

# HOLLOW EARTH<sup>TM</sup> EXPEDITION



**PULP  
ADVENTURE**  
ROLEPLAYING  
GAME





ARC

*Mt. Snofflas, Iceland*

NORTH  
AMERICA

*Tropic of Cancer*

*Bermuda Triangle*

*Santorini, Greece*

*Equator*

PACIFIC  
OCEAN

SOUTH  
AMERICA

*Last Plateau*

*South Polar Opening*

ANTARCTICA





ATLANTIC OCEAN

ASIA

EUROPE

Greece

Shambhala, Tibet

North Polar Opening.

GREENLAND

AFRICA

Equator

INDIAN OCEAN

Mysterious Island

Tropic of Capricorn

AUSTRALIA

SOUTHERN OCEAN

Antarctic Circle





# HOLLOW EARTH EXPEDITION





## Credits

**Original Concept and Design:** Jeff Combos

**Additional Design:** Jason Carl, Jim Cook, Chris Goe, and Tyler Running Deer

**Written by:** Jeff Combos, Bruce Baugh, Brannon Boren, Patrick Bradley, Eric Cagle, Jason Carl, and Steve Winter

**Additional Material:** Ed Matuskey, Melissa McNally, and M. Sechin Tower

**Creative Director:** Jeff Combos

**Lead Editor:** Melissa McNally

**Editor:** M. Sechin Tower

**Art Director:** Jeff Combos

**Graphics and Layout:** Ginormous Industries

**Cover Art:** Stephen Daniele

**Cartographer:** Stephen Daniele

**Interior Art:** Stephen Daniele, Mike May, Mark Selander, and Jeff Slemons

**Photographer:** Aaron Nanto ([www.chronicleproductions.com](http://www.chronicleproductions.com))

**Project Manager:** Melissa McNally

**Playtesters:** Monty Ashley, Brannon Boren, Jason Carl, Melissa Carl, Jim Cook, Dawn Fosse-Cook, Chris Goe, Rhias K. Hall, Kathy Johnson, Ed Matuskey, Melissa McNally, Kat Ortland, Doug Picanzi, Jennifer Running Deer, Tyler Running Deer, Trevor Schrock, Abra Soule, Justin Speyer, Katie Tower, M. Sechin Tower, Mark Walling, Tamara Walling, and all the playtesters at Gen Con 2005!

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In loving memory of Harold W. Baugh



4509 Interlake Ave N. #318 Seattle, WA 98103 USA

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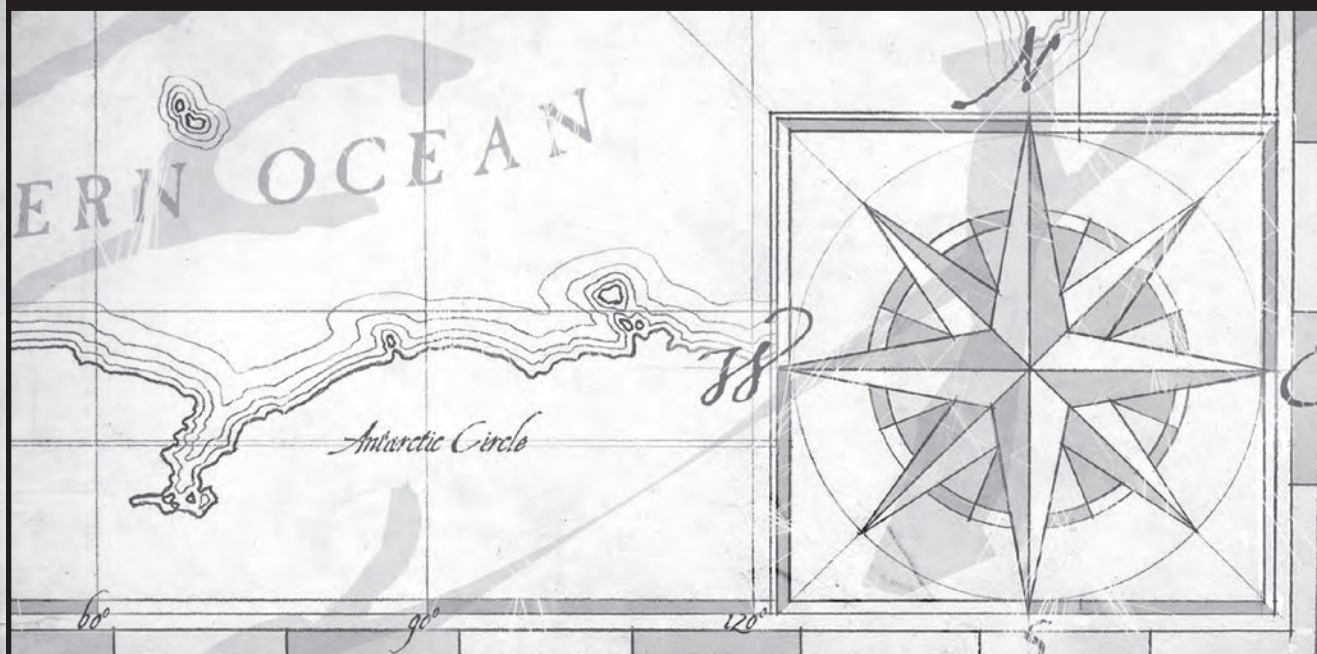
# HOLLOW EARTH EXPEDITION

