made of drab dyed wool. Most have watery, slightly bulbous eyes and thin, pushed-forward facial features. These women spend most of their time either tending to small, mean fires coaxed out of wet tinder or mending nets out on the village piers.

No village, regardless of when the children visit it, contains anyone under the age of thirty. If the children come in during the day, the fishwives try to drive them off, hurling curses and fish entrails to ensure they do not come back. However, should they have the misfortune to arrive when the menfolk lurk in the shabby huts, the men welcome the children to their meager fires. If the children accept their hospitality, the womenfolk will sullenly present them with bowls of thin fish stew. After the meal, the men extinguish the fires and the couple rolls out thin sleeping pallets for their guests.

Should the children sleep, they will find themselves netted and being carried by menfolk out to their boats. If they throw off their attackers and escape, so much the better. If not, the menfolk row the boys far out to sea and throw them overboard. The girls are kept chained up in a local sea cave for a year and a day. Every day, one of the fishwives comes and cuts a lock of each girl's hair, weaving them into a net. At the end of the sequestering the girls emerge, prematurely aged and twisted into creatures fit to take their places as fishwives. Only by catching her fisherman husband in the net woven from her hair can a would-be-rescuer force him to release her from her curse. Each day that the girl is away from the Sea or the coast, she becomes slightly younger and more herself, until after seven days she is back to normal.

# All the Islands of the Sea

Far from the coast's comforting connection to dry land, there are thousands upon thousands of islands. Some are little more than specks of rock floating in the middle of vast emptiness. Others contain stories and people cut off from the great Grimm Lands. Still others serve as a base of operation for pirates (and ghost pirates, and pirate ghosts), explorers, refugees, and even stranger things.

When the children set sail for an unnamed island, they may specify one of the island's attributes. Beyond this named attribute, chance and the narrator have complete control over what they will find.

Each unnamed island has the following attributes: beach, climate, challenge, description, inhabitants, and reward. The narrator may pick a combination that best serves the story, or may roll randomly to create an island based off of the following charts.

## Beaches

The children see the island's beach as they approach it from the open water. It gives them their first impression of what they will find, though this impression may mislead them in the long run.

| d6 | Descriptive Text |
|---|---|
| 1 | Pebbles and stones running up to grass-covered cliffs. From far out to the Sea the children can see a white carving, usually a man or horse, standing out against the green. |
| 2 | A gently slopping beach of white or gold sand with occasional rock outcroppings, almost perfect for mooring boats to. |
| 3 | Heavy, colorful corals surround the island, making it difficult to get to. Increase the difficulty of getting to or leaving the island by one grade level. |
| 4 | Dunes of golden sand with swampy reeds growing in patches. The hulks of boats sit stranded on the beach, their rotted shells held together by the reeds growing among them. |
| 5 | A thick carpet of green reeds mixed with seaweed, interspaced with bays choked with algae and weeds. Once on the island, increase the difficulty of calling to the Sea by one grade level. |
| 6 | Silvery, shifting sand that glimmers when the children walk on it. The sand shines faintly, even in complete darkness. |

## Climate

An island's climate determines how easily the children can stay there for an extended period of time. An island's climate has nothing to do with the weather or climate on the Sea, or with the Grimm Land's relatively variable seasons.

| d6 | Descriptive Text |
|---|---|
| 1 | Tropical: Heavy, wet air clings to the children as they search the island. Dozens of little freshwater streams slip between the foliage on their way down to the Sea. |
| 2 | Desert: The island has almost no potable water. What little vegetation exists lies low to the ground. Creatures who live here generally spend the days in hibernation and come out at night. |
| 3 | Temperate: The island has four distinct seasons and potable water. However, its seasons do not necessarily match up with those of the rest of the Grimm Lands. It may be covered with snow while the coast suffers from summer's heat, or display fall foliage when the rest of the world awakens into spring. |
| 4 | Arctic: The island is covered with a thick layer of ice and snow. Each day spent here inflicts a wound from the chill, unless the character can make (or have made on his behalf) a 5th-grade Boy Scouts test. |
| 5 | Halcyon: The island's perfect weather moves rapidly though the seasons. Each day at dawn, the foliage unfolds in a burst of new life. By noon it reaches maturity, and in the evening it settles into autumn's splendor. The nights are cool and crisp, at least until dawn breaks the horizon. Children on a halcyon island can automatically find food, shelter, and water sufficient to sustain life. |
| 6 | Tempestuous: The island's terrible weather moves rapidly though the seasons. Scorching midday heat follows blinding dawn rains. As twilight comes, bone-crushing cold settles over the island, with the air becoming so brittle that it feels like it might break. Boy Scouts tests on a tempestuous island suffer a –2 disadvantage. |

## Description

The descriptions given below provide the narrator with guidance in the creation of detailed information for this particular island. When combined with the climate attribute, it should also suggest various images and objects the children might encounter during their stay.

| d6 | Descriptive Text |
|---|---|
| 1 | Ancient Ruin: The island is covered, from one end to the other, with ruined buildings of indeterminate make. Various climate-appropriate plants grow on and around the ruins, but do not mask them from view. |
| 2 | Thickly Forested: The island is covered completely with tall, thick vegetation. This vegetation may range from palms to cacti, but always obscures vision and makes it difficult to move though the island's interior. |
| 3 | Water-filled: The island's exterior encircles a large body of fresh water. This freshwater pool may have fish in it, an above- and below-water ruin, or just about anything else. Roll once again on this chart, or make something up. |
| 4 | Volcano: The island's center slopes gently up to an active volcano. The volcano's slope has climate-appropriate vegetation, often quite thick, and it may erupt at any moment! |
| 5 | Living: The island is not solid, but instead is a floating mass of weeds and living creatures. It gives off a strong smell of rotting plants and fish. The island moves, making it difficult to find. Increase the difficulty of persuading the Sea to allow passage to this island by one grade. |
| 6 | Towering Stack: The island's beach ends abruptly in tall cliffs. On the top of the cliffs are more cliffs, leading to yet more cliffs. These cliffs may reach |

up thousands of feet before ending in a cave or open meadow. The inhabitants and the reward reside at the top of the stack.

## Inhabitants

As described below, most islands have some kind of inhabitants. These inhabitants are usually, but not always, hostile to the children in a general sense. They may choose to help the children, but will only do so if it furthers their own aims.

| d6 | Descriptive Text |
|---|---|
| 1 | Hostile Islanders: The island has at least five hostile island-dwellers for each child. These islanders may be relatively normal people, walking and talking animals, or anything else that walks, talks, and is no larger than adult-sized. They will not help the children unless the children can over come the challenge they present. |
| 2 | Happy Islanders: The island has at least five happy island-dwellers for each child. These islanders may be relatively normal people, walking and talking animals, or anything else that walks, talks, and is no larger than adult-sized. They happily give the children food and a place to sleep, but do not get involved with their affairs. If the children wish to claim the island's reward, they will have to take up the island's challenge. Doing so changes the islanders from happy to hostile. |
| 3 | Ghosts: The island is peopled entirely with ghosts. These ghosts are usually the remains of pirates who died on the waves, searching for the island's reward. Most of these ghosts are hostile, though there is a chance that one of the ghosts will help the children for its own reasons. |
| 4 | Lost Children: The island is peopled with other children swept out to the Sea. These children do not want to leave the island, and will take whatever steps they must to prevent other children from leaving as well. The island holds a number of children equal to the number of players, multiplied by 1d6. |
| 5 | Shipwrecked Sailor: The island's inhabitant is a crazy sailor, trapped on the island for untold ages. He is completely insane, moving from helpful to outright dangerous at the drop of a hat. Each day the children spend with the sailor, the narrator rolls 1d6; on a result of 1, make a new check to determine the island's challenge. |
| 6 | Hostile Master: A single, hostile, extremely powerful foe inhabits the island. She may be a magician, a fearsome monster, or just someone who wishes the children ill. This foe usually supports the Rotten King, allowing his minions to use the island as a base of operation within the Sea. |

## Challenge

All islands test the children in some way. The challenges suggested below represent a small fraction of the difficulties the narrator could throw at the children.

| d6 | Descriptive Text |
|---|---|
| 1 | Contest: In order to access the island's reward, the children will have to win a contest with the inhabitants. This contest usually, but not always, involves one child opposing the inhabitant's champion in a contested trait test of some kind. |
| 2 | Search: The island's reward is hidden somewhere. In order to find it the children must succeed at 1d6 8th-grade Seek tests. |
| 3 | Hide and Seek: The children must hide from the island's inhabitants for a set amount of time (usually from dusk until dawn). |
| 4 | Straight-up Fight: The children must overcome the island's inhabitants in combat to get the reward. |
| 5 | Diplomacy: The children must persuade the inhabitants to give them the reward. The difficulty of this task depends on the inhabitants and their point of view about the children, as described under "Inhabitants." |
| 6 | Building: The reward's location is obvious, but it requires a considerable amount of Rube Goldberg inventing to get to. Getting to the reward requires 1d6 8th-grade Industrial Arts tests. |

## Reward

Islands in fairy tales, even the twisted fairy tales of the Grimm Lands, usually provide those who search them out with some kind of practical advantage. This advantage comes as a reward for overcoming the island's challenge.

| d6 | Descriptive Text |
|---|---|
| 1 | Favor: The island contains a favor that the children can trade with the Sea for her assistance. |
| 2 | Treasure: The island contains a treasure that is useless to the kids, but is actively sought by someone else in the Grimm Lands. |
| 3 | Spell: The island contains a spell that at least one of the children can learn. |
| 4 | Answer: The island contains, in either written or oral form, the answer to a riddle or puzzle barring the children's path in another part of the Grimm Lands. |
| 5 | Talisman: The island contains a useful magical item. |
| 6 | Hope: The island contains something that, if released, would cause the Rotten King a great setback. When this result comes up, the narrator rolls 1d6. On a result of 1, 3, or 5, the "hope" seems to set him back, but will eventually end up assisting him in his endeavors. |

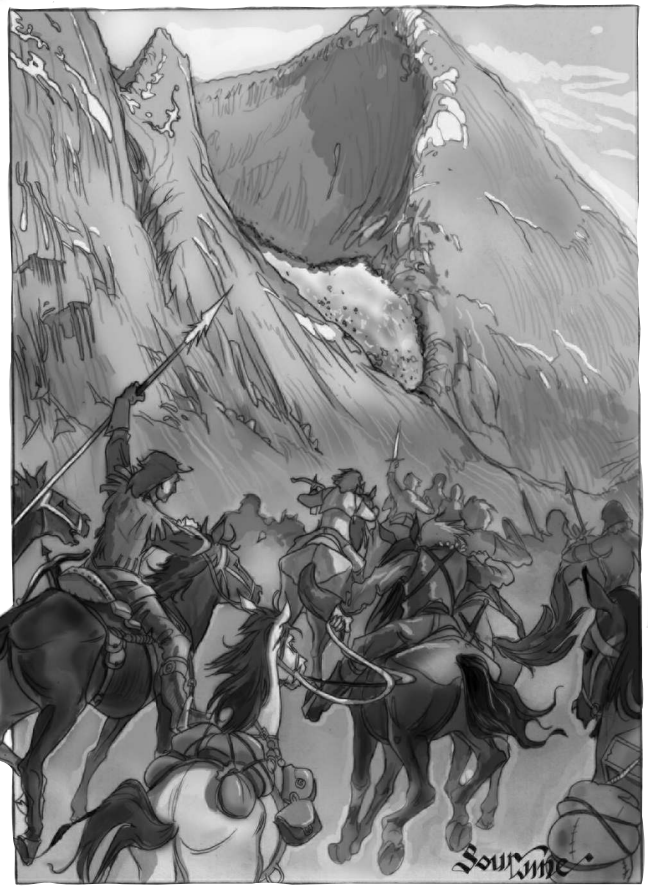
# World's Edge Mountains

Visible from every corner of the Checkerboard Kingdoms (save perhaps the darkest depths of the Great and Awful Forest), the World's Edge Mountains tower over the landscape like an angry wall of razor-sharp stone. They are the source of the Rioting River, and the only thing keeping the Grimm Lands from extending indefinitely. They are also extremely difficult to visit, because are always on the horizon…*always*. If a traveler gets too close to them, it is said that the mountains might just pick up and scuttle backward a few hundred miles! And if a traveler does somehow manage to set foot on one of the mountain's foothills (such as by sneaking up on them when they're not looking), the would-be climber could still spend a lifetime trying to cross the range. Just as the mountains themselves always seem to recede into the distance, so do their peaks always seem to loom ever-higher.

Like all mountain ranges, the World's Edge Mountains are more than just soaring mountain peaks and sheer cliff faces. They are comprised of a complex mix of climates, terrains, and ecosystems. They are mostly unsettled except for small, scattered villages and isolated castles, and they grow increasingly more wild and dangerous as one ventures higher and higher. As a rule of thumb, the foothills tend to be hilly, ranging from gentle rolling hills to jagged badlands. Alpine lakes, tumbling streams, and foreboding wetlands are all equally common, and in some places the Great and Awful Forest and the World's Edge Mountains overlap, creating some of the most foreboding landscape in all of the Grimm Lands.

Animals of all sorts bound, lurk, and fly within this archetypal mountain range. Birds of prey of all sizes hunt the skies, while wolves and mountain cats vie for a seat at the top of the food chain. Their prey include deer, goats, and sheep, some of which can talk and some of which can't, but all of which are constantly nervous. Smaller mammals like rabbits, weasels, otters, and beavers are plentiful, and the waterways teem with fish, frogs, lizards, and snakes. Unfortunately, insects are also everywhere, buzzing, crawling, and creeping throughout the range, but most abundantly near the wetlands.

The tunnels below the mountain are a confusing warren of lava tubes and passageways cut from the rock by flowing water. The deeper one goes, the warmer and more oppressive the air becomes, eventually gaining the rank odor of sulfur and brimstone. Legends say this is due to the Dragon exhaling as he sleeps deep beneath the mountains. Many other dangers dwell beneath the mountains: Craftsmen both large (giants) and small (dwarfs) maintain a crabby isolation within the range's depths, giant earthworms and fearsome fire drakes wend through its solidified lava tubes, and strange beings of earth and mud grumble and burble unintelligibly.



The only thing that these many creatures have in common is an extreme resentment toward intruders.

Many legends persist about the secrets of the mountains' inhabitants. The giant smiths, for instance, are believed to hold the secret of forging enchanted weapons out of fallen stars. The dwarven craftsmen, it is told, mine the depths of the Underworld in search of their missing kingdom and the fabled Fire Ruby of the dwarf kings.

# People and Places of Note

Besides the mundane fauna and flora found in the World's Edge Mountains, many other more extraordinary beings exist as well. Dwarfs, gnomes, giants, ogres, and other rugged, human-shaped peoples make their homes here; strangely, the Mountains seem to appeal to the extremely large and the extremely small, but not to normal-sized people.

Whereas more savage monsters are hunted down within the Checkerboard Kingdoms, or their mobility limited within the Great and Awful Forest by the closely growing trees, here in the mountains they hunt with impunity. Creatures hunt from the air, from beneath the ground, and upon far too many legs, and escape often requires leaping without looking, whether it be into a cave, into the air, or over a cliff.

## Dwarfs

The reputation of most dwarfs, thanks to contemporary fantasy stories and movies, is one of gruff but kind-hearted fellows, fond of mining, hard work, and young human women. Much of the above can be true, but it is not nearly the whole story.

Male dwarfs are stout little men about three to four feet in height, each weighing as much as a full-sized human male. They favor long, thick beards, plain but sturdy clothing, and simple fare. Though hard workers at anything they do, dwarfs love mining best of all, spending many hours a day toiling below ground to retrieve the treasures hidden in the earth. They make their homes among the mountain peaks, whether in cozy cottages nestled in nearby valleys or in the cold, dank tunnels that they mine. Some are cautiously friendly to strangers, though they tend to be very secretive, especially regarding the location of their mines and wealth.

Of female dwarfs, there is no word; that's because there are none. Dwarfs are an entirely male race that depends on the females of other races for procreation. They prefer pretty, young human women. Because the young maidens rarely see dwarfs as ideal husbands, the stout fellows often work as a group to locate, procure, and assimilate mates for the entire clan to share. Dwarfs see these women as their most valuable treasures, more precious than the purest gold or largest diamonds hewn from their mines, and protect them with unreasoning ferocity even while lavishing them with praise and genuine affection.

For obvious reasons, most dwarfs keep their true purposes a secret to the mate, introducing her into the clan under a ruse of some sort. Employing the girl as a housekeeper, cook, or other type of domestic help is a common ploy. Only after the young woman has learned to trust and possibly even love the dwarfs do they reveal their true intentions. Reactions to the revelation vary, but some dwarf clans allow the would-be mate to leave if she isn't interested in their offer.

### Snow White and the Seventeen Dwarfs

Possibly the most famous dwarfs are the seven who took in little Snow White after she ran away from her wicked stepmother. Knowing that she had many powerful enemies, the seven must have been particularly desperate to take her in anyway. Yet, their investment did not pay off: The girl fell prey to her stepmother's ruses, bit into a poisoned apple, and seemingly died. Truth be told, the clan had begun to suspect that the lass was quite dim, given her gullibility; they felt themselves better off, in the long run, without her. When a prince arrived and became deeply enamored of the supposedly dead girl within the glass coffin, the dwarfs did not drive a hard bargain.

Then, she woke up. Far from seeing this is as a miracle, the prince was appalled. It seems her lifelessness had been what appealed to the strange, spoiled boy. Moreover, the greedy dwarfs assumed that they had been tricked, and decided that their original deal was void because of extenuating circumstances. That was all the

pretense the boy needed to annul the marriage and deliver her back into the eager little hands of the dwarfs.

At first it was hard for Snow White to adjust to her new life with the dwarfs, especially after being spurned by a handsome prince. Luckily for them, her short attention span and dim mental capacities made her easily distracted by the pretty gold and shiny gems they gave her. Soon enough, she came to tolerate and even enjoy the arrangement. Today, the original cottage they shared in the early days is gone, replaced by a much larger home better able to accommodate Snow White and the dwarf clan, now numbering seventeen and growing every year.

### Hermit Dwarfs

Not all dwarfs live in clans or are willing to pass the time of day, however gruffly, with passersby. Some are hateful of all other living things, even other dwarfs. These solitary creatures spend their lives plotting and scheming. They unfortunately share their cousins' preference for young human women, but they are willing to employ much darker methods to get what they want. They tend to enjoy offering to solve a problem for a mortal in exchange for a favor. The favor, which seems benign at first, ultimately reveals itself as horrible.

Hermit dwarfs tend to know spells from the artificer and witch lists.

## Giants

The giants of the World's Edge Mountains can be massive creatures, standing anywhere from 15 feet to 500 feet high. The largest are barely capable of interacting with the human world; because they are so much larger than everyone else, they tend to ignore most people like humans ignore insects. It is not uncommon for a gang of young giants to play through a village on a round of golf not realizing they've left a divot where a church used to be (steeples make excellent tees, after all). A giant's ignorance to things smaller than itself is generally regarded as a good thing, and most smaller folk cower in fear until the giants pass them by.

### Golf

One favorite past time for giants is golf. They do not play on meticulously maintained courses as modern humans do, but rather play an ad hoc game using what is at hand: tree trunks for clubs, caves or barns for holes, and boulders or farm animals for balls. When the spirit takes them, giants tee off wherever they happen to be, ripping trees from the ground, plucking a nearby goat from its pen and smacking the poor beast into the distance with one swipe of his "club." The giants then dash off to follow their "balls" and continue their game. The game has become so important to some giants that they have begun to wear distinct golf clothing, perhaps suggested to them by kids from the Real World, as a symbol of status and skill. Tartan short pants and caps are extremely popular, as are spiked shoes that, despite their goofiness, can impale full-grown men.

## Headless Heights

Fairy tales are full of unfortunate victims, whether deserving villains or innocent bystanders, of beheadings. The Headless Horseman, Bluebeard's wives, and the many who have run afoul of the Queen of Hearts were all bereft of that most essential of organs, and it was to the Headless Heights that the Grimm Lands took them. This dark kingdom is eerie and silent, as befits a place peopled by those who cannot speak and who, by all rights, should be dead. The Headless Horseman is the captain of the kingdom's guard, and he alone can issue orders thanks to his pumpkin head. While isolationist, the kingdom paints itself as a refuge for the head-handicapped. The headless knights who patrol its borders all carry scrolls that declare that only the headless may enter, for the headed are too cruel to be trusted. Should the decree be ignored, the knights back it up with force.

In the land of the headless, a man with a head is king, even if that head seems to be missing a working mind. In truth, the kingdom is as much a prison for that king as it is a refuge for the headless. The supposed leader of the headless is the anonymous bearer of the vorpal sword, he who was once a beamish boy and the slayer of the jabberwocky. However, bearing a weapon so powerful as the vorpal sword comes with a cost. Its entire reason for being is to remove the heads from those about it, and it is an insistent piece of steel. Thus, after its young bearer emerged from the swamp, the monster defeated, his father did not for long chortle in joy. The sword demanded his father's head, and his mother's, and his brother's, and his neighbors'…and so on and so on.

Ironically, it was the Queen of Hearts who stopped the youth's rampage; were he to continue, after all, she would have no one against whom to order her favorite punishment. She demanded a powerful ritual from her court wizard, one that required the sacrifice of all four Jacks and the Ace of Spades. When it was complete, she had at her command an army composed of all the folk she had beheaded over the years. Faced by legions of those who had already lost what the vorpal sword was meant to take, the boy was defeated. They chased him into the World's Edge Mountains, and there surrounded him.

Were he killed, the sword would simply have found another owner. Thus, the headless became his permanent captors. They made him king, albeit only in name, to fool him into wanting to remain in his prison. They brought him a pretty young princess to be his wife, whom he immediately beheaded; and she bore for him a headless son. The Headless Horseman has told him, and thereby convinced the sword, that all the world has fallen prey to his martial prowess, that none still live who have their heads. Thus, the sword and its wielder, whose name no one with a mouth remembers, rule their dreary domain with no clue as to the state of the outside world.

### The Headless Knights

The headless knights of the Headless Heights are a host of soldiers who keep interlopers out, and keep their king in. Despite their lack of heads and sensory organs, the knights are able to walk, see, hear, and so on, quite well. They cannot eat, which makes them sad, though they do not need food to survive; nor can they speak, though without brains, they probably wouldn't be able to think of anything to say, anyway.

### Headless Knights (8th grade)

**Health:** 8 **Shape:** Person **Stature:** Adult
**Speed:** Really Slow **Protection:** 9 **Wounds:** 5

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cool 3rd | Pluck 8th | Luck 1st | Muscle 9th |
| Seek 8th | Scamper 1st | Scrap 9th | Throw 1st |

***Combat:*** Sword (+1 Scrap attack, +2 wounds); Shield (+2 Scrap defense); Knight's Armor (+4 protection).

*Headless:* Headless knights cannot suffer from any effect that would blind them, deafen them, behead them, or anything else that would negatively affect someone with a head. In addition, they suffer no disadvantage on Seek tests from their armor.

### The King and His Sword

The king is an able warrior, having the stats of a 10th-grade guard wearing the equivalent of mercenary's armor. As the bearer of the vorpal sword, however, he is nearly unbeatable in combat. Each turn, throughout the entire turn, the sword automatically takes off every head within its bearer's reach. This happens so quickly and so reflexively that the wielder must make a 12th-grade Muscle test to keep it from doing so. When potential beheading victims are not within

reach, if the sword believes that any are available to be severed, the wielder must make a 12th-grade Cool test or be convinced by the sword to seek some headed victims out. The sword is also fairly good at protecting its wielder, as its powers are not limited to the heads of living beings. Should arrows or spears streak within reach, off come the arrowheads and spearheads before they can harm the wielder's flesh. Should long-hafted axes or hammers be swung at him from a safe distance, snicker snack, and they are reduced to mere staves. The sword's efforts can even cause certain types of wind to die down, cause runners that have a lead to stumble and fall, and can undue progress made upon a project. Finally, in the unlikely event that the sword's wielder dies, the power and glory it conveys are such that a 12th-grade Pluck test to resist temptation must be made by anyone who sees it lying unattended. Those who fail must try to claim it.

The king was once a brave and handsome youth, full of life and happiness. Now he is alternately wracked with guilt over what he has done (or thinks he has done, in the case of imagining that everyone in the world has been beheaded) and overwhelmed by boredom. He cannot remember what it was like to kiss, to meet someone's gaze, or to engage in a normal conversation. There's the Headless Horseman, true, but he only speaks in long, droning words and follows every phrase with an eruption of evil laughter. Should he see another human being or vaguely human-shaped creature, the poor man will immediately be compelled by the sword to chase after and behead it. Should these reveal to him the presence of an entire world of headed folk waiting to be slaughtered, it would take a few dozen headless knights to dog-pile him and restrain him.

## The Ruined Castle

The largest structure of the World's End Mountains is the ruined castle, built upon a cloud that never leaves the peak around which it formed. The castle was moved, piece by piece, from its original place in the cloud kingdom; it is none other than the home of the giant killed by Jack, brought here as a sort of museum and shrine to giant-kind.

Climbing the mountain to the ruined castle is an exercise in effort and tenacity. The mountain itself is pretty tame thanks to the beating it suffered at the giants' hands (the hardest climbing is a 6th-grade Scamper test); however, it is very, very big and very, very boring. A few miles up and the mountain becomes shrouded by mists, which later become clouds, so that climbers will be able to see nothing but the dull gray and brown of the mountainside immediately around them. The only feature interrupting this lonely trek are the caves and cottages belonging to other giants, which the children would be wise to avoid. Some giants have a very keen sense of smell, but the mist works against them by muting or outright killing scents. After a couple of close calls, those with high Gaming and Boy Scouts grades may figure out that concealing their odors would be a good idea.

The climb to the mountain's summit takes nearly a week, making it possible for the children to run out of food by the time they make it up there. They will know they have arrived when they break through the cloud surrounding the peak to see the blue sky above, plus a startled Sun wondering what human children are doing so high up. In the distance, and apparently built on top of the cloud, children can see a castle. Children must make a literal leap of faith to stride out onto the cloud's surface, making Imagination tests as they cross the distance of the arrow's flight to the castle's drawbridge. Those who fail a 9th-grade Imagination test during the trip plummet, potentially to great bodily harm, to the mountainside below.

While the journey to the ruined cloud castle is dangerous, it is nothing compared to the grisly death that may await the kids should they enter. The original owner is long dead, but his ogre wife could not bear to leave the home they had shared for so long. She wailed every night for the realization that it was her actions that hid Jack from her husband, her willingness that let him into their home in the first place, and thereby might as well have been her hand that chopped the Beanstalk down and killed her husband. She could not bear to leave the castle when the giants came to take it apart and bring it down to Beanstalk's End in pieces…she clung to its foundations, its towers, its walls and doors. And so with each piece that was removed, the worshipful giants were forced to remove a piece of the giant's wife, as well. When the castle was reassembled upon the mountainside, the woman was put back together along with it, but pieces of her were scattered throughout the castle. One of her giant hands is the drawbridge, and the chandelier in the foyer is made of her giant hair and pieces of her giant eyes. Her giant teeth make up the doors, and the main staircase is made of her giant spine. Should kids come into the castle, they will hear terrible weeping coming from all around them, as the giantess sobs in her sleep. After the kids travel within her for some time, she eventually awakes, realizes that trespassers are inside her, and will begin to gnash her various body parts together in the hopes of grinding them into paste. She particularly focuses her attacks on athletic boys, as they most remind her of the hated Jack.

The giantess's gnashing subjects the kids to a new hazard (see page 102) in every room, as well as making it nearly impossible for them to escape. The kids must find some way to calm her (or kill her) before she squishes them all.

One way to do this is to find her heart, buried beneath the flagstones of the kitchen's larder (this requires an 8th-grade Seek test, though the wailing of the giantess imposes –4 grades to all Seek tests once it starts). The heart is whale-sized, making it difficult to inflict wounds upon, but if the kids manage to inflict 10 wounds, the heart dies and the giantess dies with it. Unfortunately, without her magic to keep the castle afloat, it begins to sink through the clouds. The kids have 10 turns to escape the castle before it sinks entirely through the clouds and plummets to the mountainside below.

Alternatively, the kids can try to soothe the giantess by finding one of her ears and whispering into it. One is a fountain-basin in the rear courtyard, disgustingly filled with puss-yellow liquid earwax; the other is the top of the turret of the castle's highest tower. A 10th-grade Cool test will soothe the giantess for long enough for the kids to speak with her, allowing them to discover that she cannot rest until she wreaks vengeance upon her husband's murderer. Particularly skilled conversationalists may be able to convince the giantess to let them go, so long as each kid swears an oath to find and bring Jack to her so she can grind him to the mortar between her bones. Other options include impersonating Jack and apologizing profusely (though this is dangerous, as it may lead her to attack immediately with renewed vigor), promising to find the giantess a new mate from among the smartest and largest of the giants in Beanstalk's End (presumably one with peculiar tastes in architecture, lovers, or both), or anything else the kids can think up that seems appropriate.

## The Sphinx and the Griffon

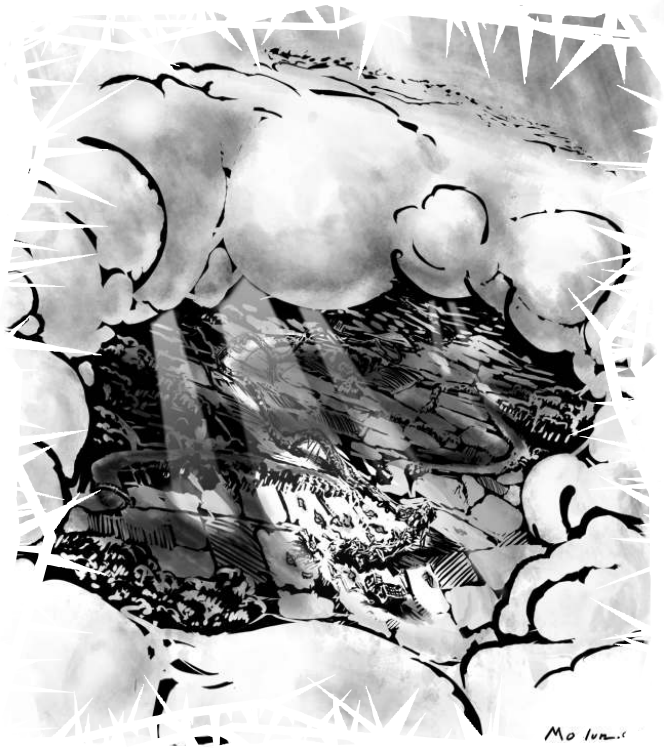
One noteworthy resident of the World's Edge Mountains is the current incarnation of the Sphinx and her mate, an enthusiastic but stupid griffon. Both have the bodies of lions and the wings of eagles, both are beautiful creatures, and both have a taste for raw flesh. Whereas the griffon has the head of a giant eagle and a mind that is little better, the Sphinx has the head of a beautiful woman and a mind as sharp as that of any human

sage (use griffon stats, but with 8th grade in Book Learning and Cool, as well as 10th grade in Gaming and Imagination).

This is in fact not the original Sphinx, but rather a riddling princess who traded bodies with the feline creature of legend. She became so repulsed and nauseated by the constant besieging of suitors that she considered suicide, but despite her hatred of the riddling life, she suffered from a compulsion to pose the inane questions to any who came to her. Thus, to escape her life, she agreed to trade bodies with the Sphinx, thinking that only the very brave or very foolish would come in search of her riddles, given the Sphinx's reputation for eating those who answered incorrectly.

This new Sphinx, despite her hatred of riddles, adores knowledge even more than she adores her mate, which makes her a valuable storehouse of information. The griffon, aside from his love for the Sphinx and what limited language skills she has taught him, is no different from countless others like him who soar the thermals above the World's Edge Mountains. Were a kid to ask the Sphinx what she saw in the griffon, she would just smile enigmatically and answer that some answers are not meant for children.

It is said that the Sphinx knows the answer to every question, but that she and her mate eat humans with little remorse. Luckily, her mate is far from intellectually stimulating, so if visitors can engage her intellect before their rouse either predator's bloodlust, she is likely to stop and speak with them before consuming them. This few minutes of discourse is a potential victim's best chance for escaping a grisly death, but doing so requires an impressive display of knowledge, logic, or wit. As a last resort, visitors might challenge her to a riddling contest, which she cannot help but agree to. Yet, her hatred for riddles is so intense that they will forever after make an enemy of her, regardless of whether they win or lose the contest.



## Glass Mountain

Glass Mountain is a unique peak. No trees or shrubs grow on its glass slopes, and the snow that falls upon it slides right off…as do any who attempt to climb its slick surface. During the day, the peak gleams brightly in the sunlight; at night, it reflects the Moon and stars lighting the night sky for miles around. There always seem to be ravens hanging about the mountain, presumably because they like its shiny sheen. In fact, looking pretty seems to be the mountain's only purpose, until one sees inside.

The mountain can only peered into if neither the Sun nor the Moon nor the stars are visible (so, a cloudy night before moonrise, or during an eclipse, or when someone is distracting the dangerous entities that are the Sun and the Moon). Inside the mountain, the viewer sees a simple, poorly made hall, as if crafted by hands that were not used to manual labor. All around the hall are heaps upon heaps of gold, tapestries, weapons, and other treasures. The glass of the mountain is impenetrable, and the hall is in the center of the hollow mountain, making the details of its residents difficult to make out. Should the kids wait and watch for several days, however, they will notice a consistency to the ravens' comings and goings. First of all, the ravens always fly away from the peak without anything in their claws; when they come back, they often bear small sacks. Second, when the ravens return laden with their mysterious goods, they land somewhere near the mountain's peak, fiddle with something small and pink that they clutch in their beaks, and then seem to disappear inside the mountain, perhaps through a hatch or trap door.

### Breaking and Entering

The first challenge to getting into the Glass Mountain is reaching its apex, where there is a trap door. Ten 12th-grade Scamper tests in a row are required to reach it, as the mountain's slopes are completely frictionless. Creative use of adhesive substances can aid in this test, or simply finding a means to fly allows for the tests to avoided…at least until the flying mount or vehicle tries to land on the mountainside, at which point the Scamper test is immediately called for. Those who fail the Scamper test are in for a rollicking ride down the mountainside, a ride that cannot be stopped by any means. Luckily for the sliders, the mountain is at enough of a slope that the trip isn't fatal, usually. Those who hit bottom take 10 wounds.

Upon finding the trap door, a Seek test and Imagination test should be made. A 10th grade on the Imagination test reveals that, given the relative scale of the trap door, some of those ravens that the kids have

seen are quite large, as big as a man or bigger! All would-be intruders notice that the trap door has an oddly round, half-inch-diameter keyhole. A 10th-grade Seek test reveals tiny teeth in its interior in place of tumblers. The only thing that will open this keyhole is a severed human finger (adult or kid, either will do). Once placed inside, the finger spirals disturbingly as it is chewed upon, slowly disappearing into the hole until it is entirely consumed. Once this occurs, the door pops open. Then it's just a matter of figuring out how to get down; climbing down the overhanging interior glass surface of the mountain is next to impossible.

## The Seven Brothers

The Glass Mountain is home to seven brothers who were inadvertently cursed to become ravens. Their younger sister turned out to be the key to curing the curse, but only temporarily. When within her presence, the brothers become human. When not, they become ravens, and over time they have learned to change their size at will, from normal birds (cat-sized) to black-winged behemoths (moose-sized). Far from feeling themselves to be cursed, the brothers enjoy their shapeshifting powers. They can fly wherever they like, spy on others quite easily, steal valuables, and so on. They have become an infamous band of burglars and information brokers, as well as occasional assassins. However, they like to enjoy their earnings in human form, and as such require that their sister always be available. At first, she was happy to accede to her elder brothers' wishes, but soon enough guilt got the best of her, and she began to protest their lifestyle. Thus, the sister is now a (usually gagged) captive of the seven brothers, kept bound in their poorly built hall.

Over the years, the brothers have amassed a huge fortune that includes unique items of all sorts. Because only the brothers, their sister, and the stars know how to open Glass Mountain, no one has managed to stop the brothers or recover their stolen goods. When not out stealing, the brothers enjoy hosting riotous parties full of strong drink and flavorful food. Before a party, the brothers usually fly off and kidnap a few "guests," typically attractive women and occasionally a few musicians. With Glass Mountain sealed to the outside world, the parties last for days. So they can remain in human form, the brothers force their sister to attend their revelries and witness firsthand the depraved debaucheries to which they subject their other guests.

Chapter Eight

# Friends and Foes

This chapter expands on some of the characters referenced in Chapter Seven, as well as providing stats for some common friends and foes that narrators may wish to include in their stories. The format for these characters are described below. Note that some characters, particularly minor ones, may simply lack grades in some traits. For Core or Playground traits, this is represented by a horizontal line, like so: —. For Study traits, a trait without grade levels is simply not listed.

## Character Descriptions

**Essential Features:** The first section of the character entry lists the character's physical features as well as its essential information. This includes its personal grade level, health, stature, speed, and any protection it may have and the wounds it inflicts with its common attacks.

If the protection and wounds differ from the normal number associated with creatures of that size, the explanation for the higher or lower number is presented in parentheses. For instance, a creature of adult stature normally has protection 5, so an adult-sized creature might be listed as having "**Protection:** 7 (warty hide)." In many cases, the explanation is cosmetic, but the narrator may use this information to determine the effects of special attacks, weapons that bypass protection, and so on.

**Traits:** The next section lists all of the character's Core and Playground traits, as well as any Study traits that the character may have.

**Description:** This section in italics is provided only for major characters. It gives either a quick visual description of the character, a summary of his history and how it diverges from the common fairy tale canon, or both.

**Details:** The character's personality, goals, tactics, and possibly history are described in greater detail.

**Special Stuff:** The character's special abilities, talents, magical spells, and possessions, if any, are listed and described.

## Major and Minor Characters

There are two types of characters in *Grimm*: major characters and minor characters. The kids controlled by the players are all major characters, as are at least one or two of the villains they face during a story. Major characters have a full array of traits, special abilities, and possessions, and also have unique personalities and motivations. Major characters are knocked out, rather than killed, when they take wounds equal to their health. And all major characters have iconic Core traits, just like the kids, and when they carry weapons, they use their combat moves.

Minor characters, meanwhile, are simpler. They include the nameless guards of the castle, wandering animals of the forest, and mindless minions of the villain. They have only a few special abilities, and when they wield weapons, they do not use their combat moves.

### Soft Spots

All characters, whether minor or major, have something called a **soft spot**. This is the character's particular, often secret, weakness. If the kids can discover it, they will be able to gain the upper hand against the character, using the soft spot as a weapon, a distraction, or a defense. Sometimes a soft spot is a particular item for which or person for whom the character would do anything. A character's soft spot can be a favorite food or tempting pleasure, or it could be a particular fear. Sometimes the fear is because something is truly anathema to the character (like water was to the Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz*), while other feared soft spots are completely mental (like a fairy tale elephant's fear of mice). Finally, some soft spots are, quite literally, soft spots in a creature's hide or armor that a carefully aiming combatant can strike.

# Minor Characters

## Animals

The animals that populate the fields and farms of the Grimm Lands are not the stupid, mundane creatures of the Real World. Many are intelligent, some frighteningly so, and they entertain agendas even the wisest of men cannot always fathom. In the Grimm Lands, it is not uncommon to spy a wolf in sheep's clothing, a cat playing a fiddle, or a cow leaping over the moon.

### Soft Spot

Most animals share common soft spots: food and fire. The first can be used to distract them, tempt them, or mollify them, while the latter elicits terror in them.

### Talking

Not all animals are simple beasts. Some have the intellect of a person, and with that intellect comes the power of speech. Talking animals look just like normal animals, and share their essential features and physical stats. However, they are more likely to have higher grades in Cool and Imagination, and may have grades in some Study traits.

### Upright

The next step upward from talking in magical "evolution" is animals that are upright. Upright animals have the same stats and abilities as talking animals, but further have the ability to walk on two legs, wear clothes and armor, use weapons and tools, and so on.

### Bear

**Grade**: 5th **Health:** 5 **Shape:** Animal
**Stature:** Moose **Speed:** Average
**Protection:** 7 (thick hide)
**Wounds:** 8 (teeth and claws)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 3rd | Pluck 5th | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 2nd | Muscle 7th | |
| Hide 3rd | Seek 5th | Scamper 4th |
| Scrap 7th | Throw — | |
| Boy Scouts 7th | | |

Bears are predatory animals found in the woodland realms of the Grimm Lands. They travel alone much of the time, though a mother bear sticks close to her cubs until they are old enough to fend for themselves. During the winter months they hibernate in their dens, at which time they are not to be feared unless they are disturbed or awakened early. Bears are omnivorous and eat just about anything that they can find. Most are particularly fond of honey, as well as the contents of picnic baskets, but particularly hungry ones settle for small children when they can find them.

**Bear Hug:** Bears that successfully wrestle their opponents can inflict wounds on the first turn of wrestling.

### Bird of Prey

**Grade:** 2nd **Health:** 2 **Shape:** Animal
**Stature:** Dog **Speed:** Really slow, fast (flying)
**Protection:** 3 **Wounds:** 4 wounds (beak and talons)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 4th | Pluck 6th | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 4th | Muscle 3rd | |
| Hide 3rd | Seek 6th | Scamper 6th |
| Scrap 4th | Throw — | |
| Boy Scouts 4th | | |

Large birds in the Grimm Lands include hawks, eagles, and other predatory flyers. They are possessed of powerful wings that allow them to soar high in the sky, as well as razor-sharp talons and beaks, which they use to capture and subdue prey. They are usually uninterested in young children, unless such children look tasty and are small enough to carry away to their nests. Most of the time, they stick to eating anything that is dog-sized or smaller.

The nobility of the Grimm Lands hold raptors in high regard. Particularly affluent nobles keep several of them as pets and use them to hunt small game.

**Eagles Eyes:** Eagles and hawks are renowned for their excellent eyesight, especially when in flight. Predatory birds gain +2 grades on Seek tests involving vision.

**Power Dive:** Predatory birds can use momentum to hit harder.

If a bird of prey spends between one and three turns diving towards its prey from above and then successfully attacks, it inflicts +1 wound for each turn spent diving.

## Bird, Song

**Grade:** 1st **Health:** 1 **Shape:** Animal
**Stature:** Mouse **Speed:** Really slow, fast (flying)
**Protection:** 0 **Wounds:** 0

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 1st | Pluck 2nd | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 6th | Muscle 1st | |
| Hide 4th | Seek 4th | Scamper 8th |
| Scrap 1st | Throw — | |
| Boy Scouts 3rd | | |

Flocks of small birds fill the treetops and skies of the Grimm Lands in spring and summer. They are brightly colored, singing gaily as they dart nimbly through the air. The small birds of the Grimm Lands are very similar to the songbirds of the Real World, albeit smarter. They are almost universally good-natured, if not a bit skittish, and have been known to help children in need. These small aviators spend much of their time looking for food, including seeds, small insects, and the ever-popular worm. Nevertheless, they are simple-minded and prone to bouts of merry singing as they perch upon branches and boughs.

**Birdsong:** The sweet, lilting chirp of small songbirds can lull even the hardest heart into a warm, cozy sleep. Anyone who remains at rest within earshot of five or more small birds will find themselves nodding off. Each affected character must succeed at a 4th-grade Pluck test or end up dozing for a number of minutes equal to the grades by which they failed their Pluck test.

## Cat

**Grade:** 1st **Health:** 1 **Shape:** Animal
**Stature:** Cat **Speed:** Fast **Protection:** 2
**Wounds:** 3 (teeth and claws)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 6th | Pluck 3rd | Imagination 3rd |
| Luck 6th | Muscle 2nd | |
| Hide 6th | Seek 4th | Scamper 7th |
| Scrap 3rd | Throw — | |
| Boy Scouts 2nd | | |

Cats are as ubiquitous in the Grimm Lands as they are in the Real World. They are largely unchanged in their appearance, though some gifted specimens are known to walk upon their hind legs from time to time. Fur lengths, colors, and patterns vary wildly.

Both the peasants and nobility of the Grimm Lands keep cats as pets. They most often do so because of the cat's ability to catch small vermin, such as mice and rats. While skilled and deadly to such small game, cats are oftentimes confounded by these rodents, who display a savvy intellect all their own.

When they aren't stalking prey, cats lie about, sleep, and take endless pleasure in preening themselves. If they are treated well, they can be staunchly loyal companions who seek to enrich their masters' lives. Like people, the personalities of cats are as different and varied as the flowers of the field.

**Nine Lives:** Cats are remarkably difficult to kill. Any cat that would normally suffer its own demise may attempt a Luck test with a difficulty appropriate to the seeming unavoidability of the death. If the cat succeeds, it manages to survive somehow, but at the expense of one of its nine lives. Should a cat either fail the Luck test, or run out of lives, it is killed.

**Prowler:** Cats are excellent night stalkers. They ignore visibility penalties in everything short of absolute darkness, and always have +2 grades on Hide tests made to move silently.

## Cow

**Grade:** 3rd **Health:** 3 **Shape:** Animal
**Stature:** Moose **Speed:** Really Slow
**Protection:** 6 **Wounds:** 5 or 6 (hooves, horns)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 1st | Pluck 2nd | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 1st | Muscle 6th | |
| Hide 1st | Seek 1st | Scamper 1st |
| Scrap 2nd | Throw — | |

A cow in the Grimm Lands looks much like any other cow, being various shades of brown, black, and tan, or alternately, white with irregular black spots. Large, sharply pointed horns denote bulls or oxen (+3 to Scrap and Pluck, +1 Health and Muscle), the former of which are much more aggressive than their female counterparts or oxen cousins. Cows are kept as livestock for the milk and meat they provide, while oxen are used as draft animals. They spend their days pulling plows, delivering milk, grazing, making cow pies, swatting at flies with their tails, and occasionally jumping over the moon.

## Dog

**Grade:** 2nd **Health:** 2 **Shape:** Animal
**Stature:** Dog **Speed:** Fast **Protection:** 3
**Wounds:** 3

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 1st | Pluck 5th | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 1st | Muscle 3rd | |
| Hide 3rd | Seek 5th | Scamper 4th |
| Scrap 3rd | Throw — | |
| Boy Scouts 6th | | |

Like cats, dogs come in a wide variety of shapes, sizes, and colors. Dogs are loyal companions who have been known to put the welfare of their masters above their own. As such, they are valued as pets, hunters, guards, and workers. Most dogs are simple and easily-satisfied, though they can be dangerous if startled or threatened.

**Sniffer:** Dogs have acute senses of smell and make excellent trackers. They gain +4 grades on Seek tests or Boy Scouts tests to track by smell.

## Horse

**Grade:** 4th **Health:** 4 **Shape:** Animal
**Stature:** Moose **Speed:** Fast (4 legs)
**Protection:** 5 **Wounds:** 6 (hooves)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 3rd | Pluck 2nd | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 2nd | Muscle 6th | |
| Hide 1st | Seek 3rd | Scamper 4th |
| Scrap 4th | Throw — | |

Horses are used as beasts of burden throughout the Grimm Lands. They are simple creatures, but can be incredibly noble, depending on their breeding. Most peasants are too poor to own riding horses, which can fetch incredible prices at market.