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# ⊕ *FLIGHT OF THE EAGLE*



*Translators note: This is the true story of the Eagle and her crew, as told by Knut Fraenkel. His badly damaged journal was found near his remains on White Island in 1930. Fortunately, I've managed to restore and translate many of the entries, but I don't know if the tale is to truly to be believed...*

**2 September 1896**  
**Stockholm**

I supped this eve with Andrée and Strindberg. Both very keen to have me join them; both a little too full of explanations about why Ekholm was wrong all along, which makes me a little nervous, but the actual information seems sound enough. I promised them a final answer tomorrow.

**3 September 1896**  
**Stockholm**

I slept little during the night; I occasionally paced, and wished I had my boots for some proper hiking. I wrote letters to D. and K. in the early hours, and include text here:

*Dear friend,*

*You've no doubt heard that S.A. Andrée has been trying to recruit me for his second attempt at a balloon flight to the northern pole. He and his photographer, the talented lad*

*Nils Strindberg, put the question to me again yesterday.*

*Now, you know that I am no stranger to the perils of balloon travel. Indeed, you were with me on one of my crashes and I am sure that you remember the trek to safety as well as I. You also know that I have a proper appreciation of the perils of extreme climates, and what I think of unprepared fools. So if you've seen some of the press surrounding Andrée's efforts, it may come as something of a surprise to you that I have accepted the offer.*

*The truth is that the matter is not fully reported. It is not that the facts in press are particularly incorrect, though I do think there has been undue harshness in the arrangement of facts. Rather, Andrée knows something that few others do, thanks to his exploratory ground trips before this year's abortive launch. He and Strindberg have shown me something that inspires my confidence. I cannot tell even you, dear friend, what it is, just yet, but by this time next year, I have no doubt that the world shall know of it.*

*Yours in the hope of ever greater adventure,*

*Knut*

Since I keep this journal private in the greatest degree, and I wish an accurate chronology of my experiences, here I do note that secret: there is a steady current toward the polar depths, a wind of 4–12 knots, running steadily almost due north, starting not far from where Andrée attempted to launch this summer. He and the meteorologist Ekholm, whom I shall be replacing on next summer's flight, discovered it while taking aerial



soundings in the days they waited for a ship to carry the balloon and sundry cargo back to Sweden.

Andrée is frank about his lack of knowledge re: what causes the wind, but he showed me the reports from a field hand at the Danskøya launching site. The wind has continued within the same parameters ever since discovery. We can expect to find it next season. Is there perhaps some opening in the ice farther north, a volcano creating an in-draft? Perhaps it is something more exotic yet. We shall find out. What matters now is that it exists.