**Kick:** Horses can lash out and kick with their rear legs, but at the expense of accuracy. Any horse that attempts such an attack suffers –2 to Scrap, but inflicts +1 wound.

### Destrier

Destriers are large horses, usually stallions, that are bred and trained for warfare. These large animals act as steeds for knights. Destriers have the same traits as horses, with +2 to Cool, Pluck, and Scrap and +1 to Health and Muscle, and their natural weapons count as Medium Two-Handed. Destriers can also trample.

**Trample:** If a destrier begins its turn not wrestling and spends its turn moving, it can trample anyone in its path rather than avoiding them. Each opponent it intercepts must make a test as if wrestling. If the destrier wins, it can inflict wounds immediately and keep moving. If the destrier loses, it must stop moving.

### Donkey/Mule

Mules and donkeys are akin to horses, but they are smaller and less imposing. They are rarely ridden, and are instead relegated to duty as pack animals. Donkeys and mules have the same traits as horses but are adult-sized and have –1 to Cool, Pluck, and Scrap. Donkeys and mules are also stubborn.

**Stubborn:** Donkeys and mules are famous for their pigheaded stubbornness. Donkeys and mules gain +4 grades on Cool and Pluck tests to resist being intimidated or coerced.

## Mouse

**Grade:** 1st **Health:** 1 **Shape:** Animal
**Stature:** Mouse **Speed:** Average **Protection:** 0
**Wounds:** 1 (teeth)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 1st | Pluck 1st | Imagination 5th |
| Luck 3rd | Muscle 1st | |
| Hide 8th | Seek 4th | Scamper 6th |
| Scrap 1st | Throw — | |

Mice are small, furry rodents that come in colors ranging from white and gray to black. They sit upon their haunches and use their hand-like paws to manipulate morsels of food and other small items. Mice are seen as pests because of their propensity to chew their way into food supplies. Despite the presence of cats in many homes across the land, mice continue to thrive. They are smarter than most humans give them credit for, and find little challenge in bringing cats to task.

**Gnaw:** Mice can gnaw through anything, given enough time.

## Rat

Rats are similar to mice, but are larger and significantly less

wholesome. Rats have the same traits as mice, with +2 to Cool, Pluck, and Scrap, and are often cat-sized. Rats are also plague-carriers.

The stats for rats may also be used for squirrels, weasels, and other large rodents, though they probably are not plague carriers.

**Plague Carriers:** Rats are known to carry diseases, which is another reason that they are despised. Anyone who suffers at least one wound from a rat bite must succeed on a 6th-grade Muscle test or contract a disease. A character so infected must attempt a 6th-grade Muscle test each day, with failure resulting in a wound that cannot be healed until the disease is cured. If the character can succeed on a number of consecutive Muscle tests equal to the number of levels by which he failed his initial Muscle test, he is cured.

### Wolf

**Grade:** 3rd **Health:** 3 **Shape:** Animal
**Stature:** Kid **Speed:** Fast **Protection:** 4
**Wounds:** 5 (teeth)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 3rd | Pluck 3rd | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 1st | Muscle 4th | |
| Hide 4th | Seek 5th | Scamper 5th |
| Scrap 4th | Throw — | |
| Boy Scouts 6th | | |

Wolves are roaming predators that are reviled by farmers for fear that they will decimate their herds and flocks. In the Grimm Lands, they are particularly evil-spirited, and have been known to go to great lengths in order to gobble up unwary children.

**Pack Tactics:** Wolves work in tandem to bring down large opponents. Whenever a wolf would provide a teamwork die to a fellow wolf's Scrap attack test or Muscle wrestle test, it instead provides +1 grade.

**Wild Tracker:** While not as keen-nosed as dogs, which are bred for it, wolves are still formidable hunters. They gain a +2 advantage on Seek tests or Boy Scouts tests to track by smell, and a +1 advantage on Seek tests made in darkness.

## Carnivorous Plants

From vampire-like rose bushes with their sickly white blooms to the twisted blades of strangleweed, not all plants that take root in the Grimm Lands are benign. Rarely can they be distinguished from normal bushes, trees, and vines. It takes a keen eye and a lot of experience to tell which plants are safe, and which ones are hungry.

While carnivorous plants can be found in all parts of the Grimm Lands, they are most often encountered in the Great and Awful Forest. There are many different varieties, but the most commonly encountered are bushes, grasses, trees, and vines. The talents listed under each plant type may be possessed by other plants, at the narrator's discretion.

**Rooted:** Unless otherwise noted, carnivorous plants cannot move from the place they are planted.

**Simple:** Carnivorous plants are made to eat, and nothing more. They do not speak and cannot hear, and cannot be intimidated, placated, or otherwise communicated with except via the most basic of methods. Kids might successfully threaten a plant with fire, for instance, or distract it with fresh meat.

***Soft Spot:*** Fire.

### Carnivorous Shrub

**Grade:** 2nd **Health:** 2 **Shape:** Plant
**Stature:** Kid **Speed:** — **Protection:** 3
**Wounds:** 4

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool — | Pluck 2nd | Imagination — |
| Luck 1st | Muscle 2nd | |
| Hide 5th | Seek 3rd | Scamper — |
| Scrap 3rd | Throw — | |

Carnivorous shrubs grow along the perimeters of pathways and spread into narrow openings that must be traversed by potential prey. The most common carnivorous shrubs are possessed of thorns that tear into prey who have been wrestled, drawing their blood out like living hypodermic needles. Such bushes entangle prey in their branches, immobilizing them until they are completely drained of life. It takes multiple shrubs to immobilize kid-sized targets.

Some particularly wicked nobles cultivate carnivorous bushes, using them as an extra level of security on their grounds. Some of these bushes are trimmed into elaborate topiaries and grown to dangerous sizes.

## Carnivorous Tree

**Grade:** 8th **Health:** 8 **Shape:** Plant
**Stature:** Elephant **Speed:** —
**Protection:** 10 (bark)
**Wounds:** 8 (branches and roots)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool — | Pluck 5th | Imagination — |
| Luck 1st | Muscle 10th | |
| Hide 3rd | Seek 3rd | Scamper — |
| Scrap 8th | Throw — | |

Carnivorous trees are the largest of the carnivorous plants. Only a few of these malevolent trees exist outside the borders of the Great and Awful Forest, as they are a constant target for benevolent wood cutters. The pale hardwood of carnivorous trees is highly prized due to its strength and exoticism. It takes stains very well, although the rings and whirls that appear are sometimes quite disturbing.

The most common carnivorous trees have gray bark and a multitude of serrated, blood-red leaves. The trunks and branches of these specimens feature a number of cuts, splits, and fissures which penetrate deep into the tree. Sap the color of pus leaks from these openings, coating the tree in a sickening layer of slime. One especially large crease opens midway along the tree's trunk: its mouth. The remains of recent victims (fur, bits of clothing, patches of torn flesh, etc.) stick to the sap around the tree's maw, a silent warning to others that they should keep their distance.

**Fruit:** Many carnivorous trees temp victims with their apple- or pear-shaped fruit. Despite the nauseating source of such fruit, the flesh looks tender and juicy, and smells intoxicatingly sweet, requiring a 5th-grade Pluck test to resist temptation. Any who fail are driven to attempt to pluck one of the fruit, which brings them within reach of the tree's attacks.

**Swallow Whole:** A carnivorous tree that successfully wrestles an adult-sized or smaller victim can spend a turn to pull him toward its gaping mouth, which gnashes wildly in a horrible display of appetite. If it successfully wrestles the victim the next turn, it swallows him whole (see page 105).

## Carnivorous Vine

**Grade:** 5th **Health:** 5 **Shape:** Plant
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** — **Protection:** 5
**Wounds:** 5

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool — | Pluck 2nd | Imagination — |
| Luck 1st | Muscle 6th | |
| Hide 6th | Seek 6th | Scamper — |
| Scrap 6th | Throw — | |

Though the Grimm Lands' carnivorous vines do not feast directly upon the flesh of animals and children, they do use victims in order to propagate and spread. These vines are encountered as plant colonies with dark purple leaves, red-orange stems, and shiny black seed pods. They climb and cling to stone, trees, fences, and walls, and grow relatively quickly.

When potential victims come within range, the vine lashes out with one or more of its pod-bearing stems. Victims who are struck can be injected with a number of spores, which are not always obvious to the casual observer. If left within the wound, the spores eventually sprout new vines, which emerge from the wound site and slowly devour the victim from the inside out.

**Implant Spore:** Each time a target suffers wounds from a carnivorous vine, he must succeed at a 6th-grade Luck test. If he fails, 1d6 spores have found their way into the wound. Noticing the spores requires a 6th-grade Seek or 4-H test, which can only be performed by someone attempting to treat the wound, provide first aid, and so on. Removing a spore requires a 6th-grade 4-H test; failure by 3 or more grades not only means that the spore remains, it also causes the subject to suffer a wound.

If one or more spores are left inside the wound, they begin to sprout and grow within one week. For each sprouted spore that emerges from the old wound, the victim suffers one incurable wound per week. Should the victim die, a new colony of carnivorous vines will emerge from his body and begin to climb the nearest solid object. Sprouts can be removed in the same manner as spores, with the same consequences for failure but with an 8th-grade difficulty.

## Cleaners

**Grade:** 3rd **Health:** 3 **Shape:** Animal
**Stature:** Kid **Speed:** Slow
**Protection:** 5 (exoskeleton)
**Wounds:** 5 (serrated feet)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 2nd | Pluck 3rd | Imagination — |
| Luck 1st | Muscle 3rd | |
| Hide 3rd | Seek 5th | Scamper 4th |
| Scrap 4th | Throw 1st | |
| 4-H 1st | Boy Scouts 2nd | Home Ec 4th |
| Juvie 4th | | |

This beast's segmented body is covered by a multitude of tiny legs, and it spirals obscenely as it trundles along. Where one would expect to see a bug-like head, one instead finds the grotesque and distorted visages of nearly a school-aged child topped with a pair of creepy antennae. Its childish mouth, with wide lips twisted into expressions of rage and hatred, slavers constantly as it gnashes.

The cleaners are the macabre result of gnomish ingenuity. In order to keep the nether regions of the Beanstalk nice and clean, the gnomes crossbred unruly children with a species of giant insect in order to create the ultimate cleaning machines.

Roaming the darkest tunnels of the Beanstalk in packs of up to a dozen, the cleaners constantly chitter and curse as they devour all that happens to be in their path. They are perpetually wicked and unpleasant little monsters, given that they are created from wayward children. The cleaners despise good children most of all, because such kids will never be consigned to a fate even remotely as bad as their own.

**Tunnel Crawlers:** Cleaners are able to climb on walls and ceilings with no trouble at all, and they are not slowed down by vertical surfaces. Likewise, as they live in perpetual darkness, they are adept at using their sensitive antennae to sense things as clearly as if it were daylight.

**Ugly:** The cleaners are one of the most terrifying sights to be seen in the Beanstalk. The sounds of their gnashing jaws, shrieking voices, and countless legs provide a fitting symphony to their repulsiveness. Anyone seeing a cleaner must succeed at a 4th-grade Pluck check or grow nauseous, suffering a –1 disadvantage on all tests for the scene.

***Soft Spot:*** Despite their poor attitudes and despicable natures, the cleaners are unable to eat anyone who voluntarily offers himself up as food.

# Dwarfs

**Grade:** 5th **Health:** 5 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Kid **Speed:** Slow
**Protection:** 5 (thick skin)
**Wounds:** 4 or hammer (medium hand weapon)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 3rd | Pluck 6th | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 2nd | Muscle 5th | |
| Hide 4th | Seek 4th | Scamper 3rd |
| Scrap 6th | Throw 2nd | |
| Boy Scouts 3rd | Industrial Arts 7th | |

Although they stand only three or four feet in height, dwarfs are stocky and weigh as much as or more than average-sized human males. All dwarfs grow their thick beards long and prefer to wear utilitarian clothing that can stand up to the rigors of toil and constant work. Their stubby fingers are nonetheless quite dexterous, and their hands are calloused from years of labor in the mines and smithies of their mountain homes.

Dwarfs live within carefully-carved caverns and mines beneath the World's Edge Mountains. They prefer to occupy themselves with endless work, be it mining precious metals and gems or turning said metals and gems into beautiful works of art. Though they are cautiously friendly towards outsiders, dwarfs are secretive to a fault and rarely allow anyone to know their innermost thoughts and desires.

Of dwarf women, little is to be said. This is because there are no dwarf women. The Dwarfs are a race made up entirely of males, and they require willing females of other races to help keep their culture alive. Once a suitable female is found, she is taken to the clan and betrothed to it as a whole. Not every woman finds this arrangement to her liking, but those that do gain the love and affection of an entire community.

***Soft Spot:*** Dwarfs are fond of beautiful things, from gems and finely-crafted jewelry to lovely females of almost any species. If properly exploited, this attraction to beautiful things makes dwarfs easy to manipulate. Anyone attempting to coerce a dwarf with the prospect of owning a beautiful object gains a +1 advantage on Cool tests against the dwarf. If the reward is offered by a beautiful female of any race, the advantage increases to +2; if the reward *is* a beautiful female of any race, there's virtually nothing the dwarf won't do.

# Fairies

**Grade:** 5th **Health:** 5 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Mouse **Speed:** Fast, fast (flying)
**Protection:** 1
**Wounds:** 1 or thorn dagger (light hand weapon)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 6th | Pluck 4th | Imagination 10th |
| Luck 8th | Muscle 2nd | |
| Hide 10th | Seek 6th | Scamper 8th |
| Scrap 3rd | Throw 3rd | |
| 4-H 4th | Boy Scouts 4th | Juvie 4th |

Fairies are small and magical creatures of the natural realm. They are often, though not always, small in stature, possessed of gossamer wings, and fair to look at. Not all fairies are the same, however, and to cast them all into the same mold would do them a great disservice, indeed.

Fairies, or the "wee folk" as they have been called for centuries, are a collective of magical creatures that have made their final homes in the Grimm Lands. Once common in the Real World, fairies found it difficult to survive as science and knowledge gained a solid foothold in their old homelands. Though commonly considered to be good spirits, fairies are not always so benevolent. They are renowned for their quick tempers and fickle moods, and a slighted fairy is a force to be reckoned with, no matter what her size.

The fairies detailed here are considered to be affiliated with the Seelie Court. Though inherently mischievous, Seelie fairies are not known to be inherently wicked, unlike those of the Unseelie Court (see "Goblins," page 196).

**Change Shape:** Fairies possess the ability to change their shape at will. They can look like anything they wish to, from a mouse to a piece of wood to a handful of pebbles. Fairies can also grow or shrink themselves, becoming as small as a seed or as large as a horse.

***Soft Spot:*** Fairies hate things made of cold-wrought iron. Fairies that see such things must make 4th-grade Pluck tests or run in fear; even those who succeed suffer a –1 disadvantage on all tests for the scene. Further, weapons made of cold-wrought iron inflict +1 wound against fairies.

## Brownie

Fairies that inhabit human homes and aid in chores around the house are referred to as brownies. In exchange for a brownie's services, housekeepers are expected to leave out offerings of milk, food, and beer. Brownies prefer to think of these offerings as gifts, not payment, and any human that insists that such items are a form of compensation for the brownie's labors will soon find that the brownies have abandoned his home due to the insult.

Brownies rarely appear to their human cohabitants, preferring to remain aloof and only interacting as much as they must. When seen, they appear to be small men and women dressed in simple

peasant garb. They only perform their tasks at night. If caught in the act unawares, they will immediately cease their activities and disappear until the following evening. In situations where a group of brownies has lived with the same family for generations, they can be quite loyal, going so far as to violently resist intruders.

Brownies have the same traits as fairies, but cannot fly, have –2 grades in Cool and Imagination, +2 grades in 4-H and Pluck, and +4 grades in Home Ec and Industrial Arts.

**Invisible:** Brownies may become invisible whenever they wish, during which time an 8th-grade Imagination test is required to spot them.

## Changeling

When fairies kidnap human infants, they leave a changeling behind in its place. The reasons that fairies might abduct human children are not always clear. The common belief is that fairies are unable to have children of their own, and so they occasionally yearn to become parents of human offspring. It has also been known to happen that particularly haughty fairies prefer human servants, and so they abduct them as infants so that they can be acclimatized to life with the fay later on.

Changelings start out looking much like the children that they were left to replace. As time wears on, though, they become more and more troublesome, requiring vast quantities of food and attention in order to survive. If their needs are not met, they can be noisome and destructive. When a family can no longer tolerate the presence of a changeling, the creature disappears or appears to die.

Changelings have the same traits as fairies, but are cat-sized, can fly without wings, have –4 grades in Cool, and have +2 grades in Juvie and Scrap.

## Pixie

Pixies are diminutive fairies with pointed ears, fine features, and cone-shaped hats. They prefer to wear clothing made from leaves or nothing at all. Their place in fairy society is to care for the wilds and woodland creatures, keeping a careful watch on all that transpires within the natural realm. They are easily bored with these duties, however, and often go amongst human settlements at night in order to cause harmless mischief.

Pranks that are often attributed to pixies are rarely dangerous, but are nonetheless annoying. Tying knots into a sleeping person's hair is one such joke, as is turning a person's entire wardrobe inside-out. Some pixies delight in watering down beer and spirits, turning wine into vinegar, or replacing a hen's eggs with perfectly round stones. In order to appease pixies, rural folk leave out saucers of milk or plates of sweets.

Pixies have the same traits as fairies, but have –1 grade in Muscle and Scrap, +2 grades in Cool, Scamper, and Throw, and +4 grades in 4-H and Boy Scouts. They also carry tiny bows (medium ranged weapons).

## Sylph

Sylphs are fairies with a special affinity for air and wind. They are often seen as small, thin, blue-skinned women with butterfly wings and sheer clothing. In the hierarchy of the fay, sylphs are charged with keeping watch. As such, they are responsible for warning other fairies of impending disasters, such as fires and floods.

Given their penchant for wind and air, sylphs are excellent musicians and vocalists. Oftentimes, their enchanting melodies can lure unsuspecting men to their deaths. Though sylphs do not intend to harm anyone, they prefer to be left alone to their music. In order to maintain their privacy while playing, they choose locations that are difficult or dangerous for anyone to access. Individuals drawn to the haunting music of sylphs have been known to fall to their deaths, drown, or find themselves hopelessly lost in inhospitable country.

Sylphs have the same traits as fairies, but are kid-sized, have +2 grades in Cool and Muscle, and have +4 grades in Country Club and Seek.

**Enchanting Song:** Sylphs are excellent musicians whose songs possess an eerie, enchanting quality to both human men and dwarfs. Should a person-shaped male hear a sylph's song, he must succeed on a 5th-grade Pluck test or be compelled to find the source of the music. The enchantment ends when the music stops, or if the enchanted individual is hurt.

**Wind Control:** Being fairies of the air, sylphs have an amazing control over the wind and air. They can cause the wind to blow harder or to stop altogether. When they combine their abilities together, they can conjure gale-force winds and mighty storms.

# Fetch

**Grade:** 9th **Health:** 9 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Fast
**Protection:** 6 (doughy skin)
**Wounds:** 5

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 8th | Pluck 3rd | Imagination 10th |
| Luck 4th | Muscle 2nd | |
| Hide 10th | Seek 4th | Scamper 4th |
| Scrap 4th | Throw 4th | |
| Juvie 8th | | |

What begins as a white, almost featureless doll, with a doughy face and two featureless black eyes, soon becomes an identical twin of its chosen victim. Through contact most foul, often while its target restlessly sleeps, the fetch—or doppelganger, should you prefer—takes on the likeness and life essence of its prey, until one is slain and the other is indistinguishable from the dead.

The wisest of scholars fervently hope that fetches are as rare as diamonds. If not, then it is a stretch for one to trust his friends, much less himself, in a world where identity is a commodity to be stolen and subsequently

destroyed by formless and voracious monsters.

Fetches begin as little more than vaguely person-shaped lumps of clay-like substance, albeit with self-awareness and an uncanny ability to move without being seen. They choose victims at random, stalking them and marking the details of their lives: their voices, their mannerisms, their friends and companions. As their victims sleep, the fetches stand over them and steal their breath, their forms changing to resemble their prey with each parasitic inhalation.

After some days, the fetch's disguise is nearly complete. It reveals itself to its victim, a seeming mirror image, maddening in its perfection. The victim, exhausted and sickened by days of soul-theft and nightmares, rarely has the strength to resist this final manifestation. The fetch then embraces its chosen target, finally absorbing the last remaining pieces in an effort to complete the puzzle.

A victim so taken ceases to be, and is altogether replaced by the fetch. In its new guise, the creature seeks to experience life through the eyes of its victim. Though the disguise is complete and altogether perfect, the fetch cannot help but to express its own twisted personality. Friends and family note the changes and are disturbed by them. In time, the fetch's wickedness comes to the fore, no longer disguised behind a friendly mask. Once enough mischief has been caused, it sloughs off its stolen skin and goes in search of other prey.

**Absorb Body:** In order to fully assume the identity of its victim, a fetch must first absorb his body by inflicting wounds while wrestling. This can only be attempted against a victim who has a single (no more, no less) wound remaining. When absorbing such a victim, the fetch gains +4 grades to its Muscle test to wrestle.

**Assume Identity:** Fetches are masters of disguise that seek to steal the identities of their victims. Only one victim can be chosen at a time, and the fetch must make a significant investment of time and effort in order to complete its horrible transformation. Once a fetch has assumed a victim's identity and absorbed his remains, it is totally indistinguishable from its prey. This results in a +4 grade to the fetch's Cool tests to portray the victim in public. However, the fetch cannot help eventually revealing its cruelty: For each week that a fetch continues to masquerade as its victim, its advantages on Cool tests are reduced by 1, eventually becoming disadvantages.

The fetch also gains, for as long as it is impersonating the victim, grades in Study traits equal to half the victim's grades.

**Steal Breath:** Once it has chosen a victim, the fetch must steal his very soul. This is accomplished by sneaking into the victim's chambers while he sleeps and absorbing his essence in a process that is visually similar to inhalation. For every three consecutive nights spent partaking in such spiritual larceny, the victim's health is permanently reduced by one level.

***Soft Spot:*** Fetches can't abide yeast. Even the lightest touch inflicts a wound, and swallowing it (such as if a fetch ate a lump of unbaked bread dough) causes the fetch to explode in clumps of pasty dough.

# Flat Folk

The flat folk are those who were flattened by the fall of the giant beanstalk. Ashamed of their freakish appearance and terrified of even the slightest breeze, the flat folk remain in the Basement beneath the Beanstalk. The flat folk appear almost normal from the front and rear, if not a bit distorted and somewhat wider than normal. From the side, however, they are so thin as to be nearly invisible.

Although they are strange to look upon, the flat folk are gracious hosts who warmly welcome anyone into their midst. Their settlements are like comforting oases beneath the Beanstalk, and not a few children have found succor among them in times of trouble. That said, the flat folk are quite intolerant of rudeness. They do not take jibes or jokes kindly, especially when a would-be guest insults or makes fun of them because of their flatness. In such cases, the flat folk may attempt to flatten the offender so as to teach him a lesson about manners.

Flat folk have the same traits as common folk, guards, and so on, with the following special abilities.

**Flat:** Because of their flatness, the flat folk can squeeze through spaces that would otherwise be too tight. Such spaces can be no less than an inch wide or high, and must still be able to accommodate the flat person's inherent width. Flat folk can also turn sideways in order to seemingly vanish. When doing this, a flat person gains +8 grades to Hide tests against the people he is hiding from, but suffers a –4 disadvantage on Hide tests against people perpendicular to them.

***Soft Spot:*** The flat folk suffer penalties when caught in anything from a slight breeze (–1 to non-Core trait tests and a one level speed reduction) to a strong gust (–4 and zero speed). Stronger winds completely blow them away, unless they hang onto something. Additionally, flat folk are terrified of paperclips. If a paperclip is brandished at a flat folk, he must one or more flat folk, they must succeed at a 5th Grade level Pluck test or flee.

# Giant Bugs

In the deep darks of the forests, and in the areas surrounding the Beanstalk, gigantic insects roam in search of food. Their massive jaws gnash, their grasping pincers grope, and their whip-like antennae taste the air hungrily.

Giant bugs swarm in the nightmares of countless children, and the Grimm Lands have become home to several different types. They tend to congregate in the lands nearest to the Beanstalk and in the darkest portions of the Great and Awful Forest. From swarming hives of giant bees to armies of dog-sized ants, their variety is as unlimited as the insect world.

***Soft Spot:*** Giant insects have the same likes and dislikes as their smaller cousins, but to register with them, thing in question (whether it's raindrops for an ant, honey for a bee, or light for a cockroach) must be appropriately giant in scale.

## Ant

**Grade:** 3rd **Health:** 3 **Shape:** Bug
**Stature:** Dog **Speed:** Fast
**Protection:** 5 (carapace) **Wounds:** 5 (mandibles)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool — | Pluck 6th | Imagination — |
| Luck 1st | Muscle 6th | |
| Hide 2nd | Seek 2nd | Scamper 4th |
| Scrap 5th | Throw — | |

Industrial Arts 8th (hives only)

If left alone, giant ants are rarely a threat. Nevertheless, they are extremely territorial, and their daily search for food can lead them into contact with all manner of folk. Rarely can a single peasant farm sustain an entire colony of these creatures for long, as they carry all edible fare to their subterranean nests: crops, livestock, and unlucky farmers are all taken away, whether whole or in pieces.

Giant ants are most often black or red in color. Ants of different colors are in constant competition with one another, and they wage terrible wars against their foes in an attempt to conquer their nests and enslave their enemies.

**Vicious Jaws:** Ants, especially those in the role of soldiers for their nest, are equipped with a set of mighty, serrated jaws. For every grade beyond the first by which a giant ant succeeds at a Scrap test, it inflicts an additional wound.

## Bee

**Grade:** 2nd **Health:** 2 **Shape:** Bug
**Stature:** Cat **Speed:** Fast, fast (flying)
**Protection:** 3 **Wounds:** 5 (stinger)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool — | Pluck 3rd | Imagination — |
| Luck 3rd | Muscle 2nd | |
| Hide 3rd | Seek 5th | Scamper 2nd |
| Scrap 3rd | Throw — | |

Industrial Arts 8th (hives only)

Giant bees the size of mailboxes swarm industriously in the flower fields of the Grimm Lands. Their buzzing can be felt in one's bones as they hover from flower to flower, their weight causing the stems of the plants to bend and occasionally break. Like giant ants, the giant bees of the Grimm Lands are not particularly aggressive unless they are disturbed. They will defend their hives to the death, and only foolish children venture close to them in search of honey.

Legends say that the giant bees were originally kept by the giant that was defeated by Jack. Not only did the giant crave the flesh of men, but he had a sweet tooth that only the cloying flavor of honey could satisfy. Somehow, in the years following the giant's death, some of the bees have managed to find their way down, down, down to the lands below, where they have thrived. Few men have tried to tame them, for their stings can kill, but their honey is as valuable as the gold that Jack stole from the ill-fated giant.

**Sting:** If a giant bee inflicts a wound, the victim must make a 4th-grade Luck test. If he fails, the stinger is embedded in the wound. This kills the bee, but inflicts an additional 1d6 wounds to the victim, which can be halved with a 4th-grade Muscle test.

## Cockroach

**Grade:** 6th **Health:** 6 **Shape:** Bug
**Stature:** Moose **Speed:** Slow
**Protection:** 7 (carapace)
**Wounds:** 7 (large mouth parts)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool — | Pluck 3rd | Imagination — |
| Luck 6th | Muscle 7th | |
| Hide 7th | Seek 6th | Scamper 8th |
| Scrap 6th | Throw — | |

The largest of the Grimm Lands' giant bugs are the roaches that hide in the shadows beneath the fallen Beanstalk. Nearly the size of small cars, these scavengers are content to feast upon the refuse left by the flat folk. When the trash and offal has been consumed, however, their appetites become more craven, and they seek to squelch their hungers with the flesh of the living, be they two-dimensional or three.

Giant cockroaches are covered in thick carapaces that shine sickly when touched by light. Their beady eyes betray no intellect, only hunger. They flee from illumination of any kind, only braving it if their appetite drives them to do so.

**Dark Dwellers:** Cockroaches operate just fine in the darkness. However, they hate bright light, and must make Pluck tests or flee from anything from a flashlight (2nd grade) to blinding sunlight (6th grade). Even those that succeed suffer a –2 disadvantage on all Playground tests while the light is present.

## Cricket

**Grade:** 4th **Health:** 4 **Shape:** Bug
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Average **Protection:** 5
**Wounds:** 5 (mouth parts)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool — | Pluck 2nd | Imagination — |
| Luck 3rd | Muscle 5th | |
| Hide 5th | Seek 3rd | Scamper 7th |
| Scrap 4th | Throw — | |

Giant crickets, also called cave crickets, are massive bloated insects. Their pale, striped bodies grow up to four feet in length, and their bulbous heads feature white, sightless eyes. Their backs are hunched and crooked-looking, and their legs sport formidable-looking spikes. Their rear legs are long and powerful, while the antennae that sprout from their heads are delicate and feathery in appearance.

Cave crickets are the chosen steeds of the flat folk; the adult-sized bugs have no problem carrying the nearly weightless people. Native to the cavernous chambers beneath the Beanstalk, cave crickets spend much of their time in the wild searching for food. Such fare usually

consists of rotting vegetation, although someone living who is covered in enough refuse might seem a tasty treat.

Despite their monstrous appearance, cave crickets are quite gentle. They are terribly loyal when treated well, and will fight to the death to protect their friends and masters.

**Dark Dwellers:** Cave crickets use their delicate antennae to navigate in the dark as if it were fully lit. However, they are afraid of light, and must make Pluck tests or flee from anything from a flashlight (2nd grade) to blinding sunlight (6th grade). If a cave cricket has a rider, he may make a 4-H test in place of the cricket's Pluck test. Even those that succeed suffer a –2 disadvantage on all Playground tests while the light is present.

**Jumper:** When a cave cricket spends its turn jumping, it travels twice as far in a single leap as it would normally travel by walking. Cave crickets are one of the only creatures in the Grimm Lands that are capable of leaping across the Great Chasm.

**Reliable Steed:** Cave crickets are renowned for their reputation as reliable and steady mounts. Anyone using a cave cricket as a mount need never fear falling from the saddle.

## Spider

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Grade:** 7th | **Health:** 7 | **Shape:** Bug |
| **Stature:** Adult | **Speed:** Fast | **Protection:** 5 |
| **Wounds:** 7 (mandibles) | | |
| Cool — | Pluck 2nd | Imagination — |
| Luck 3rd | Muscle 7th | |
| Hide 6th | Seek 6th | Scamper 7th |
| Scrap 8th | Throw 5th | |
| Home Ec 8th (weaving webs only) | | |
| Industrial Arts 8th (weaving webs only) | | |

The giant spiders of the Great and Awful Forest are perhaps the most frightening of all of the Grimm Lands' giant bugs. They weave nigh-invisible webs between the trees, snaring passing animals and feasting on their blood. Few creatures are safe from the webs, which have been known to entangle fully grown bears on occasion.

Though they remain hidden much of the time, patiently waiting for their prey, the giant spiders are a terrible sight to behold once they reveal themselves. Their bulbous bodies are greenish-black, and their eight blood-colored eyes are unblinking and pitiless. Short bristly hairs, sharp as porcupine quills, sprout from their legs and backs. Although no sounds emerge from their mouths, the spiders sometimes pluck the strands of their webs, producing a series of eerie, harp-like notes.

**Poisonous Bite:** If the spider inflicts a wound, the victim must make a 6th-grade Muscle test. If the target fails, he is paralyzed for a number of hours equal to the number of grades by which he failed.

**Webs:** The webs of giant spiders are thin and hard to see, especially in dark conditions, requiring a 6th-grade Seek test to spot. They are also incredibly sticky: Those who touch them are considered wrestled by an adult-sized creature with Muscle 8th grade. Finally, spiders can snare targets with their webs by making Throw attacks with a range of a cricket's hop. Targets that are hit are considered to be wrestling, as above.

## Giants

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Grade:** 10th | **Health:** 10 | **Shape:** Person |
| **Stature:** Whale | **Speed:** Slow | **Protection:** 8 |
| **Wounds:** 9 (improvised weapon) | | |
| Cool 4th | Pluck 10th | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 1st | Muscle 12th | |
| Hide 1st | Seek 3rd | Scamper 6th |
| Scrap 10th | Throw 8th | |
| 4-H 3rd | Boy Scouts 2nd | Country Club 2nd |
| Home Ec 3rd | | |

Towering above all but the tallest of hills, giants are forces of nature that are best weathered, if not avoided completely. Rarely do they take notice of the ant-like men who inhabit the Grimm Lands, for they are more concerned with more visceral matters: golf, bowling, and the occasional (and quite literal) house-sitting.

On average, giants are an impressive fifty feet in height, though some of the most imposing specimens are ten times that size. They appear to be massive humans, though their slack jaws and glazed expressions reveal little more than a child's intelligence. None too fond of baths or basic hygiene, giants are often filthy and beset by parasites that are too small for them to take much notice of. They travel in small groups, laughing and guffawing boorishly as they go.

Luckily for many innocent (and, by comparison, tiny) folk, giants rarely leave their homes in the World's End Mountains. When they do, it is to cause trouble, for destruction is a giant's stock in trade. They find pleasure in stomping anything smaller than they are, much as a schoolboy enjoys pouring boiling water on an anthill. They aren't specifically malicious in their intentions, though the giants who are tend to be the worst of the lot.

Most giants are far from bright. They are simple beings with basic desires, ample prejudices, and very little self-control. They act on impulse, seeking to satisfy the desire of the moment with little or no thought to the consequences of their actions. They feel no guilt, unless it is for a missed opportunity to crush a peasant's wagon or to hurl a cow into a neighboring kingdom. When they aren't creating swathes of destruction across the land, giants enjoy sleeping, eating, or foraging. They are also fond of games such as bowling and golf, though the rules they follow for either game are ad hoc and largely a product of their immediate environment.

***Soft Spot:*** Giants have no particular soft spot other than their size. They are so large, for instance, that they can by stymied by simply fleeing somewhere that they can't reach. They also tend to sleep very soundly, as what would seem like a very large

noise to us, rousing us from slumber, is a very small noise to them.

## Gnome

**Grade:** 4th **Health:** 4 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Dog **Speed:** Slow **Protection:** 3
**Wounds:** 4 (light weapon)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 5th | Pluck 5th | Imagination 4th |
| Luck 4th | Muscle 3rd | |
| Hide 6th | Seek 4th | Scamper 4th |
| Scrap 2nd | Throw 4th | |
| 4-H 5th | Book Learning 6th | |
| Boy Scouts 5th | Country Club 3rd | Gaming 6th |
| Home Ec 5th | Indust Arts 5th | Juvie 6th |

Gnomes appear as small old men with tufts of crazed hair and sometimes pointed, well-groomed beards. They dress in brightly-colored suits, and prefer to accessorize with matching caps and suspenders. They are quick to smile, and their mirth is contagious, but none can say for certain what a gnome is truly thinking behind his big nose and sly grin.

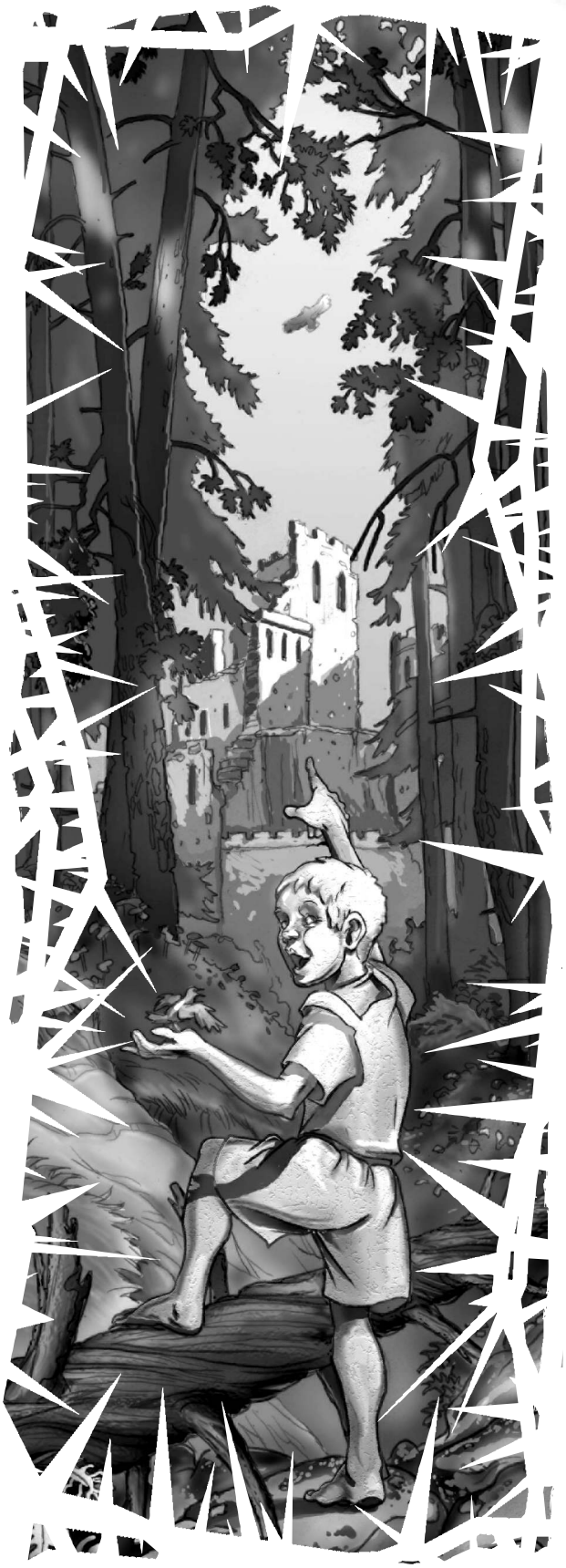
The three most famous gnomes in the Grimm Lands, the brothers who carved out the Beanstalk, are not the only gnomes to be found. Other gnomes are seldom seen, though, and rarely do they interact with anyone but the animals and plants of the wilds.

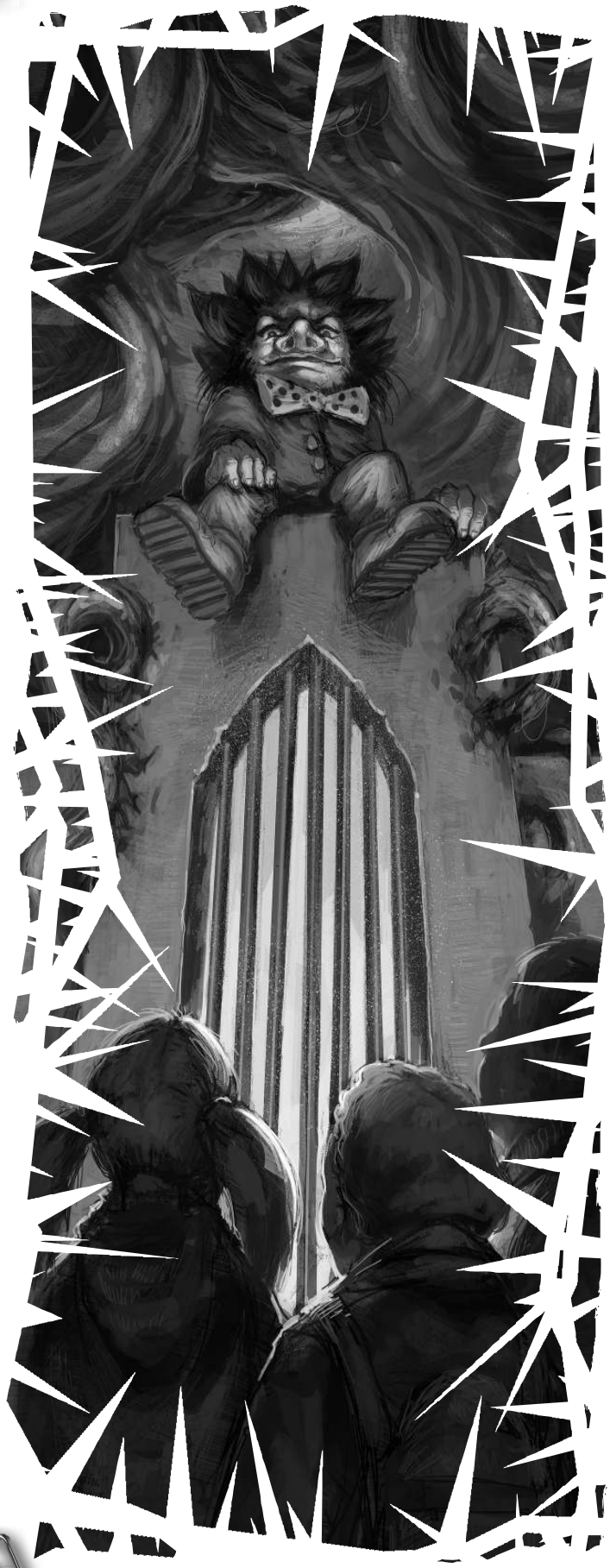
By and large, gnomes are content to live carefree lives away from the concerns of humanity. Occasionally, a gnome takes a particular human commoner under his wing, acting as a guardian angel of sorts. By comparison, some gnomes also take issue with a human's behavior, and seek to cause him all manner of trouble in return. In either case, gnomes act in secret, rarely revealing themselves unless it furthers their goals.

Gnomes are consummate gardeners, and they love all manner of growing things. They are fair to the animals of their lands, and can often be found in the company of woodchucks, voles, and songbirds. Those gnomes who turn their minds to business find that they are remarkably shrewd and adept in matters of profit, as has been demonstrated by the Beanstalk's success, and not a few have followed the example set by the three brothers.

**Vanish:** Gnomes can blend into their surroundings. As long as a gnome does nothing but stand still or move during his turn, he gains a +4 advantage on Hide tests.

***Soft Spot:*** A gnome's suspenders are his greatest weakness. Should a gnome's suspenders be snapped (possible by successfully wrestling him), he erupts into a cloud of purple mist. This is merely a temporary inconvenience, as the gnome will reform again in three days. Gnomes who are dispatched in this way are not at all appreciative, and go out of their way to inconvenience the party who was responsible for the snapping.





## Goblins

**Grade:** 4th **Health:** 4 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Kid **Speed:** Fast
**Protection:** 4 (warty skin)
**Wounds:** 4 (light weapon)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 4th | Pluck 6th | Imagination 5th |
| Luck 7th | Muscle 4th | |
| Hide 6th | Seek 6th | Scamper 6th |
| Scrap 5th | Throw 6th | |
| Boy Scouts 2nd | Indust Arts 3rd | Juvie 6th |

Goblins are wickedness and spite made flesh. They are fairies that have either been corrupted by evil or were created from the leavings of evil itself. They are, to an individual, ugly to behold, though they may certainly appear in fair guises so as to deceive their victims.

Not only do goblins gain great enjoyment from the depredations that they enact, but these acts also cause their individual status to rise amongst their own kind. They need no excuse to vent their wrath upon others.

As fairies are identified with the Seelie Court, Goblins are identified with the Unseelie Court. Where the Seelie are embodiments of light and warmth, the Unseelie are dark and cold.

***Soft Spot:*** Goblins hate things made of cold-wrought iron. Goblins that see such things must make 4th-grade Pluck tests or run in fear; even those who succeed suffer a –1 disadvantage on all tests for the scene. Further, weapons made cold-wrought iron inflict +1 wound against goblins.

## Broker

Even the goblins have their con men, and those known as brokers are quintessential con artists. They exist for no other reason than to gain something for nothing, by hook or by crook. The more they can get away with, the better they like it, and the deals that they make with unsuspecting humans are always designed with the broker's ultimate goal in mind.

Some brokers have actual magic abilities, with spells taken from the artisan, seer, and witch list. Others have no powers but that of illusion, allowing them to trick a person into thinking that they can spin straw into gold or something of the kind, and they bargain this perceived power for their victim's services or property. Brokers either intend to trick their victims or get them to sell something priceless, like true love or a firstborn child, for something as banal as material wealth.

Brokers appear as small men and women with hunched backs, homely faces, and beady yellow eyes. They dress in old finery which is need of some repair, and

many of them carry walking sticks, canes, or wooden staves.

Brokers have traits similar to goblins, but have +4 grades in Cool, –2 grades in Muscle and Scrap, and from 2nd to 10th grade in Gaming. Brokers are 4th-grade foes.

**Your Wish Is My Command:** Brokers either know several spells from the artisan, seer, and witch list, or they have the absolute power of illusion. Those with the latter power can create convincing illusions based on the needs and desires of their victims. Should a victim want vast wealth, a broker can easily fabricate a bag of gold coins or a handful of gemstones to placate him. The illusion lasts as long as the broker wishes it to, and only the victim can see what the broker wants him to. To anyone else, the gems will appear as worthless stones, and the coins will be nothing more than pennies in an old dirty sock.

## Brute

Goblin brutes, sometimes known as ogres and trolls by superstitious folk, are the largest of the Unseelie. Although they are slow-witted, they possess an animal cunning that is akin to that of wolves. They are always looking for a fight, be it with friend or foe, and even the other goblins tread lightly around them.

Goblin brutes are larger than full-grown men, with thick and warty skins, large rheumy eyes, and coarse black hair. They dress in dingy overalls that are stained with all manner of unmentionable substances.

Brutes have traits similar to normal goblins, but are Moose-sized, have +3 grades in Muscle and Scrap, and have –3 grades in Cool, Imagination, Luck, Scamper, and Juvie. They tend to carry improvised weapons made from tree trunks or, occasionally, weapons stolen from adult humans. Brutes are 5th-grade foes.

## Redcap

Of all the goblins, redcaps are the most prone to wanton violence. Even when compared to the large and intimidating brutes, redcaps are more savage and bloodthirsty. They spend most of their time drinking and picking fights with one another until they grow bored enough to canvas the countryside for one or more suitable mortal victims. Once a victim is located, the redcaps descend upon him, tearing him to shreds with all the subtlety of a hurricane.

Redcaps are larger than the standard goblin, standing about as tall as a child. Their faces are twisted and ugly, and their mouths are framed with tiny sharp teeth. They wear gaudy clothes, stained with blood and bits of gore, and smell of rotting meat. In times past, they wore floppy felt caps that they dipped into the blood of their slain victims. These days, most redcaps prefer to wear bowler-style hats, which are also slathered with fresh blood as often as they can get it.

Redcaps have traits similar to those of goblins, but are kid-sized, have +3 grades in Scrap and Seek, and have –3 grades in Juvie, Hide, Luck, and Imagination. Redcaps alternate between using their teeth, their claws, their long and jagged toenails, and viciously barbed knives, the combination of which are considered heavy weapons. Redcaps are 6th-grade foes.

**Blood Frenzy:** Redcaps are driven into a rage by the sight, smell, and taste of blood. As soon as anyone involved in combat with redcaps is injured, including another redcap, all redcaps in the scene gain +2 grades on Muscle, Pluck, and Scrap tests, and they inflict +1 wound on successful attacks.