What marvels await us!

*Personal note: entries from intervening months not transcribed into my expedition journal, but preserved in the volume left in safe deposit box.*

**8 July 1897**

## **Danskøya, Spitsbergen**

We are nearly ready to launch the *Eagle*, but there is a problem: it leaks. I don't quite understand why it should do so, as the design seems entirely sound and others besides Andrée himself vouch for the construction. Nonetheless, 2-3 dozen cubic meters of gas escape the *Eagle* each day after inflation. This poses a dilemma.

Simple calculations reveal that under the circumstances generally known to prevail, we run a grave risk of not reaching the pole. We appear to be under-supplied for the ensuing ground trek that would be required, as well. Only the three of us know that we are well within the *true* margin of safety provided by the generally unsuspected aerial tide Andrée and Ekholm discovered last year. But Andrée fears to reveal it just yet, suspecting—quite rightly, I am inclined to say—that the moment it hits general news, someone with greater financial support will take the opportunity to steal the find away from him and our fine Sweden.

In short, do we tip our hand or risk being thought fools? It is not an easy decision, for bad press now might be hard to offset later, no matter how glorious our resulting trip. We have agreed to consider the matter and reach a final reckoning not later than the 10 July 1897.

**9 July 1897**

## **Danskøya, Spitsbergen**

I woke this morning with a conviction that there was only one proper course to take. While breaking my

fast, I discovered that A. and Strindberg feel exactly the same way: let the world think we are fools. We shall leave behind a sealed explanation to be opened in conjunction with our first post-polar message to the world. This should establish that we did not gamble or guess, but proceeded on the basis of reliable information not yet disclosed to humanity at large.

We turn with glad hearts to final preparations.

**11 July 1897**

## **Danskøya, Spitsbergen**

Aloft!

Flying in the *Eagle* brings a distinct set of sensations. In other balloons, we aimed to rise above most features of the terrain into the realms of calmer air. But Andrée's balloon is not an ordinary one. I can peer over the side of our gondola and see the many ropes trailing down to the ground perhaps 300 meters below me, every rope capable of being raised and lowered independently. The drag from these slows us so that we are no longer moving at precisely the same speed as the wind. With this slower speed, we can steer, using small sails deployed to each side of the canopy overhead and alongside our gondola. I already knew all of this, of course, but knowledge is not ever as glorious as experience.

Our ascent was not without incident, however. The drag ropes worked too well, and we had to jettison some of our ballast lest we crash into the sea. We know that our more informed observers must be predicting disaster, but we know what they don't yet. We are now steering slowly toward the secret current, and preparing for a period of more rapid travel.

What an adventure this is! I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

**12 July 1897**

## **North of Spitsbergen**

Early this morning, we found the secret current. Now we are cruising along at a very respectable 9 knots. The wind itself runs 10-12 knots, with slight gusts from time to time, and we deploy enough drag ropes so that we retain some steering capacity. Ahead there is only ice and cloud, but we all feel the thrill of impending discovery. Our course is very nearly due north, and even if we must land some ways from the pole, we have more than enough in the way of sledges and supplies to make a trek across the ice ourselves,



having safely grounded the balloon and then returning to it. I hope I am not being too childish in feeling that the secrecy of some of this crucial understanding makes it all the sweeter.

Now that we are up and running smoothly, I've had more time to observe my colleagues in operation. I make notes here so as to have a record of my perceptions from this time.

Salomon August Andrée is not the sort of man I would seek out as a friend. He is a full 15 years older than I, but it's more than age. He combines a certain natty fussiness with a tremendous self-confidence of the sort that so often leads mountaineers into folly. What redeems him from this risk is the simple fact of his actually being correct. His design of the craft and his plan for the expedition route demonstrably work as he intended. For this, much can be forgiven.