## Sneak

Goblins keep abreast of the world around them through a vast network of sneaky spies. These sneaks wander the lands looking for trouble, and report back to the Unseelie if a particular opportunity would benefit from the involvement of more goblins. Sneaks are also excellent thieves and assassins, with the best of them all rising to positions of fearful authority within goblin society.

When they are seen, sneaks are nothing much to look at. At half the size of a child, they are less than intimidating, but they are incredibly quick and agile on their feet. Sneaks are always smiling, but they keep their lips closed lest their gold teeth shine and give away their position. Black clothing is favored by sneaks, but they have a particular weakness for bright gems. They enjoy replacing their front teeth with gold ones; the gaudier the design, the better they like it.

Sneaks have traits similar to those of goblins, but have –2 grades in Cool, Pluck, and Scrap, and +3 grades in Imagination, Luck, Hide, Scamper, and Juvie.

**Shadow Leap:** A goblin sneak can move from shadow to shadow in much the same way as a frog leaps from lily pad to lily pad. The shadows need not be connected, but they must be within visual range of one another for the sneak to make the jump.

# Living Objects

From mops and brooms that clean of their own volition to flying needles and dancing dining room chairs, living objects abound in the Grimm Lands. Though they are oftentimes indistinguishable from their mundane counterparts, it is always wise to take a closer look before one tries to sit on a piece of furniture or use a tool, just in case it would take offense at being handled.

**Blend In:** Living versions of everyday items are rarely distinguishable as such, so long as they remain still and refrain from speaking. When in an environment where their presence would not normally be deemed unusual (a parlor for a living chair, or a kitchen for a living spoon), living objects gain +4 grades on Hide tests.

## Animated Broomstick

**Grade:** 4th **Health:** 4 **Shape:** Object
**Stature:** Kid **Speed:** Fast
**Protection:** 5 (wood)
**Wounds:** 5 (stick)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 3rd | Pluck 4th | Imagination 2nd |
| Luck 4th | Muscle 2nd | |
| Hide 6th | Seek 4th | Scamper 4th |
| Scrap 4th | Throw — | |
| Home Ec 6th | | |

The animated broomstick is a favorite companion of busy housekeepers. Consisting of a fine shaft of wood with a series of stiff bristles or straw attached to one end, broomsticks are used to sweep up dirt and dust, and can even be used to swat unwelcome intruders in a pinch. Animated versions of the standard broomstick can sweep all by themselves, should they be so inclined. Though not incredibly intelligent, as far as living objects go, animated broomsticks are hard-working and possess unending stamina. They never speak.

Animated mops and rakes have similar traits to animated broomsticks.

## Animated Flatware

**Grade:** 1st **Health:** 1 **Shape:** Object
**Stature:** Mouse **Speed:** Really Fast
**Protection:** 3 (metal)
**Wounds:** 1 (stabbing or smacking edge)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 3rd | Pluck 4th | Imagination 2nd |
| Luck 4th | Muscle 1st | |
| Hide 4th | Seek 2nd | Scamper 5th |
| Scrap 4th | Throw — | |
| Home Ec 6th | | |

Living flatware is ever so popular in the feasting halls of *Grimm*'s nobility. Examples of such items include spoons that stir themselves, knives that cut meat and butter bread to order, and forks that dance on command. Most such utensils are made of common metals and steel, though entire settings of silver and gold are not unheard of. When they speak, forks tend to be enthusiastic and absent-minded, knives aggressive and earnest, and spoons polite to the point of being obsequious.

## Animated Furniture

**Grade:** 4th **Health:** 4 **Shape:** Object
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Slow
**Protection:** 7 (wood)
**Wounds:** 6 (table legs, etc.)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 2nd | Pluck 6th | Imagination 2nd |
| Pluck 3rd | Muscle 3rd | |
| Hide 2nd | Seek 1st | Scamper 2nd |
| | Scrap 4th | Throw — |

Animated furniture includes large items like couches, beds, and tables, and is to animated flatware as large, friendly dogs are to servants, guards, and butlers. It makes strange creaking noises that sound for all the world like a dog barking or whining, and has a tendency to dance about when least convenient, such as when one is attempting to eat on an animated table or sit on an animated couch.

# People

The people of the Grimm Lands display all manners, moods, and means. Some are common folk, with simple clothing and spotty hygiene, but good hearts. Others claim to be nobility, with the education and wealth to prove it, but may have hearts as cold and dirty as a disheveled cottage.

## Common Folk

**Grade:** 3rd **Health:** 3 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Average **Protection:** 5
**Wounds:** 5

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 2nd | Pluck 2nd | Imagination 2nd |
| Luck 2nd | Muscle 2nd | |
| Hide 3rd | Seek 3rd | Scamper 3rd |
| Scrap 3rd | Throw 3rd | |
| 4-H 1st | Boy Scouts 1st | Home Ec 1st |
| Industrial Arts 1st | | |

The farms, villages, and militias of the Grimm Lands are, by and large, composed of the common folk. Common folk are just that: common. They rarely distinguish themselves, though a great many of *Grimm*'s heroes are descended from the common folk and their ilk. Outside of the occasional hero, common folk are simple people with simple needs. They prefer that their lives remain plain and monotonous, for the alternative is too frightening for them to entertain. They are obedient to their superiors (or to those they perceive as such), but they are also superstitious and prone to flights of fancy. Considering where they live, this is hardly surprising.

### Common Kid

Even the common folk of the Grimm Lands have children. Unlike their parents, the common children still retain some imagination and thirst for adventure. Still, they are all too aware of the dangers that pervade their homeland, and will only take risks if the rewards are correspondingly valuable. Common kids have the same traits as common folk, but are 2nd grade instead of 3rd grade, have 2 health instead of 3, and are kid-sized.

### Skilled Worker

Some of the Grimm Lands' adults have skills that elevate

them above the norm. Skilled workers have the same traits as common folk, but have up to four total additional grades in Study traits.

## Guards

The Grimm Lands' soldiery is drawn from the ranks of the common man. Typically, such folk are pressed into service during levies and the like, though some willingly choose the life of a professional soldier when faced with the monotonous existence of a farmhand or village ruffian. Unlike knights, who are trained from childhood in the ways of war, common soldiers and their ilk rarely receive more than cursory combat training with light armor and simple or easily manufactured arms. The more experienced and better-equipped the guard, the higher his grade level. However, no matter their grade levels, guards tend to be unlucky and unimaginative.

Guards have grades in Seek equal to their personal grade levels, but only perform at these base grade levels when their hats, helmets, or chainmail hoods are removed (which, of course, makes them vulnerable to attack by clever kids with good aim or sneaking skills).

### Guard (4th grade)

**Grade:** 4th **Health:** 4 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Average
**Protection:** 6 (bandit's armor)
**Wounds:** 6 (light weapon)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 2nd | Pluck 2nd | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 1st | Muscle 4th | |
| Hide 2nd | Seek 2nd | Scamper 2nd |
| Scrap 4th | Throw 2nd | |

### Guard (6th grade)

**Grade:** 6th **Health:** 6 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Average
**Protection:** 7 (mercenary's armor)
**Wounds:** 8 (medium weapon, two-handed)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 3rd | Pluck 3rd | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 1st | Muscle 6th | |
| Hide 2nd | Seek 2nd | Scamper 2nd |
| Scrap 6th | Throw 2nd | |

### Guard (8th grade)

**Grade:** 8th **Health:** 8 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Really Slow
**Protection:** 8 (sentry's armor, shield)
**Wounds:** 7 (medium weapon, one-handed)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 4th | Pluck 4th | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 1st | Muscle 8th | |
| Hide 2nd | Seek 2nd | Scamper 2nd |
| Scrap 8th | Throw 2nd | |

### Guard (10th grade)

**Grade:** 10th **Health:** 10 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Really Slow
**Protection:** 9 (knight's armor)
**Wounds:** 9 (heavy weapon)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 5th | Pluck 5th | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 1st | Muscle 10th | |
| Hide 2nd | Seek 2nd | Scamper 2nd |
| Scrap 10th | Throw 2nd | |

## Noble Folk

**Grade:** 3rd **Health:** 3 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Average **Protection:** 5
**Wounds:** 6 (light weapon)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 6th | Pluck 3rd | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 4th | Muscle 4th | |
| Hide 2nd | Seek 2nd | Scamper 3rd |
| Scrap 2nd | Throw 2nd | |
| Book Learning 1st | Country Club 6th | |

Noble folk are wealthy, as evidenced by their clothing, bearing, and health. They dress in finery which is only dreamt of by their lowly subjects. Their diets afford them more nutrition, so they are often taller and more physically fit than commoners.

The nobility is the aristocracy of the Grimm Lands. They make and enforce the laws, wage wars against their peers, and endeavor to improve their stations through force, political marriage, or honest trade. Most are born into their positions of power, having inherited their wealth and titles from one of their parents. A rare few began their lives as commoners and earned their positions through courageous acts. Regardless of the humility of their beginnings, nobles demand respect from their lessers, as is afforded to them by their titles. The rulers of the Grimm Lands are a varied lot. Some are as noble as their titles indicate, while others are vile and conniving creatures who crave little more than wealth and power. Regardless of their ultimate goals, each is well versed in the diplomatic intricacies of the royal court, and highly trained in the arts of dueling.

**Title:** A noble's title is an indication of his rank and social status within the society of the Grimm Lands. From humble knights to barons, princes, and kings, nobles are little more than wealthy commoners without their titles. Even a relatively impoverished prince holds more political sway than a wealthy count or duke. Not only does a noble's title distinguish him from his peers, it also allows him to adjudicate in legal matters and settle disputes between the common folk.

**Wealth:** Though not all nobles hold lands, even the poorest are far wealthier than the subjects that they oversee. So long as they are within their own realm, nobles can access their funds in order to pay for services or buy property. They can also liquidate their own assets in order to secure more coin, but this is often a lengthier process than merely reaching into their coinpurses.

### Knights

Knights are nobles who wage crusades in the name of their noble lords. They are responsible for keeping trained levies of soldiers at the ready, should their masters seek to muster them for war. In times of peace, they continue to hone their skills through intense training and by participating in tournaments. Each is sworn to a chivalrous code of conduct, though each knight adheres to it as his individual demeanor demands. Knights have the same traits as noble folk, but have +2 grades in Muscle, Scrap, and Pluck, and possess knight's armor, a medium hand weapon, and a shield.

**Chivalry:** A knight's code of honor prevents him from performing certain actions that might be deemed base or below his station. The code also requires that a knight defend the weak and bear arms in support of his sovereign. Though not all knights follow the chivalric code to the letter, the fact that they have sworn to uphold it is often enough to give them leverage in social situations. So long as a knight has not publicly violated his code of honor, he gains a +2 advantage on all Cool tests.

**Mounted Fighter:** Knights are trained to fight from horseback. A mounted knight gains a +1 grade to all Scrap tests, and his personal grade level is considered to be one level higher until he is unsaddled.

### Princesses

Beautiful princesses are a staple of fairy tales, and the Grimm Lands are home to a number of fair and noble maidens. Cloistered away from their brothers, princesses are rarely taught the intricacies of courtly life or the brutalities of single combat. Instead, they are taught etiquette, manners, and conversational skills. They often become little more than pawns to be used by their fathers for political gain, especially when an advantageous alliance can be forged through an arranged marriage. Princesses have the same traits as noble folk, but have –1 grade in Scrap, –2 grades in Muscle, and +2 grades in Imagination and Pluck.

**Beauty and Grace:** Princesses possess an ethereal quality that makes them appear more beautiful and graceful than ordinary folk. When associating with men, regardless of whether or not they are of noble stock, princesses gain +2 grades on Cool tests.

### Woodsmen

**Grade:** 4th **Health:** 4 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Average **Protection:** 5
**Wounds:** 6 (light weapon) or 5 (medium ranged weapon)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 3rd | Pluck 6th | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 2nd | Muscle 6th | |
| Hide 5th | Seek 6th | Scamper 5th |
| Scrap 4th | Throw 6th | |
| 4-H 2nd | Boy Scouts 6th | Industrial Arts 1st |

Faithful woodsmen are hunters, woodcutters, and trackers when they're not busy saving unfortunate children. Though such heroism is rare in the Grimm Lands, there are still examples of these brave souls to be found…and to be sure, there are examples of corrupt and evil fellows just like them. Either sort eschews civilized life, preferring instead to make their homes outside of villages and towns.

## Trolls

**Grade:** 6th **Health:** 6 **Shape:** Person(ish)
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Slow
**Protection:** 6 (tough skin)
**Wounds:** 7 (claws and teeth)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 3rd | Pluck 1st | Imagination 2nd |
| Luck 1st | Muscle 6th | |
| Hide 6th | Seek 4th | Scamper 5th |
| Scrap 7th | Throw 3rd | |
| Boy Scouts 3rd | Country Club 1st | |

Industrial Arts 8th (bridges only)

Trolls come in as many shapes and colors as there are nightmares to be had about them. Like many monsters in the Grimm Lands, they exist only because kids have believed in them, and bear the marks of the overactive imaginations of their unintending creators. Impossibly long and corkscrewed claws, fangs that jut at strange and inconvenient angles, and warty skin covered in blemishes and scabs are all par for the course. No wonder trolls are so eager to eat kids, if they're the ones to blame for being shaped like that!

Trolls are but one of the countless varieties of foul, almost-person-shaped creatures who haunt the Grimm Lands hoping to snack on unwary passers-by and, hopefully, children. They lurk beneath bridges, extracting tolls (a word which is possibly merely a bastardized version of "troll," being the only word that some trolls know) from those who pass overhead. If the passerby cannot pay, the troll may extract an oath (see page 103) from the traveler; this often involves bringing the traveler's child, younger sibling, or if the traveler himself is a child, his friends, to be handed over to the hungry creature.

They have some token level of Imagination because they spend much of their time daydreaming about what their next snack will look like. Additionally, some use the Boy Scouts trait to set snares on their bridges, and all are thoroughly versed in the structural design and repair of bridges—so much so that some rulers allow known trolls to remain beneath their kingdom's bridges. A few children devoured now and then is a small price to pay, they believe, for having valuable river crossings kept in good repair by their adopted owners.

**Bridge Bond:** Trolls are nothing without their toll bridges, and have developed both a bond and a dependence on them. While on or beneath its bridge, a bridge troll is fairly stealthy and dangerous, and even has some

social grace, as reflected in its traits above. The moment a troll steps off of its bridge or, if beneath it, out from under its shadow, it suffers a –3 disadvantage on all trait tests. Luring a troll away from its bridge is therefore one of the best ways to overcome it.

**Soothing Melodies:** Despite their often limited vocabulary, trolls are excellent hummers. While lying in wait beneath their bridges, they emit wondrous tunes just beneath audible hearing range. Those who approach the bridge and have second thoughts about crossing must make 3rd-grade Cool tests or be lulled into a false sense of security, and approach unconcerned. For some reason, cats can hear the humming and dislike it immensely.

# Major Characters

## Iconic Traits

Major characters have iconic Core traits, just like the kids. These appear in bold italic, like: ***Muscle 5th.***

## Beast

**Grade:** 8th **Health:** 8 **Shape:** Bestial
**Stature:** Moose **Speed:** Fast
**Protection:** 8 (tough skin)
**Wounds:** 8 (claws and teeth)

*The Beast is as big as a bear and every bit as hairy as one, but he wears a suit of impeccable tailoring with shiny, round buttons and a high-collared cloak. His face looks like that of a wild dog, with sharp fangs and a rough snout. With his claws he carefully holds a pair of shears, which he uses with surprising tenderness as he takes a clipping from the plant before him.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 7th | Pluck 7th | Imagination 4th |
| Luck 4th | ***Muscle 11th*** | |
| Hide 6th | Seek 6th | Scamper 8th |
| Scrap 10th | Throw 6th | |
| 4-H 7th | Book Learning 6th | |
| Boy Scouts 7th | Country Club 5th | Home Ec 7th |

Sometimes magic can wear off, and sometimes, so too can love. This was certainly the case for Beauty and the Beast. His return to refinement was a disappointment to Beauty, who had fallen in love with a wildly passionate animal of a man, not some pampered princeling with rules about etiquette and which fork to use for soup. And so, to regain her love, Beast took back his curse.

Now Beast lives a nearly completely animal existence, his only human interactions being with the sensual Beauty, whom he strokes lovingly, and the rare and lovely flowers of his garden, the scent of which soothes him. The rest of the time he prowls his labyrinth, tracking down the scents of anyone who has stolen flowers and killing them.

**You Wouldn't Like Me When I'm Beastly:** When Beast is enraged, by someone cutting his flowers for instance, he flies into an animalistic rage. While thus enraged, after he spends his turn making a successful Scrap attack, he may make another Scrap attack, albeit with a Scrap one grade lower. This continues until he fails at a Scrap attack or makes a Scrap attack at 1st grade. In this state he is completely irrational, and cannot be intimidated, reasoned with, or swayed, except via his soft spot.

***Soft Spot:*** Beast cannot perform violence in the midst of his flower garden, as the scent is overwhelmingly calming to him. Were someone to make a perfume from the scent, cover himself with flowers, and the like, he would not need to fear Beast, who indeed would be soothed by the character's presence (though Beauty might not take kindly to this development).

## Beauty

Beauty was always an independent, capable sort of girl. She has the stats of a woodsman with 8th grade in Cool and Gaming, and knows up to the 4th circle of enchanter spells (her method is her primal beauty).

## Big Bad Wolf

**Grade:** 7th **Health:** 7 **Shape:** Bestial
**Stature:** Moose **Speed:** Really Fast
**Protection:** 7 (tough skin)
**Wounds:** 8 (claws and teeth)

*Once upon a time the Big Bad Wolf was the scariest thing on four legs, or two when he felt like walking upright. He was the very personification of fear, the ancestral terror of things that howl in the night beyond the campfire-light's reach.*

*However, things have changed for Mr. B.B. Wolf, Esquire. Nowadays it seems like the only children he meets are the clever kind who know his tricks and see through his disguises, and his stomach is a lattice of scar tissue from all of the times his wriggling meals have been cut out of it. He won't stop chasing them, though. The truth is he's addicted to the taste of the Real World and its tenderest morsels especially. He can't help himself.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ***Cool 5th*** | Pluck 5th | Imagination 4th |
| Luck 5th | Muscle 10th | |
| Hide 7th | Seek 10th | Scamper 11th |
| Scrap 9th | Throw 6th | |

To the refined palette of the wolf, the fairy tale beings of the Grimm Lands taste like sickly confections, no matter how mundane and meaty they seem. Children

from the Real World, however, are succulent treats he can't get enough of.

He is surprisingly cowardly for such a capable combatant, and attempts disguises and tricks first, only drawing himself up to his full height and baring his yellow fangs when they fail. His typical tactic is to scatter a group—possibly by huffing and puffing—then swallow one of them whole. His hunger temporarily satiated, he is free to prey on the rest of the group in the ways he enjoys.

A smart child could prey on his desperation for food by using a variation on the Billy Goat Gruff gambit, promising to lead the wolf to other children in return for freedom.

**I'll Huff and I'll Puff:** If the Big Bad Wolf spends an entire turn inhaling, he can blow out a gust of air on his next turn that is strong enough to knock down houses (ones made of straw or wood, anyway) or blow children hundreds of feet through the air. When the Big Bad Wolf exhales, any children standing in front of him must make a 6th Grade Scamper test (with a +1 advantage if they spent the previous turn grabbing hold of something) or be blown away to separate locations of his choosing within an arrow's flight, taking a single wound upon landing.

**Leader of the Pack:** Although he hates to share his meals, the Big Bad Wolf sometimes runs with a pack of up to a dozen ordinary wolves. Use the statistics on page 186 to represent these wolves.

**My, What Big Teeth You Have:** By hunching over and putting on human clothes, hiding under a bedsheet, or something similar, the Big Bad Wolf can pass for something that resembles a person. Inhabitants of the Grimm Lands are fooled by this every time, but kids only have to make a 4th-grade Imagination tests to see right through it. While the Big Bad Wolf is a poor trickster, he is even worse at noticing when others see through his tricks. All a child needs to do is play along with whatever ridiculous disguise the Big Bad Wolf has adopted, and he can gain several turns of preparation before the game is up.

**Swallow Whole:** The Big Bad Wolf can swallow a child whole after spending two consecutive turns successfully wrestling him. A swallowed child is still alive, but is trapped in the dark and loses a wound every day as he is slowly digested, waiting for somebody to cut open the stomach and rescue him.

***Soft Spot:*** If the Big Bad Wolf can be tricked into swallowing whole something that is heavy or painful (such as a bag of stones covered in a cloak, a cactus in a t-shirt, or a kid-shaped piñata stuffed with knives), he either suffers wounds from it ignoring all protection, is considered to be wrestling with an adult-sized foe..

## Chris Barnum

**Grade:** 4th **Health:** 4 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Kid **Speed:** Average
**Protection:** 4 **Wounds:** 4 or improvised weapons

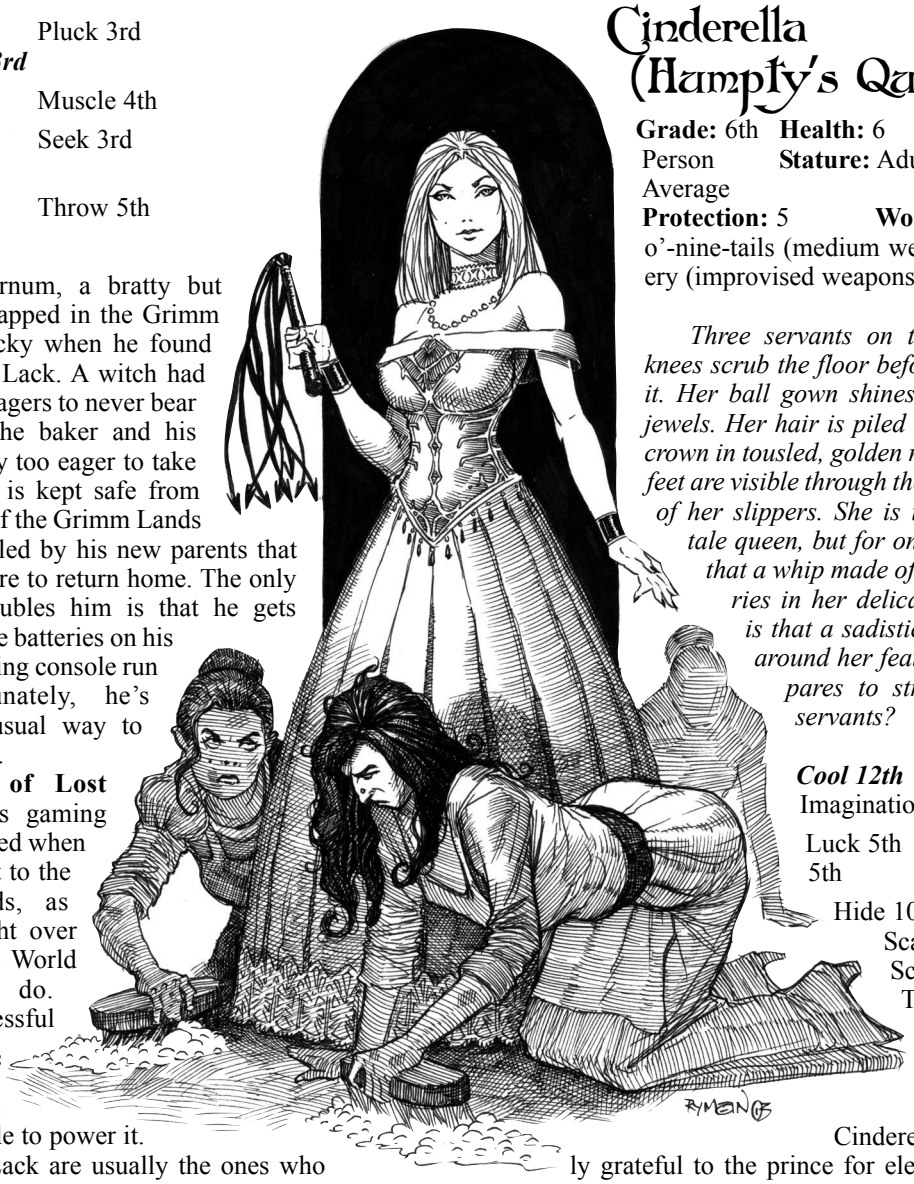
*It's been so long since you saw someone wearing a baseball cap you almost forgot what they look like, but look! Here's an ordinary boy wearing a Lakers cap. He's wearing jeans and a t-shirt, too. He's just like you.*

Cool 4th Pluck 3rd
***Imagination 3rd***
Luck 4th Muscle 4th
Hide 4th Seek 3rd
Scamper 4th
Scrap 4th Throw 5th
Gaming 7th

Chris Barnum, a bratty but normal boy trapped in the Grimm Lands, got lucky when he found the village of Lack. A witch had cursed the villagers to never bear children, so the baker and his wife were only too eager to take him in. Chris is kept safe from the monsters of the Grimm Lands and is so spoiled by his new parents that he has no desire to return home. The only thing that troubles him is that he gets bored when the batteries on his handheld gaming console run down. Fortunately, he's found an unusual way to recharge them.

**Console of Lost Souls:** Chris's gaming console changed when it was brought to the Grimm Lands, as objects brought over from the Real World sometimes do. With a successful Throw attack, he can suck people into his gaming console to power it. Travelers to Lack are usually the ones who suffer this, his parents willing to lure them into their house to keep their new child happy. Victims find themselves trapped in a maze while having bombs thrown at them, running from digital zombies, running through tubes in hedgehog form, and so on. They must pass Gaming tests every round, starting with a difficulty of 1st grade and increasing by one grade each round. Those who fail are knocked out. Video games give you multiple lives, though, so characters can be knocked out a total of three times before being permanently deleted. There are two ways out: either by having someone break the console from the outside, or by succeeding at 12th grade on one of the Gaming tests, which results in the player being freed and Chris being sucked into the game instead.

***Soft Spot:*** Chris can't stand the idea of anyone being better at video games than he is, and could be tricked to enter his own console to prove it.



# Cinderella (Humpty's Queen)

**Grade:** 6th **Health:** 6 **Shape:** Person **Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Average
**Protection:** 5 **Wounds:** 5 or cat-o'-nine-tails (medium weapon) or crockery (improvised weapons)

*Three servants on their hands and knees scrub the floor before she walks on it. Her ball gown shines with gems and jewels. Her hair is piled high around her crown in tousled, golden ringlets. Her tiny feet are visible through the twinkling glass of her slippers. She is the perfect fairy tale queen, but for one little detail. Is that a whip made of leather she carries in her delicate fingers? And is that a sadistic grin that plays around her features as she prepares to strike one of her servants?*

***Cool 12th*** Pluck 6th
Imagination 5th
Luck 5th Muscle 5th
Hide 10th Seek 7th
Scamper 4th
Scrap 4th
Throw 8th
Country Club 11th
Home Ec 10th

Cinderella was certainly grateful to the prince for elevating her from the tawdry position she was in, but not grateful enough to let the sleazy oaf actually *touch* her. Men are far too disgusting for someone like her to ever suffer their advances. This situation frustrated the prince so much that eventually he tried to force himself on his overly shy bride, and then, whoops, over the balcony he went.

With an entire angry kingdom out to get her for the murder of their charming prince, Cinderella went on the run. Her fairy godmother wasn't going to get her out of this one, but help came from an unexpected source.

Humpty Dumpty, in search of a bride to add the appearance of legitimacy to his rotten rule, asked for her hand. Cinderella accepted quickly; the egg-man was interested in her solely as a decoration and had no desire to take the relationship further, and he offered her a delightful dowry. First, he gave her sanctuary from her charge of murder, and second, he delivered her stepsisters to her bound as slaves, their hands shackled and their feet encased in heated metal shoes. It was the sweetest gift she had ever received.

As a queen, Cinderella is a haughty ice maiden and sadist who delights in the torment of her subjects. When the Rotten King demands impossible things of his people, she is there to goad him further in punishing them when they fail. She also pushes his military advances, wanting to see all of the Checkerboard Kingdoms—especially her former home—brought within range of the cat-o'-nine-tails she uses on anyone who displeases her. Most especially, she uses it on her three ugly slaves, who crawl around everywhere she goes, scrubbing every surface within her sight until it gleams to match her glass slippers.

**Cat-o'-Nine-Tails:** When Cinderella's leather scourge tastes pain, it grows hungry for more, lashing around with a life of its own. Every time that Cinderella wounds someone with her cat-o'-nine-tails, she gains a cumulative +1 advantage on Scrap attacks for the rest of the scene.

***Soft Spot:*** If Cinderella is touched in a kind way by a person-shaped male, she goes to pieces and will spend the rest of the scene curled up on the floor trying to wipe off the filthiness.

# Crooked Man

**Grade:** 3rd **Health:** 3 **Shape:** Person (from the front)
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Really Slow
**Protection:** 5
**Wounds:** 5 or crooked cane (light weapon)

*Muttering insults in a barely comprehensible Scottish accent, a paper-thin man who looks like he has been folded and spindled approaches you, hobbling on a cane and being followed by a cat every bit as crooked as he is.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 5th | ***Pluck 4th*** | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 1st | Muscle 6th | |
| Hide 7th | Seek 7th | Scamper 3rd |
| Scrap 5th | Throw 1st | |
| 4-H 4th | Book Learning 9th | |
| Home Ec 5th | Industrial Arts 5th | |

The Crooked Man was one of the flat people crushed by the Beanstalk, until he was exiled from their community for being too mean. While he was contemplating suicide at the Great Chasm, a cat jumped on his head and stretched him into his current crooked state. Feeling grateful and willing to try kindness instead of meanness, he now wanders the Beanstalk, though what seems like kindness to him seems plenty mean to everyone else.

He doesn't realize that the cat is a part of him, his own exiled better nature, trying to lead him away from bitterness and back towards hope. It's a journey that will take a long time.

**Cantankerous:** Usually, the Crooked Man is content to mutter under his breath, but when something really gets his goat he gets good and riled up, giving him a +1 advantage on all tests that involve making other people suffer.

**Crooked:** The Crooked Man can fold himself down until he is impossibly flat and narrow, allowing him to fit through any gap that an envelope would be able to slide through. If all he does is spend his turn evading, he is impossible to hit with Scrap or Throw attacks.

***Soft Spot:*** The Crooked Man can't abide anything straight.

# The Dragon

**Grade:** 12th **Health:** 12 **Shape:** Bestial
**Stature:** Dog to Dinosaur **Speed:** Average, fast (flying)
**Protection:** Always 10 greater than base protection for stature (dragon scales)
**Weapons:** Always three wounds greater than base wounds for stature (claws and teeth)

*By the flickering firelight and the glowing pools of lava, you see the outline of the Dragon. All other dragons pale in comparison to his majesty. His scaled, black, reptilian bulk is easily the size of a house. Each breath he inhales is a gust of wind that could knock you off your feet, and every exhalation is accompanied by tufts of flame from his nostrils. His cruel talons draw your attention; each looks like it is capable of skewering three men in a row. His leathery wings arch up to the roof of this gigantic cavern before bending down again to end in lengthy spurs at his side.*

*The walls all around you are covered in a strange patchwork that you only recognize when you notice it has eyes: human skins stitched together in a ghastly wallpaper. Your gaze is dragged away from this horror by the glittering mountain of treasure the Dragon lies upon. Piled high are neat rows of coins, heaps of nuggets, overflowing chests of jewelry and gemstones, swords and elaborate suits of armor, cloth and silk, and other wonders. You see an orrery and a telescope and a pile of leatherbound books and a painting that you'd swear you've seen before.*

*As you approach, the gusting wind of the Dragon's breath suddenly stops. Did his monstrous eyelid just give a flicker?*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ***Cool 12th*** | Pluck 12th | Imagination 7th |
| Luck 7th | Muscle 12th | |
| Hide 3rd | Seek 10th | Scamper 10th |
| Scrap 12th | Throw 7th | |

Down in the darkest depths of the Underworld, beyond the River Styx and the Lakes of Fire and the Palaces of the Reveling Princes, is the cavern of the Dragon. He is the mold on which all lesser dragons are based, a monstrous lizard-like beast that can change his size at will. Mostly, he slumbers, guarding his treasures carefully. Occasionally he can be wakened by something above, as was the case when the Beanstalk fell and he terrorized the Grimm Lands in a fit of tired grouchiness. Sometimes, though,

he wakes of his own accord to seek out a new treasure to add to his mountain, preferably something priceless and unique.

Rumor has it that the greatest treasure among his collection is the Key to Babylon. Fashioned from the breath of God, this key can supposedly open the way out of the Grimm Lands. The Dragon may even be willing to lend it to brave children who find their way into his cavern and petition his help, for a price. When the Dragon offers help, it is always at a price.

He asks for epic quests to be undertaken in his name—dethroning the Rotten King, say, or collecting a sprig of Edgeweed that only grows at the edge of the world. Such quests may not even be possible, and those who fail will be added to the collection of living skins that line his walls, their eyes darting over the form of their tormentor forever more.

**Breathe Fire:** The Dragon can spend his turn spitting a stream of flame. If aimed at a single target within a stone's throw, the target must make a 12th-grade Scamper test or take one wound for each point by which he failed the test, regardless of size. The Dragon may widen the fire to include more targets, but widening the fire decreases the Scamper difficulty by one grade per cricket's hop by which the flame's target area widens. As a rough guideline, widening the flame by a cricket's hop could include up to one additional elephant-sized target, or two additional moose-sized targets, or four additional adult-sized targets, and so on (assuming they are all standing shoulder-to-shoulder). Thus, the best way to reduce the danger of the Dragon's breath is to spread out!

**Magical Mucus:** Every part of the Dragon is said to have some magical property, and witches pay handsomely for his fallen scales to use in their potions. Most unusually, the Dragon's snot has the power to permanently remove transformation curses on those who are covered in it. Of course, the Dragon's snot is not an easy thing to get hold of. When he is at his largest size, his nose might be climbed into by an enterprising child; finding a way to make him sneeze could also work.

**Majesty:** The Dragon is such a terrifying creature that it takes a 10th-grade Pluck test to do anything other than cower in his presence.

***Soft Spot:*** The Dragon has a single weak spot somewhere among his scales. It requires a 12th-grade Seek test to find it, and attacks made to hit it suffer a –6 disadvantage. However, attacks that hit the spot ignore all of the Dragon's protection.

## Griffon

**Grade:** 8th **Health:** 8 **Shape:** Bestial
**Stature:** Elephant **Speed:** Fast, really fast (flying)
**Protection:** 7 **Wounds:** 9 (beak and claws)

*The beast is magnificent, with golden feathers, a sleek body, and razor-sharp claws. Its beak opens, releasing an eagle's cry that, for all its beauty, is unmistakably tinged with hunger.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 3rd | Pluck 11th | Imagination 1st |
| ***Luck 9th*** | Muscle 6th | |
| Hide 2nd | Seek 11th | Scamper 8th |
| Scrap 9th | Throw — | |

Griffons are not much more intelligent than the hawks and lions that they resemble, but they are nonetheless powerful predators and noble creatures. They rarely hunt kids, or even adults, preferring to snatch moose-sized prey from the plains and hills over which they soar.

**Stab or Grab:** If a griffon spends its turn diving from flight before attacking, it gains a +1 advantage per turn spent diving on its first attack (including the opposed Muscle test of a wrestle attempt).

***Soft Spot:*** Griffons cannot stand to have their feathers plucked. If a feather is plucked, the griffon forgets what it is doing and focuses entirely on the plucker. Should the plucker light the feather on fire, the griffon screeches and flees.

## Hansel and Gretel

**Grade:** 6th **Health:** 6 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Kid **Speed:** Average **Protection:** 4
**Wounds:** 4 or improvised weapon

*You have never seen such fine physical specimens as these two corn-haired and sky-eyed young siblings. You know their story, of course. Evil mother-figure, trail*

*of breadcrumbs, gingerbread house, wicked witch, chicken bone, oven, boom!*

*Well, Hansel and Gretel still live in that gingerbread cottage in the woods, and it serves as a haven for children fleeing the attention of wicked witches—and there are always plenty of those. Strangely, none of the children who enter the gingerbread house are ever seen to leave.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 8th | ***Pluck 6th*** | Imagination 5th |
| Luck 4th | Muscle 5th | |
| Hide 10th | Seek 4th | Scamper 4th |
| Scrap 5th | Throw 4th | |
| Home Ec 10th | Industrial Arts 8th | |

The blind witch of the gingerbread cottage was not a nice lady by any stretch, but she was not the real villain of the tale. No, she was merely the slave of the true monster: the Oven. For years she had been feeding children to the Oven to slake its monumental hunger, and in return it granted her magical powers. When Gretel slammed that door shut behind the witch, she and her brother became its new slaves.

They know that a version of their story has made it out into the Real World, and trade off this by telling children who they are and that they will be kept safe from witches within their gingerbread house. This is perfectly true, but the children will not be safe from Hansel and Gretel. They feed their guests lumps of wall and sugared window frame (which always regrow) that have been poisoned, weakening the children so that they can be either fattened up for the Oven or kept as slaves until the cruel siblings tire of them.

**Crow Control:** The sentient Oven gave Hansel and Gretel control over a murder of crows, who follow their every command. The crows will fight (use stats for birds of prey, page 183), but their main use is as spies. The crows love to eat crumbs, and can be distracted or calmed by anyone who thinks to throw a handful of crumbs on the ground.

**Sibling's Love:** If Hansel and Gretel are fighting back to back, they can re-roll failed defense rolls. If the second roll is a failure, the sibling who was not being attacked is the one who takes the damage.

***Soft Spot:*** If one of the two siblings is killed, the other falls to the ground weeping, and will take no other actions except begging to be slain. If left alone, the distraught sibling slowly grows roots and turns into a tree on the spot, even indoors.

## Hans the Hedgehog

**Grade:** 6th **Health:** 6 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Average
**Protection:** 7 (spiny armor)
**Wounds:** 7 (spines)

*With the thick prickles and the long snout Hans may not look like it, but he is an actual man. He's a man wearing a homemade suit of hedgehog-shaped armor, and therefore obviously not a stable and ordinary man, but he is a man nonetheless. He is not aware of this fact, however, bemoaning the fate that he is convinced left him trapped a hedgehog from the waist up.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 2nd | Pluck 6th | Imagination 2nd |
| Luck 1st | ***Muscle 7th*** | |
| Hide 2nd | Seek 5th | Scamper 7th |
| Scrap 7th | Throw 7th | |
| 4-H 8th | Boy Scouts 7th | |

Before Hans was born, his father, lamenting his lack of a son, uttered the words, "I will have a child, even if it be a hedgehog." His son was born a hedgehog from the waist up, but the curse was eventually lifted. Hans, however, is unwilling to accept this. Fleeing his married bliss with the princess whose love cured him, he returned to the woods and his former life. Subconsciously, he prefers his simple old life with only the tunes of his bagpipes and his animals to think about.

Hans lives in the Great and Awful Forest, where he tends to a herd of donkeys and pigs. He keeps his animals safe from the many predators of the woods by lulling them with tunes from his enchanted bagpipes. Occasionally, forgetting what happened last time, he tires of his lonely woodland life, climbs onto his rooster, and rides into a village in search of a bride.

The girls unfortunate enough to be bought by Hans in return for his fine animals, or kidnapped when nobody is desperate enough to trade a daughter for a hog, never return. Hans is not a bright soul and every bride he brings home winds up accidentally being pincushioned to death by his sharp spikes.

**Enchanting Bagpipes:** Anyone who hears Hans play on his magical bagpipes must make a 5th-grade Pluck test or be rendered calm and non-hostile.

**Second Skin:** Hans has become so accustomed to his spiny armor that he no longer suffers penalties from wearing it. Additionally, anyone who inflicts wounds against him with a Scrap attack may be hurt by his spines; they must make a 7th-grade Luck test or take one wound per grade by which they failed. These wounds can be negated by protection, as normal. Those who can make Scrap attacks without getting too close, like adults with heavy weapons, moose-sized combatants with medium or heavy weapons, and so on, may be immune to this effect. Creatures using their natural attacks, likes fists, claws, and teeth, are always subject to the effect.

***Soft Spot:*** If Hans's hedgehog-armor is ever removed he will go catatonic, falling to the ground in a horrified fit. He cannot be returned to normality except by putting the armor back on him.

## Hans's Riding Rooster

**Grade:** 6th **Health:** 6 **Shape:** Animal
**Stature:** Moose **Speed:** Fast **Protection:** 6
**Wounds:** 9 (talons)

Cool 1st Pluck 6th
Imagination 1st

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Luck 1st | Muscle 7th | |
| Hide 2nd | Seek 3rd | Scamper 5th |
| Scrap 6th | Throw — | |

# Humpty Dumpty (The Rotten King)

**Grade:** 10th **Health:** 10 **Shape:** Person(ish)
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Slow
**Protection:** 9 (gluey eggshell)
**Wounds:** 9 (egg shards with yolky acid)

*The Rotten King sits on his awkward throne made of broken bricks, (all that's left of his famous wall, don't you know). He is a thoroughly unpleasant figure, a cracked egg with arms and legs and strings of sickly yellow yolk that run out of his shell and over his face. The stench is repulsive, like the strongest rotten eggs you've ever smelled. He wears fancy lederhosen, holds a scepter, and a crown sits at an angle around the top of his shell, but for all his regal trappings, the darting and paranoid human eyes set in the eggshell give him away. His mind is every bit as cracked as his body, you see.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 12th | Pluck 12th | ***Imagination 12th*** |
| Luck 4th | Muscle 9th | |
| Hide 3rd | Seek 12th | Scamper 3rd |
| Scrap 10th | Throw 5th | |
| Book Learning 4th | Country Club 4th | |

Yes, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall and couldn't be put back together again…at least, not properly. The king's men and horses tried their best, because Humpty was his favorite walking, talking egg advisor. They used glue, they used twine, they used his own dried yolk, they used perseverance. Because after all, he is the king. With glue, dried yolk, and perseverance they got Humpty Dumpty to resemble his old self, but only superficially. The cracks in his shell eventually rotted the poor egg. And the stench that he exuded began to rot everything around him, including the king himself, who was found one morning as a puddle of putrid flesh, like a spilled yolk. The king had no heirs, so Humpty was elevated to the position.

Since ascending to his new throne made of shattered wall, he has made many decrees that the people of his kingdom, a once-fantastical realm in the heart of the Great and Awful Forest, find difficult to live with. He redefines the meanings of words at will, punishing those who misuse them with death. He makes certain combinations of colors illegal, punishing those who wear them with death. He made looking at the Moon illegal, and you can guess how he punished those whom the Moon gleefully pointed out with his shining beams when he caught them looking.

Humpty Dumpty is king of the Great and Awful Forest, but he would like to be much more. Yes, he has his Rotten Court (including his untouchable bride, Cinderella), his castle, his cowed and frightened forest-dwelling people, and technical rulership over all the monsters of the forest, but a being of his majesty deserves to be ruler of all of the Grimm Lands.

His army is made up of horses that walk like men and men who are ridden like steeds, by goblins and ogres, by greedy dwarfs and malevolent talking animals. Since the Great and Awful Forest connects to every Checkerboard Kingdom, his armies can march anywhere. Only the Rotten King's idiosyncratic leadership prevents him from conquering the lands, as he tires of battles quickly and plans others just as quickly, always moving on to the next mad scheme. His latest plan is to send his troops out to sow discord and confusion while goblin sneaks drip his rotting yolk everywhere they can: in the wells and the casks of beer, in the fields and on the flowers, in hens' nests and babies' cribs. Everything the yolk touches is corrupted with the Rotten King's stench, and becomes just a little darker, a little nastier, a little more insane. This has been particularly effective in coastal kingdoms, where the whole mills have been secretly converted to dumping the Rotten King's corruption into the Sea.

The Rotten King has many schemes and plans, though they rarely come to fruition. At any given time he may be plotting to pull the Sun from the sky, drink all the waters of the Sea, and hunt down the last of those damnable acid monkeys (which none but he have ever seen). Depending on his mood, he may attempt to rope children into helping him with his latest demented scheme, or he may pit them against each other and his servants in bizarre tests of skill, or he may even attack them in a berserk fury. Say what you like about life in the Grimm Lands, but it's never dull with the Rotten King around.

**Mad as a Fish:** Humpty Dumpty is so mad, and the nature of the Grimm Lands so flexible, that his insanity sometimes manifests around him. All hehas to do is put his arm around someone and say, "Let me tell you something," and the world around his confidant dissolves into a bizarre hallucinogenic playground. Rainbows shoot upward, unicorns gallop past, strange music plays, and singing trees burst from the ground.

As soon as he stops talking, the vision ends. No matter how far they seem to have traveled, everyone is right back where they started. Anyone brought with Humpty Dumpty on one of these psychedelic journeys must make opposed Cool, Imagination, and Pluck tests against the Rotten King. Those who fail any of the three tests believe anything he says, and are willing to do nearly anything for him, for a varying duration: the rest of the scene for those who fail one test, the rest of the story for those who fail two tests, and the rest of the saga for those who fail all three tests! Control is broken after the Rotten King forces the enthralled character to do anything that would harm himself or another innocent…but not before the character completes the task.

**Putable Back Together Again:** Even if Humpty Dumpty is killed (probably by falling from a great height), anyone corrupted by his **Rotten to the Core**

ability cannot rest until the pieces of Humpty's shell are put back together again, at which point the Rotten King is returned to life. The only way to permanently destroy the Rotten King and to release the land and those corrupted by him is to collect his shell pieces and have them burned by the Dragon; swallowed whole by the Big Bad Wolf; given to and then gambled or bought back from the Devil and then cast off the Edge of the World.

**Rotten to the Core:** Humpty Dumpty corrupts everything that he touches. Those who come within a mile of him must make a Muscle, Pluck, and Imagination test each day. The tests start at 1st grade, and increase in difficulty by one grade with each consecutive day. Once someone fails all three tests, she is corrupted, mad, and amoral, and remains so until Humpty Dumpty is so destroyed that he cannot be **Putable Back Together Again** (see above).

**Sulfuric Scabs:** Every time Humpty Dumpty takes a wound, a burst of noxious gas jets out of his shell. Anyone adjacent to him must make a 6th-grade Muscle test or spend the next round nauseated and unable to spend their turns in any way except for moving away from him.

***Soft Spot:*** Humpty Dumpty is terrified of falling and being broken again, so much so that if anyone knocks him over he will spend the next two rounds rolling around on the ground squealing and checking himself for new cracks. Should the Rotten King actually fall from a height, he has no protection from the wounds suffered from the fall.

## Jack

**Grade:** 7th **Health:** 7 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Kid **Speed:** Fast **Protection:** 4
**Wounds:** 5 or axe (medium hand weapon)

*This young man wears simple peasant clothing and a jaunty green hat, looking like an overgrown Peter Pan or an underage Robin Hood. He has an oblivious and happy gaze, devoid of all thought and care. A ready smile plays on his face, and a nasty-looking axe hangs at his belt.*

| ***Cool 6th*** | ***Pluck 8th*** | ***Imagination 2nd*** |
|---|---|---|
| ***Luck 12th*** | ***Muscle 6th*** | |
| Hide 7th | Seek 3rd | Scamper 10th |
| Scrap 6th | Throw 6th | |
| Boy Scouts 5th | Industrial Arts 5th | |

Of Humpty Dumpty's servants, Jack is the Rotten King's favorite. The Rotten King felt strong empathy for the boy who, like him, fell and broke something. The bump that the boy received on his noggin confused him, mixing up all of the many tales and nursery rhymes attributed to his name. He simply no longer remembers who he is supposed to be. Instead, he allows the lecherous king to manipulate him and give him a purpose; it's just easier that way. A young girl named Jill, lovelorn and desperate, wanders the countryside of the Grimm Lands, hoping against

hope that her Jack will someday remember himself and return to her.

Jack is a smart and brave young man, and if it were not for his scattered mind, he would be quite the hero in the Grimm Lands. A well-meaning fairy godmother, seeing his plight but being helpless to do anything about it, secretly replaced Jack's sharp and deadly woodaxe with a magical one that delivers a severe beating, but does not kill. Jack does not know why victims seem to live through his assaults, but since he would prefer not to kill anyone, he hasn't mentioned the fact to his master. So long as Humpty Dumpty doesn't directly ask that he directly take a life, Jack contentedly follows all orders without thinking of the consequences, even ones that would obviously lead to the pain and suffering of many.

**Iconic:** Jack is the ultimate hero of fairy tales. All of his Core traits are iconic traits.

**Soft-edged Axe:** Wounds inflicted by Jack's axe never kill. Additionally, they heal at a rate of one per hour, in addition to normal healing.

***Soft Spot:*** Jack is very suggestible, and can be tricked fairly easily. So long as it does not directly contradict a command from Humpty Dumpty, Jack is willing to give it a shot. Additionally, any attempt to remind him of Jill will cause him to become very confused and disturbed, causing a disadvantage of –4 grades to all tests for the scene.

## Kanaka and Kahuna

**Grade:** 8th **Health:** 8 **Shape:** Animal (upright)
**Stature:** Adult
**Speed:** Very slow (walking), very fast (swimming)
**Protection:** 6 (sharkskin)
**Wounds:** 8 (lots and lots of teeth)

*These two sharks are brothers and, like all brothers, they love and hate each other in equal measure. They wear disguises made of human skin and Hawaiian shirts that camouflage them completely, allowing them to appear completely human. Only when their prey enters the water do they cast off their disguises and leap in to feed. Then, the bickering starts…*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ***Cool 5th*** | Pluck 9th | Imagination 3rd |
| Luck 6th | Muscle 9th | |
| Hide 3rd | Seek 7th | Scamper 8th |
| Scrap 8th | Throw 4th | |
| *Kahuna only:* | | |
| Country Club 7th | Home Ec 5th | |

Kanaka and Kahuna like to lie on the beach all day long, soaking up the sun in their human disguises. If someone looks like they're about to go in the water, the two concerned brothers try to warn them not to go in. It's full of sharks, don't you know? When someone ignores their advice and dives in anyway, they leap in to attack, pausing so that Kahuna can explain the definition of "irony" first.

Kanaka is a mute, and not a very intelligent one. His brother, Kahuna, is constantly castigating him for doing things wrong. While they circle their victims, tying on napkins and preparing their meal with items in a box they keep underwater, an argument usually starts: "Kanaka, what are you doing? You can't serve children with white wine! Go and get a red. No, no, that's not how you tie your napkin!"

**Human Disguises:** It requires a 5th-grade Seek test to notice that the brothers' human suits have zippers up the back, while a 5th-grade Cool test allows anyone interacting with them to notice that they're being deceitful in some way.

**The Water's Fine:** The water near the two sharks takes on a wondrous glow, seeming ever so inviting. It requires a 5th-grade Pluck test to resist diving in straight away.

***Soft Spot:*** Once Kahuna starts discussing the rules of etiquette, he becomes easily distracted by minutiae. A child who realizes this and makes a Country Club test opposed by Kahuna's Cool test can, by pointing out something askew about the presentation of their meal, delay the sharks for a turn. If the child wins by five or more grades, he can manipulate Kahuna into attacking his contemptible brother for knowing less than a child about the habits of civilized society.

## Mad Marion

**Grade:** 5th **Health:** 5
**Shape:** Person **Stature:** Adult
**Speed:** Very Slow **Protection:** 5 **Wounds:** 5 or dissection tools (light hand weapon)

*The old woman's labcoat is red with blood, and as she approaches you can see more red spatters on her glasses. She has a clipboard in one hand and something unspeakable, sharp, and metallic in the other. For some reason there is a large pea balanced on her clipboard. She checks that the straps holding you down are secure and licks her red lips. "Let's see what this little boy is made of," she says. As you begin screaming, she shakes her head sadly and brandishes the pea.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 4th | Pluck 1st | Imagination 3rd |
| Luck 6th | ***Muscle 3rd*** | |
| Hide 3rd | Seek 6th | Scamper 3rd |
| Scrap 2nd | Throw 2nd | |
| 4-H 8th | Book Learning 12th | |
| Boy Scouts 2nd | | |
| Home Ec 5th | Industrial Arts 5th | |

The Grimm Lands may run on pixie dust and magic, but that doesn't mean there isn't room for science, of a kind. Mad Marion is a practitioner of that science. She understands the importance of research and experimentation, and that even the most basic tenets of

our understanding must be rigorously tested before the advancement of knowledge can proceed. For Mad Marion, there is one important scientific question: Are little boys really made of slugs, snails, puppy dog's tails, and little girls of sugar, spice, and all things nice?

To test this supposed fact, believed by almost everyone in the Grimm Lands, Mad Marion has set up a laboratory within a bulbous cyst of the Beanstalk. She brings captured children here and cuts them open, keeping them alive for as long as her art allows, so that she can examine their insides.

So far, she hasn't found a trace of slugs or sugar or anything like that, although she tastes some of the things she finds just in case she can't see the sweetener. This would seem to disprove the puppy dog's tails theorem, but it's possible that the children studied thus far have been fakes, so she always needs more subjects.

**Peas:** The strange peas Mad Marion grows in the Beanstalk are perfect for filling the mouths of children. All she has to do is pop one in a child's mouth, and the child is unable to speak until it is removed. If a kid tries to use a talent requiring speaking or begins to cast a spell, she attempts to Throw the pea into the kid's mouth (this can be resisted with a Scamper test as normal, but the target gains a +2 advantage on the test due to the precise aim required). Once put in, it cannot be removed without pulling out the kid's teeth or the kid himself succeeding at a 5th-grade Muscle test to bite through it.

**Vivisectionist:** Mad Marion has a wonderful gift for keeping her subjects alive and awake, even as she removes their insides. Every time she makes an incision with her dissection tools, the victim suffers wounds as normal. However, so long as a victim remains on her dissection table, he remains conscious and alive, no matter how many wounds he takes. Her skill is such that she can even keep a head alive, separate from its body. The only way to heal damage that should lead to death is via magic; only then can a victim be removed from the table safely.

***Soft Spot:*** Oddly, Mad Marion is terrified to see what she herself is made of. If she is ever wounded, she immediately flees in fear, trying desperately to stop any of the horrible things she is convinced live under her skin from escaping.

## Mr. Hoots

**Grade:** 2nd **Health:** 2 **Shape:** Animal (upright)
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Very slow, fast (flying)
**Protection:** 5 **Wounds:** 5 (talons)

*Mr. Hoots is a fat, old owl every bit as big as a grownup. He wears a bowler hat, a waistcoat and a monocle that he thinks makes him look very smart indeed. This is because Mr. Hoots is a member of the parliament of owls, who adjudicate all of the actions of the talking animals—when the owls can stop bickering with each other for five minutes, that is. Mr. Hoots is the Right Honorable Minister for Children's Matters and Matters Pertaining to Children, so if you're very lucky indeed he may just help you out. After you've completed the proper forms, that is.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 6th | Pluck 2nd | ***Imagination 6th*** |
| Luck 2nd | Muscle 3rd | |
| Hide 2nd | Seek 10th | Scamper 3rd |
| Scrap 2nd | Throw 2nd | |
| Book Learning 10th | | |

On the all-too-rare occasions when the Minister for Children's Matters isn't caught up in a parliamentary debate with the other wordy owls, he watches over lost children to make sure that they are safe, or if they are not safe, that they are at least being mistreated in accordance with the rules.

Some days he may swoop down out of the sky to halt the Big Bad Wolf and check his hunting permit in detail, giving his prey time to get away. Other days he stops the children at the worst possible time to check that their papers are in order, and when he finds they don't have any papers, he will happen to have the correct forms right here. They just need to be filled out in triplicate, in between dodging the swings of the giant's club or while running from the swarm of giant ants.

**Filibuster:** Mr. Hoots can talk and talk and talk. As soon as he starts, any animal to whom he directs his rambling, whether upright or natural, talking or mute, must stop to listen and, as best as possible obey his instructions. Kids are not compelled to do so, but as they fall within his jurisdiction, Mr. Hoots can make life miserable for them if they don't comply. If they don't fill out their forms in a timely manner, for instance, animals might harass them everywhere they walk, or mounts might refuse to let kids ride them.

**Government Position:** It's not the animal the kids need to worry about, it's the position; even if they kill Mr. Hoots, he is soon replaced by another upright, adult-sized owl who is, if it were possible, even more annoying.

***Soft Spot:*** Mr. Hoots is a sucker for worms, and can even be distracted by worm-shaped objects (like string or jelly worms) that happen to by lying on the ground.

## Mother Goose

**Grade:** 3rd **Health:** 3 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Very Slow
**Protection:** 5 **Weapons:** Base 5 wounds; riding crop (light hand weapon)

*She comes swooping down out of the sky with a roar like a descending biplane. Her goose beats wings as large as a glider as it comes in to land, its feet skidding in the dirt with an incongruous squeaking sound. She leaps from her mount with an energy that belies her frail old lady's body, her hair streaming out from under the aviator's cap she wears. She flips up her goggles as she*

*approaches, and says, "Hello, children. Who would like to hear a rhyme?"*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 9th | Pluck 1st | ***Imagination 4th*** |
| Luck 4th | Muscle 3rd | |
| Hide 4th | Seek 4th | Scamper 2nd |
| Scrap 1st | Throw 3rd | |
| 4-H 8th | Book Learning 6th | |
| Boy Scouts 6th | Gaming 10th (nursery rhymes only) | |

Mother Goose serves as a courier for the Rotten King, bearing his mad messages all over the Grimm Lands. On Monday she might deliver a declaration of war to King Midas, then on Tuesday she delivers the same message to a family of voles. She doesn't mind the pointlessness of her position; any excuse to get away from Humpty's court and into the air is good enough for her.

Flying is her passion, and she rambles to anyone in earshot about her various adventures and dogfights with the Sphinx and the Dragon, none of which are true. In reality, she is a coward and a psychopath and therefore perfect for the Rotten Court. She enjoys ingratiating herself with children by reciting her rhymes and stories, promising them rides on her "fully combat-ready fighter goose" and then pushing them off at a height. "Bye bye, baby bunting!" she cackles as they fall. At worst, the fall is deadly; at best, it means that the kid is now lost and alone in a dangerous place.

**Come Fly with Me:** Any child who listens to one of Mother Goose's nursery rhymes must make a 4th-grade Pluck test to resist temptation, or want to climb aboard her goose more than anything in the world. If multiple children succumb to the rhymes at the same time, they may come to blows over who gets to ride first.

***Soft Spot:*** Mother Goose's goose responds, not to her, but to her rhymes. If someone finishes Mother Goose's sentences with their own rhymes, the goose becomes confused and does the opposite of what she wants it to.

## Goose

**Grade:** 3rd **Health:** 3 **Shape:** Animal
**Stature:** Adult
**Speed:** Very Slow (walking), Fast (flying)
**Protection:** 5 **Wounds:** 6 (beak)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 3rd | Pluck 5th | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 4th | Muscle 7th | |
| Hide 4th | Seek 4th | Scamper 2nd |
| Scrap 5th | Throw — | |

## Peter Peter

**Grade:** 5th **Health:** 5 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Average
**Protection:** 5 **Wounds:** 5 or pumpkin knife (light hand weapon) or rake (medium hand weapon)

*Peter Peter is a short man with spiky, black hair, a big nose, and suspicious eyes. He wears a set of filthy overalls, covered in orange stains and pumpkin seeds. Hanging from his belt is a huge pumpkin knife, but the stains on that are an ominous red.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 3rd | Pluck 4th | Imagination 3rd |
| Luck 6th | ***Muscle 5th*** | |
| Hide 8th | Seek 6th | Scamper 5th |
| Scrap 5th | Throw 4th | |
| 4-H 2nd | Book Learning 4th | |
| Boy Scouts 7th | Home Ec 5th | Industrial Arts 6th |

Peter Peter loves women. Half the time, they're all he can think about. But the other half of the time, he's a raving lunatic who kills girls and buries them inside his pumpkins. Nobody knows why Peter Peter went mad, certainly not Peter Peter himself. Maybe his first love betrayed him, maybe the Moon picked him up and showed him the maddening stars, maybe he ate a bad pumpkin. Now, he's as unpredictable as they come.

His pumpkin patch on the edge of the Great and Awful Forest is right outside one of the doors in the Beanstalk. Children entering or exiting this way have to come through the pumpkin patch, and that means coming through Peter Peter. If they are all boys, the pumpkins attack them with their grasping vines (see carnivorous vines, page 187), but any girls will bring the Pumpkin-Eater out of his shack.

Depending on his mood (toss a coin: heads he's crazy in love, tails he's just plain crazy), he is either creepily over-friendly, offering shelter or guidance in a too-familiar fashion, or he attacks immediately. He uses his knife against girls and his rake against boys. At dramatic moments, Peter Peter flips back to the other persona (keep tossing the coin throughout the scene as often as you like). If the kids need his help, they're going to have to put up with a pretty big risk.

**He Has a Thing for the Girls:** When using his nasty knife against girls, Peter Peter may use Boy Scouts as his attack trait.

***Soft Spot:*** The only way to avoid Peter Peter's psychotic attention is to show him true kindness. He will be unable to attack anyone who is genuinely kind to him, although that doesn't stop his pumpkins and their strangling vines.

## Serge the Clockmaster

**Grade:** 5th **Health:** 7 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Dog **Speed:** Slow
**Protection:** 7 (clockwork organs)
**Wounds:** 7 (piston fists)

*Clockmaster Serge is a gray-haired old gnome with all of the usual gnomish traits: the long beard, the small body, the oversized head. On that head, over a hawkish nose, sits the thickest pair of glasses you've ever seen. Like goggles, they amplify his eyes to huge proportions. His eyes rarely move, sitting alarmingly still. Everything about Clockmaster Serge is still, and gray.*

*He rarely gets excited, but two things are guaranteed to do it. One is the acquisition of new gadgets: Technology that he does not understand fascinates him. The other is an opportunity to rant about his impressive and orderly Clocktower and how it and its inhabitants remain the only sane things in the entirely mad Grimm Lands.*

*Clockmaster Serge is, in fact, a little too sane. He has gone through sane and come out the other side to a point where emotion means nothing to him and the end always justifies the means.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ***Cool 7th*** | Pluck 5th | Imagination — |
| Luck 6th | Muscle 7th | |
| Hide 5th | Seek 7th | Scamper 8th |
| Scrap 4th | Throw 4th | |
| Book Learning 10th | Industrial Arts 12th | |

Time passes strangely in the Grimm Lands, if at all. How many centuries has the Big Bad Wolf hunted in the Great and Awful Forest? How many years ago was it that the Beanstalk fell? When will it be time for dinner? The answers to these questions are vague at best.

Deep in the Checkerboard Kingdoms is a place where they intend to do something about this situation. The Clocktower is a masterwork of gnomish engineering that always knows what the correct time is, even if the Sun, Moon, and stars all beg to differ.

The Clocktower is ruled by Serge the Clockmaster, an ancient gnome who has been alive seemingly forever. This is because he cannot die. Ever since he discovered the secret of clockhearting surgery and performed it on himself, he's been an automaton, a machine in a gnomish skin. He's happy in his Clocktower and thinks that everyone wants to join him in his ordered and peaceful life. To him, becoming cold and emotionless is a wondrous gift, and he is glad to share it with anyone "worthy."

***Soft Spot:*** Serge is easily distracted or bribed with technology from the Real World.

**Clockhearted:** This is an ability that the children may find themselves gaining, though not always willingly. Those who have their heart removed by Serge immediately gain this ability. Their Muscle trait increases by three and they count as being two grades higher for the purpose of determining wounds. From now on, they will never suffer from disease or any curse that affects their health. They always know what time it is, and cannot help but state it precisely to the minute and second when asked.

Every week they remain Clockhearted, they lose one grade of Imagination. Once their Imagination runs out completely, they stop caring about friends and family, become emotionless and severe, and are filled with a desire to spend their days in orderly work at the Clocktower.

The effects of being Clockhearted are already factored into Clockmaster Serge's traits.

## Spider-Filled Rapunzel

**Grade:** 5th **Health:** 5 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Slow
**Protection:** 3 (paper-thin skin)
**Wounds:** 5 (spider bites)

*Her hair is as beautiful as spun silk, so soft to the touch that, as you grab handful after handful to haul yourself up the side of the tower, you are amazed that it doesn't slip through your fingers. You reach the balcony and drag yourself over it, eyes wide in anticipation.*

*She stands before you, beckoning, her golden hair hanging over her face. You approach and she touches your arm. Something is wrong, you feel it now. You look down at your arm and see that her hand is withered and dead, yet holding you firmly. Her other hand reaches up and parts the hair that hangs over her face, and you scream as the desiccated corpse leans in close for a kiss, the spiders pouring out from between her lips…*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 8th | Pluck 4th | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 4th | ***Muscle 8th*** | |
| Hide 7th | Seek 4th | Scamper 9th |
| Scrap 8th | Throw 4th | |

Old Gothel the witch's tower is alive, possibly because of a spell cast by the witch or just from years of soaking up the leftovers of her magic. When Rapunzel was imprisoned there the tower was happy, but when she left it grew lonely. In her absence, the tower made friends with the spiders, whose webs reminded the tower of Rapunzel's hair.

Years later, Rapunzel returned to the tower to thank it for taking care of her so well. She barely made it through the door before the spiders had at her and she was poisoned to death. To keep the tower happy, the spiders climbed inside Rapunzel's body and took control, making her walk and sing and brush her hair just like in the old days. Once again, Rapunzel lets down her hair for suitors to climb up, and once again the tower is truly happy.

**Catch and Kiss:** If Rapunzel succeeds in wrestling a victim, she can deliver a kiss instead of inflicting wounds. The kiss automatically paralyzes a victim for 1d6 turns, but Rapunzel takes a wound as some of her spiders remain behind to continue biting the victim.

**Let Down Your Hair:** Rapunzel's hair is so bewitching that any male who sees it hanging from the balcony of her tower must make a 4th-grade Pluck test or be forced to climb up it. The hair is easy to climb (3rd-grade Scamper test), but a 5th-grade Muscle test is needed to

disengage from the hair, which is intertwined with sticky web as it gets closer to Rapunzel.

**Venom:** Anyone hit by Rapunzel must make a 7th-grade Luck test or be bitten by one of the spiders. Those who are bitten are briefly paralyzed and lose their next turn.

***Soft Spot:*** Rapunzel can't help but attack any flies, fairies, or other buzzing winged creatures to exclusion of all other prey. The spiders within her become so obsessed with catching the tasty morsels that, if there are enough of the buzzing prey, they will accidentally walk her right out the tower window after them.

## The Three "Little" Pigs

**Grade:** 6th **Health:** 6 **Shape:** Animal (upright)
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Very Slow
**Protection:** 7 (pork fat)
**Wounds:** 5 or wrench (medium hand weapon)

*Hurry up, children. First, we negotiate the field of mantraps. Don't step on the bumps or you'll wind up with an iron spike in your groin. What did I tell you, Timmy? Oh well, leave him behind now. No dawdling!*

*Over the moat, quickly! Jump high or you'll end up piranha snacks. What did I tell you, Sally? Oh well, no use crying over spilt children. Over the wall, onwards and upwards!*

*Don't step on the red flowers or they'll shoot poison at you. Or is it the green flowers? I can never remember. Look out for the pit traps. Whoops! There goes another one. Bye-bye, Peter. Now, hop over the tripwires, then quickly duck under the blades. That's the ticket! You didn't need that bit, did you, Alison?*

*And here we are at the brick houses at last. Now, how many of you darling children are left? Not to worry, I'm sure we'll lose some more once we get inside. Why don't you ring the doorbell, Tarquin? Oh no, not the bees!*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 2nd | Pluck 1st | Imagination 7th |
| ***Luck 6th*** | Muscle 2nd | |
| Hide 7th | Seek 8th | Scamper 1st |
| Scrap 1st | Throw 5th | |
| Book Learning 5th | Industrial Arts 12th | |
| Juvie 6th | | |

The Three "Little" Pigs have been through a lot during their time as fairy tales…who can blame them if all that excitement has led to a little post-traumatic stress? Now they spend their days locked inside three brick fortresses in the foothills of the World's Edge Mountains, surrounded by a network of improbable traps and armed 6th-grade guards.

They've become masters of trap-building, and if you need help designing (or undermining) defenses, they are definitely the pigs you need to talk to. If you can make it past those traps, that is. The pigs are so paranoid that they won't let anyone

in, thinking them agents of the Big Bad Wolf.

Anyone who does get inside will have a chance to explain themselves in the presence of one of the pigs. Each of them lives in a mud pit they rarely leave except to guzzle down another trough full of feed. Protected by their traps, they've grown lazy and grotesquely fat. They are weak and flabby creatures ruled by fear, but for a fee they will help anyone with a pressing need of their skills and knowledge.

**Ingenuity:** Consulting with the Three "Little" Pigs confers a +2 advantage on any tests made to avoid traps for the rest of the story. For the right fee, they may also pass on their Trapmastery ability, again for a duration determined by the GM.

**Trapmastery:** The pigs are surrounded by miles of hazards (see page 102) and traps. Traps designed by the pigs typically require an 8th-grade Scamper test to avoid and a 10th-grade Industrial Arts test to disarm. For each grade by which either test is failed, the victim loses a wound as the trap is triggered. This is merely a guideline: The narrator is encouraged to develop all manner of inconveniencing, maiming, and dastardly details regarding the traps.

***Soft Spot:*** The pigs are terrified of the Big Bad Wolf, as well as any reasonable suggestion that his arrival is imminent.

## The Three Spinsters

**Grade:** 5th **Health:** 5 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Adult **Speed:** Varies
**Protection:** 5 **Wounds:** 5 or varies

*The Three Spinsters of Spinnenbruch are easy to recognize, thanks to the deformities that help distinguish them from each other: One has a swollen thumb the size of her hand (due to the work of yanking thread), another has a swollen lip that covers her chin (due to licking the thread), and the third has a foot three times the normal size (due to pushing the pedal of the spinning wheel). They all dress in similar non-descript clothes of no particular quality. They would blend seamlessly with the populace if not for their grotesque features and their tendency to enslave little kids.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ***Cool 7th*** | Pluck 2nd | Imagination 3rd |
| Luck 6th | Muscle 3rd | |
| Hide 3rd | Seek 8th | Scamper 1st |
| Scrap 5th | Throw 5th | |
| Home Ec 9th | | |

These old women used to be a kindly trio, and even once helped a girl avoid an unpleasant situation by spinning the tons of yarn a queen had commanded her to produce. But when a kid from the Real World introduced them to the idea of mass production, they traded in their benevolence for a ruthless desire for efficiency.

They ended up in Spinnenbruch after hearing about it becoming a textile capital, and offered their services to King Dieter, who gladly employed them as the supervisors of the various looms, weaves, and workshops.

Besides their identifying marks, the Three Spinsters are otherwise nearly identical in mood and personality, with only very subtle variations. They are all obsessed with children's hair and will not lose a chance to pass their hand through a carefully groomed mane, whether it belongs to a boy or a girl. They have collected several balls of yarn made from the hair of previous victims, and want to get hold of the magic spinning wheel to make them into the greatest garment ever seen in the Grimm Lands.

Thumb fancies herself the leader and takes point in their exploration and interactions with others, given that it is easier for her to hide her deformity. Lip is quiet but very observant and calculating, remaining in the background to better analyze the possibilities in any given situation. Foot is the most energetic of them all, but also the most stubborn; she enjoys her job as supervisor and is the one that deals the harshest punishments for laziness; her grotesque foot is as well suited to swift kicks as it is to spinning.

They have a talent for spotting stray children and will approach any young traveler that crosses into Spinnenbruch's lands. Thumb will be the one speaking, acting as if she sympathizes with the children's plight and offering room and board in their home, appearing for all intents like a kindly old woman. Once children arrive at one of the workshops supervised by the Three, Foot orders the children shackled and assigned to one of the looms, weaves, or spinning wheels. They pay frequent visits to their new workers, and will manifest an unsavory interest in those with pretty hair.

**Foot:** As above, but with a speed of "Really slow" and inflicts seven wounds, thanks to her huge foot.

**Lip:** 3rd grade in Cool, thanks to her deformity, but 9th grade in Seek.

**Thumb:** 7th grade in Muscle and 6th grade in Scrap.

***Soft Spot:*** The spinsters see the potential destruction of any yarn, even hair or wool that has not yet been spun, as a tragic loss. Kids can bargain with them by holding such materials—even their own hair—"hostage" over an open flame.

## The Tooth Fairy

**Grade:** 7th **Health:** 7 **Shape:** Person
**Stature:** Kid **Speed:** Slow (walking), Fast (flying)
**Protection:** 5 (cloud of pixie dust)
**Wounds:** 4 or tooth pliers (special)

*You can only just make her out in the shadows; no matter how fast you travel she is always there, lurking on the edge of your vision. You get an impression of bulk, but not size. She is fat, bald, bloodstained, and wearing a filthy pink tutu covered in vomit stains. There are pliers in her hand, and when she opens her mouth you see jagged, broken teeth, far too many of them for one person. Is that another tooth growing out of*

*her head? Then she's gone again and all you see are shadows.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 8th | Pluck 12th | ***Imagination 6th*** |
| Luck 6th | Muscle 5th | |
| Hide 12th | Seek 8th | Scamper 6th |
| Scrap 5th | Throw 5th | |
| 4-H 3rd | Book Learning 2nd | |
| Boy Scouts 4th | Country Club 1st | |
| Home Ec 5th | Industrial Arts 4th | |

The Tooth Fairy is obsessed with collecting teeth, but unhappy with the old-fashioned way of doing things. What sense does it make to wait for them to fall out of children's mouths when you can pull them out yourself? You don't even have to pay for them this way. Much better.

She long ago became lost in the dark passages of the Beanstalk, and is likeliest to still be found there, hidden in the shadows. She stalks her prey carefully, only attacking when she has the perfect ambush organized. Bursting from the darkness, she snaps teeth off with her pliers, stuffs a lemon drop into the victim's mouth, and runs. Once she has escaped from potential retribution, she stuffs the stolen tooth into her own mouth. She has no interest in killing, only collecting.

**Ambush:** When the Tooth Fairy ambushes, she gains two rounds' worth of actions instead of one.

**Pulling Teeth:** With a successful attack, the Tooth Fairy can choose to pull out a tooth and insert a magical lemon drop instead of inflicting a wound. The tooth removal causes so much pain, however, that the victim suffers a –2 disadvantage on all non-Core tests and to all Cool tests per tooth removed. This disadvantage lasts until each empty tooth socket can be seen to by first aid (see page 60) or medical care (see page 61). An empty tooth socket counts as a wound for the purposes of determining first aid or medical care difficulty.

**This Will Make It All Better:** On the turn after the Tooth Fairy puts the lemon drop in a victim's mouth, he realizes that it is so sour, it's beginning to eat through his tongue. That round and every round thereafter, he suffers one wound, regardless of size. Unfortunately, the lemon drop sticks to the tongue or the roof of the mouth; to remove it requires a character to spend a turn and succeed at an 8th-grade Muscle test. The only other way to disable the lemon drop is to drink a glass of milk.

***Soft Spot:*** If the single tooth growing from the Tooth Fairy's bald skull is ever pulled out, she returns to her original form, that of a fairy princess. Grinning from ear to ear, she apologizes for her simply beastly behavior in a delighted squeak of a voice, then offers to lead the children to safety. Humming happily and completely oblivious of anything around her that isn't nice, she is as good as her word. Once the children are safe, she offers them a shiny quarter each, warns them not to spend it all in the one place, and continues on her way, blissfully ignorant of the damage she has caused.

## The Ugly Duckling

**Grade:** 6th **Health:** 6
**Shape:** Animal (upright) **Stature:** Adult
**Speed:** Slow **Protection:** 5
**Wounds:** 5 or razor (light hand weapon)

*Tall, lean, and appearing in some ways human, this creature is a horrific blend of the worst features of man and bird. He wears tight-fitting clothing, as if to reveal as much of his repulsive body as possible.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 2nd | ***Pluck 5th*** | Imagination 1st |
| Luck 1st | Muscle 5th | |
| Hide 9th | Seek 9th | Scamper 3rd |
| Scrap 7th | Throw 5th | |
| 4-H 6th | Boy Scouts 4th | |

The Ugly Duckling, Humpty Dumpty's torturer, enforcer, and head of security, is the most vicious of the Rotten King's regulars. Having grown up as a swan amidst a family of ducks, the Ugly Duckling was ridiculed for his different appearance, and was led to believe that he was a freak. Rather than being found by an encouraging mentor, however, the Duckling was found by Humpty Dumpty. The monster encouraged the Duckling to take vengeance upon his siblings, and helped him hunt them down and kill them, then watched smugly as the Ugly Duckling ate his former siblings raw. The more ducks he ate, the more twisted and grotesque he became, until he transformed into the hideously twisted humanoid-swan hybrid that he is today, never more to achieve his beautiful potential. The Ugly Duckling is now an empty husk of hate and can't imagine being anything else. He serves the Rotten King because Humpty encourages his wicked fetish for inflicting pain.

**Fearsome Countenance:** The Ugly Duckling uses not only the promise of pain, but his disgusting features, as well, when torturing his victims. The first time anyone looks upon the Ugly Duckling, he must make a 6th-grade Pluck test or be frightened for the rest of the scene.

**Flensing Stroke:** The Ugly Duckling loves to peel away his victims flesh with long, caressing strokes of his straight-razor. He inflicts +1 wound per two grades by which he succeeds on Scrap tests (instead of the normal three grades). Additionally, the wounds are exceedingly painful: For every such wound a character suffers from, he suffers a –2 disadvantage rather than –1.

***Soft Spot:*** The Ugly Duckling hates and envies all swans, for they remind him of what he could once have been. The sight of a swan might distract him, fill him with rage, or cause disadvantages; should a swan attack him, on the other hand, he might be made to flee in fear.

# The Witch of the Woods

**Grade:** 10th **Health:** 10 **Shape:** Person(ish)
**Stature:** Elephant **Speed:** Really slow
**Protection:** 10 (layers of dirt)
**Wounds:** 9 (talons)

*The rocks here are round and almost skull-like. In fact, picking one of them up, you see that it's an actual skull. This, you consider for a moment before the ground beneath you heaves, is not a good sign.*

*The trees shake and the ground lifts, and what you thought was a hill reveals itself to be an old woman the size of a hill, with skin like bark and earth and trees growing out of her back. She stretches her dirt-encrusted frame as far as the hunch will let her and stands on two legs like a bird's. Her body is a huge lump the shape of a house, and her skin looks thick as wood. She swings her head around to look at you, still leaning forwards almost horizontally, which is what will happen to you if you don't straighten your posture, I swear. Filthy strands of hair hang down over her mud-brown face, which cracks like dry earth as she grins hungrily from ear to ear upon seeing you. She has far too many teeth in that mouth.*

*Far, far too many.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ***Cool 11th*** | Pluck 11th | Imagination 7th |
| Luck 6th | Muscle 9th | |
| Hide 12th | Seek 7th | Scamper 4th |
| Scrap 8th | Throw 4th | |
| Book Learning 9th | Gaming 12th | Home Ec 10th |

The Witch of the Woods used to be known as Baba Yaga. Under that name she terrorized children and any others who strayed near her hut in the Great and Awful Forest for years. Like many witches, she liked nothing more than eating children, but she also enjoyed stretching the experience out by ordering them to perform impossible tasks first and cursing them when they failed.

Baba Yaga was herself suffering from a curse: Every time she was asked a question, she aged a year. For a time she fought the curse with a rejuvenating potion made from blue roses, but still she grew older. Her reputation as a wise woman drew people from far around to question her, often with gifts of children or other food.

As she rapidly aged, she lost the use of her legs and took to traveling around in a mortar and pestle, with a broom dragging behind to cover her tracks. Even this was a strain for her, and eventually she retired to her hut, which was able to walk on two chicken-like legs, and never left again. Three enchanted riders who were her slaves ran all of her errands and brought her food.

Even in the walking hut, she was besieged with questions shouted through the windows. As she grew fat and old, she merged with the hut until the two were one. Eventually, she became covered by so much detritus that she blended in with the forest floor, and she finally found peace. She laid down her old bones and slept, and now wakes up only occasionally to give some deserving child a good eating.

Her three enchanted riders still serve her as they are cursed to do. They ride through the Great and Awful Forest on their heroic steeds, rounding up victims for their mistress and occasionally giving each other battle whenever they cross paths (they don't get along).

**Spells:** The Witch of the Woods knows all of the spells on the seer and witch lists, but is so thoroughly evil that it would take quite a bit of convincing to get her to use them for anyone else's benefit.

**Swallow Whole:** A child who is swallowed whole by the Witch of the Woods vanishes down her gullet, tumbling through the roof and into her dark hut. The hut is full of bones, though no skulls (she spits those distasteful things out), but a child could find candles and matches in the kitchen drawers with a 5th-grade Seek test. Lighting a fire in the fireplace makes the Witch choke, coughing the child right back out. Alternatively, a swallowed kid could try to force the windows open (with a 10th-grade Muscle test) and crawl out.

***Soft Spot:*** If the Witch of the Woods is asked a question, even innocent ones like "What are you?" or "Why won't you leave me alone?" she ages another year. She's so far beyond a mortal lifespan now that it doesn't affect her appearance, but what's left of her bones deep under her bark-like skin continue to creak and pop as she gets older. When she is asked a question she shrieks and suffers a wound. A string of questions is enough to make her flee.

## The Three Riders

**Grade:** 6th **Health:** 6
**Shape:** Person and Animal **Stature:** Moose
**Speed:** Fast **Protection:** 5 (shield)
**Wounds:** 6 or sword (medium weapon)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cool 3rd | Pluck 9th | Imagination 2nd |
| Luck 6th | Muscle 8th | |
| Hide 4th | Seek 7th | Scamper 6th |
| Scrap 8th | Throw 4th | |

One of the three riders wears black armor and rides a black horse, the second wears white and rides a white horse, while the third wears red, rides a red horse, and carries a burning torch. Upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that the riders are not separate from their horses, but rather are part of them. They prefer to thunder in, use their abilities to distract everyone nearby, and leave with a hapless child in their arms before anyone is the wiser.

**Possessions:** These magical constructs carry swords and shields.

**Black Rider:** When this rider approaches, everything within a stone's throw is cloaked in darkness. Everyone within a stone's throw who cannot see in darkness is effectively blind,

suffering a disadvantage on some Playground tests and automatically failing others, at the narrator's discretion.

**White Rider:** When this rider approaches, everything within a stone's throw is bathed by a bright glare. Everyone within a stone's throw who requires vision to see is effectively blind, suffering a disadvantage on some Playground tests and automatically failing others, at the narrator's discretion.

**Red Rider:** When this rider approaches, everything flammable within a stone's throw catches fire. Everyone within a stone's throw bearing flammable items (like clothes or hair) suffers one wound and continues to suffer a wound each turn until they stop, drop, roll, and make successful 4th-grade Scamper tests. This test automatically fails if the surface upon which the rolling occurs is also on fire.

All fires caused by the red rider go out with a puff of smoke as soon as he departs.

# Statures

| | Stature | Base Wounds & Protection |
|---|---|---|
| *Large* | Dinosaur-sized | 9 |
| | Whale-sized | 8 |
| | Elephant-sized | 7 |
| *Medium* | Moose-sized | 6 |
| | Adult-sized | 5 |
| | Kid-sized | 4 |
| *Small* | Dog-sized | 3 |
| | Cat-sized | 2 |
| | Mouse-sized | 1 |

## Stature Advantage Tests

| Test | Advantage? |
|---|---|
| Muscle | Larger |
| Scrap vs. Scrap | Larger |
| Scrap vs. Scamper | Smaller |
| Throw vs. Scamper | Smaller |
| Hide or Seek | Smaller |

| Stature Advantages | Dinosaur | Whale | Elephant | Moose | Adult | Kid | Dog | Cat | Mouse |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dinosaur | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Whale | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Elephant | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Moose | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Adult | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Kid | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Dog | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Cat | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Mouse | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

# Speeds

**Really Slow**
10 yards/round

**Slow**
20 yards/round

**Average**
40 yards/round

**Fast**
80 yards/round

**Really Fast**
160 yards/round

# Ranges

**Cricket's Hop**
5 feet–20 feet

**Stone's Throw**
20 feet–50 yards

**Arrow's Flight**
50 yards–400 yards

# Index


action scenes . . . . . .45-57
  dramatic moments . . . . . .46-49
  steps . . . . . .46
advantages . . . . . .42-43
animals . . . . . .182-185
animated objects . . . . . .197
apprenticeship . . . . . .74
armor . . . . . .62-63
artificers . . . . . .79-81
Babylon . . . . . .109
Beanstalk . . . . . .109-114
Beast . . . . . .134, 199
Beauty . . . . . .134, 199
Big Bad Wolf . . . . . .199-200
  hunting grounds . . . . . .143
Black Tower . . . . . .130-131
boost . . . . . .40-41
Bo Peep . . . . . .148
botch . . . . . .41
Boy Blue . . . . . .148
bugs, giant . . . . . .190-192
Bully . . . . . .7-9
Castle of Shudders . . . . . .127-129
Castle of the Snake . . . . . .143-144
character advancement . . . . . .6
character creation . . . . . .1-5
Checkerboard Kingdoms . . . . . .114-139
  general information . . . . . .114-116
  sample kingdoms . . . . . .117-139
Chris Barnum . . . . . .200
Cinderella . . . . . .201-202
City of Kings . . . . . .117-118
cleaners . . . . . .188
Clockhearted . . . . . .120
Clocktower . . . . . .118-120
clothing . . . . . .65-66
combat moves, weapons . . . . . .63
common folk, stats . . . . . .198
Cottage of the Three Bears . . . . . .144-145
credits . . . . . .4
Crooked Man . . . . . .204
Cursed Ferryman . . . . . .154-155
Cursed Spindle . . . . . .135-136
Dead Man's Cove . . . . . .169
death . . . . . .60, 99
declaring actions . . . . . .49-50
despair . . . . . .102
Devil's Punchbowl . . . . . .169
Director Schlossen . . . . . .136-137
Dragon . . . . . .204-205
dramatic moments . . . . . .46-49
Dreamer . . . . . .9-11
drowning . . . . . .102
Duchy of Ducats . . . . . .120-122

dwarfs .....174-175, 187
  hermit .....175
enchanted streams .....142
enchanters .....81-82
faces of the Sea .....159-163
fairies .....188-189
Fairwater Bay .....167-169
falling .....102-103
Ferret's Nest .....122-123
fetch .....189
Fifty-Fingered Delta .....155
fighting .....51-56
fire .....103
first aid .....60-61
fish, talking .....142
fishing villages, strange .....170
flat folk .....111, 192
fling .....63
focusing .....43-44
Forest, Great and Awful .....139-152
gear, miscellaneous .....65
gear, protective .....62-63
giant bugs .....192-194
giant golf .....175-176
giants .....175-176, 192-193
Gingerbread House .....145-146
Glass Mountain .....179-180
Glorious Empire .....123-124
gnomes .....193
goblins .....194
grades .....1
  personal .....21
  starting .....21
graduation .....92-93
Great and Awful Forest .....139-152
griffon .....179, 205
Grimm Lands, leaving .....109
guardians .....82-84
guards .....199
Hans the Hedgehog .....146, 204
Hansel and Gretel .....145-146, 203-204
hazards .....102-103
  drowning .....102
  falling .....102-103
  fire .....103
Headless Heights .....176-177
headless knights .....176-177
healing .....60-61
health .....21
Hollow Tree .....125-126
Humpty Dumpty .....205-206
iconic traits .....202
Imagination, using .....71-73
imaginings .....71-73
islands .....170-172
items .....62-71
Jack .....206-207
Jock .....11-12
Kahuna .....207
Kanaka .....207
keepsakes .....66-68
Kindergarten .....21
King Midas .....130
knights, stats .....198
Land of Fear .....126-129
Land of Gold .....129-130
League of Witches and Warlocks .130-131
leaving the Grimm Lands .....109
living objects .....197
London Bridge .....156-157
Mad Marion .....207-208
magic .....73-89
  kids .....76-77
  artificers .....79-81
  duels .....78-79
  enchanters .....81-82
  estrangement .....77
  guardians .....82-84
  learning .....73-76
    apprenticeship .....74
    precociousness .....75
    study .....75
  methods .....78
  progressive .....76
  seers .....84-85
  styles .....79-89
  using .....76-79
  weakening .....76-77
  witches .....85-87
  wizards .....88-89
Maiden of Gulls .....160-161
major characters .....181, 199-215
medical care .....61
minor characters .....181, 182-199
Mother Goose .....208-209
Mother Holle's Hovel .....146-147
Mother of Fishes .....162
moving .....56-57
Mr. Hoots .....210
narrator, sources .....90
narrator, tips .....98-99
Nerd .....12-14
noble folk, stats .....197-198
Normal Kid .....14-16
oaths .....103-105
Old Fishwife .....162
Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe 147
Outcast .....16-18
parry .....63
people, stats .....196-198
Peter Peter .....209

physical features . . . . . .2-3, 180
plants, carnivorous . . . . . .140-142, 185-186
poison . . . . . .105
Popular Kid . . . . . .18-19
precociousness . . . . . .75
princesses, stats . . . . . .201
progressive spells . . . . . .76
protection . . . . . .57
protective gear . . . . . .62-63
Queen Sophia . . . . . .138-139
range . . . . . .57
Rapunzel . . . . . .131-132, 210-211
Riddle Manor . . . . . .132-133
Rioting River . . . . . .152-158
  crossing . . . . . .153-154
  tempers . . . . . .152-153
river race . . . . . .158
River Styx . . . . . .157-158
Rosalind . . . . . .128-129
Rose Garden . . . . . .134
Rotten Kingdom . . . . . .148
Ruined Castle . . . . . .177-178
sagas . . . . . .91-98
  goals . . . . . .91
  themes . . . . . .91-92
  tone . . . . . .93
Sand Castle . . . . . .155-156
scenes . . . . . .97-98
Sea . . . . . .159-172
  entreating . . . . . .163-164
  faces . . . . . .159-163
  moods . . . . . .163
  oddities . . . . . .165-167
seers . . . . . .84-85
Serge the Clockmaster . . . . . .209-210
Seven Kids' House . . . . . .150-151
shape . . . . . .2
shields . . . . . .62-63
Sleeping Beauty . . . . . .148-150
Snow White . . . . . .174-175
soft spots . . . . . .182
sources, narrator . . . . . .90
speed . . . . . .3, 60
spells, progressive . . . . . .76
spending your turn . . . . . .51-57
Sphinx . . . . . .179
Spider-Filled Rapunzel . . . . . .210-211
Spinnenbruch . . . . . .134-136
Spinsters . . . . . .214
stature . . . . . .2-3, 57-60
stepping up . . . . . .44
storytelling . . . . . .94-99
  setting the scene . . . . . .97-98
    structure . . . . . .95-99
      tips . . . . . .98-99
  twists . . . . . .94-95
strangleweed . . . . . .140
Stray Kingdom . . . . . .136-138
streams, enchanted . . . . . .142
study . . . . . .75
swallowed whole . . . . . .105-106
Sword Oak . . . . . .141-142
table talk . . . . . .50
talents . . . . . .29-39
  general . . . . . .30-39
  origin . . . . . .29-30
  selecting . . . . . .4-5
talismans . . . . . .68-71
talking fish . . . . . .142, 158
teamwork . . . . . .44-45
  sharing dice . . . . . .44
temptations . . . . . .106-107
tests . . . . . .40-45
  increasing your chances . . . . . .42-45
  multiple dice . . . . . .41
  opposed . . . . . .41-42
thieves' candles . . . . . .122
Three Little Pigs . . . . . .211-212
Three Riders . . . . . .214-215
thrust . . . . . .63
Tin and Spices . . . . . .138-139
Tooth Fairy . . . . . .212-213
Tower of the Birds . . . . . .151
traits . . . . . .21-29
  Core . . . . . .21-24
  expending . . . . . .21
  iconic . . . . . .4, 199
  levels . . . . . .20-21
  Playground . . . . . .24-26
  Study . . . . . .26-29
trolls . . . . . .198-199
turn order, determining . . . . . .49
turn, spending your . . . . . .51-57
Ugly Duckling . . . . . .213
ultimate medicine . . . . . .158
University . . . . . .21
vorpal sword . . . . . .176-177
weapons . . . . . .63-65
  combat moves . . . . . .63
  improvised . . . . . .64
  for minor characters . . . . . .63
Witch of the Woods . . . . . .214-215
witches . . . . . .85-87
wizards . . . . . .88-89
Woman of the Waves . . . . . .161
woodsmen, stats . . . . . .201
World's Edge Mountains . . . . . .173-180
wounds . . . . . .60-61
  healing . . . . . .60-61

# Grimm

Character Name

Archetype

Wounds

Specialty (2d6)

Iconic Trait

Grade Level (Health)

Flaw

Character Portrait

## Special Stuff

## Story Notes

## Core Traits

| Grade | Max Grade | | Advantages / Disadvantages |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Cool | |
| | | Imagination | |
| | | Luck | |
| | | Muscle | |
| | | Pluck | |

## Playground Traits

| Grade | | Advantages / Disadvantages |
|---|---|---|
| | Hide | |
| | Seek | |
| | Scamper | |
| | Scrap | |
| | Throw | |

## Study Traits

| Grade | | Advantages / Disadvantages |
|---|---|---|
| | 4-H | |
| | Book learning | |
| | Country Club | |
| | Gaming | |
| | Home Ec. | |
| | Industrial Arts | |
| | juvie | |
| | Scouts | |

# Grimm™

## Once upon a time…

Once upon a time there was a land of twisted fairy tales. Where dreams and nightmares walked hand in hand, where wonder and despair were two sides of the same coin, where magic and imagination reigned, and where kindly villagers lived next door to strange beasts.

**These Grimm Lands are where *you* – a clever kid from the Real World – find yourself trapped.**

*Grimm* is a roleplaying game where you become an archetypal kid trying to survive in the strange Grimm Lands. You might start out as a bully, a nerd, a jock, or an outcast…but you could *become* much, much more.

**Maybe even a hero.**

To survive, you'll need to overcome your worst fears, trust your fellow kids, develop your natural talents, and rely on luck and pluck, imagination and muscle.

**Perhaps you'll live happily ever after…but you might also discover that *not all stories end that way!***

FANTASY FLIGHT GAMES

GR01 - Grimm ISBN 978-1-58994-215-8

9 781589 942158 53995

$39.95 U.S.

VISIT US ON THE WEB!

WWW.FANTASYFLIGHTGAMES.COM