Nils Strindberg, on the other hand, is a fine fellow. A few years younger than I and far less experienced in exploration, he nonetheless has a deft hand for the most delicate of photographic equipment in the harshest of conditions. I confess to not fully understanding all of his technical concerns, but the results—his most excellent negatives—speak for themselves. We shall be well-documented on this trip. Andrée and I also find kindly warmth in Strindberg's devotion to his fiancée, to whom he writes long letters for our pigeons to carry along with more scientific data.

And what of myself? What would I say of myself, were I to encounter me, as 'twere? Knut Fraenkel, 27 years of age, civil engineer, veteran of the mountains, and not altogether a novice in the air: a gentleman of the world. I like to think that I would wish to know myself.

The wind seems to be picking up. Time for more monitoring.

### 13 July 1897 North of Spitsbergen

The wind did indeed rise yesterday afternoon, gusting up and settling back down, rising in terraces until it stabilized at about 20-22 knots. Drag ropes reduced our speed to 17 knots, but even that is uncomfortably fast for the *Eagle's* design. The wind is, furthermore, shifting slightly to the west, taking us not very far from the pole, but nonetheless toward territory not as well plumbed as our originally intended course. I could wish for some additional drag, but I fear that our ropes would end up under too much tension and simply snap. In the meantime, we shall watch.

I suspect now that my volcanic hypothesis will indeed prove out. The ice below us displays noticeable ridges, 1-2 meters tall, all marching toward (or from) our as yet unknown destination. Eruption would press upon the pack ice that way. I'm now looking for longitudinal breaks in the ice that might let me view the sea.

*Later:*

The wind continues to rise and has twice reached a peak of 28 knots. We have lost some of our drag ropes, and both sails have been significantly damaged; at my suggestion, we brought them inside the gondola for safety. For the moment, the wind carries us as it will, and we are no more than 1 knot below the prevailing speed.

Looking ahead, I see peculiar clouds. Conditions are altogether wrong for what appears to be a towering stormhead, but even if conditions allowed, cumulus clouds would not rest on the ice that way. I can only assume that my perception is faulty. Another few hours and we will no doubt find the truth of the matter, one way or another.

### 14 July 1897 North of Spitsbergen

Our altitude fell after suppertime, until we finally stabilized at about 40 meters. The air is more humid than seemed feasible for prevailing conditions, and I discovered while climbing partway up the canopy that there are pockets of warm air in the current! They are 10 degrees or more above freezing, carrying rather heavy droplets of water, which are responsible for the additional ice build-up on *Eagle*. All three of us took turns scraping off the accumulation we could reach, and Andrée tested out his plan for rotating and titling the canopy to clear more. Alas, it worked much less impressively than he'd hoped.

We have been in the midst of dense clouds for the last three-quarters of an hour. Strong upwellings of warm, wet air are spread throughout the mass. Instead of a volcano, I now suspect a different sort of geological activity: a rift like those in Iceland, with lava pushing up in both points and lines. Some of the floes we saw just before entering the clouds seem to confirm this speculation, as there were areas of uplift—some conical, some long symmetrical ridges. Some of those uplifted floes were also a remarkable green tint, which might well be an infusion of copper or other minerals in water expelled by volcanism, such as I've seen in mountain hot springs.



The surface of the ice appears to slope somewhat downhill to the north and west. It's difficult to fully confirm these observations, given the variability of the conditions, but I expect to reach open water sometime in the next few hours so long as the slope remains roughly constant.

More disturbingly, I notice an increasing swing in our magnetic compasses. Some of that we expected; it is well-known that the magnetic north pole lies at some remove from the geographical axis of the Earth, and that magnetic instruments in its vicinity sometimes register fluctuations. We are relatively far for that, but these are unusual conditions. Even so, I can only hope

that further disorientation does not come from whatever phenomenon awaits us. I am now supplementing the usual data with my dead-reckoning observations.

*Later:*

The cloud cover remains and, indeed, has thickened. With our compasses malfunctioning, only my dragline measurements provide a guide to speed and direction. I will assume that errors are entering the record, and note that later travelers shall have to correct the account.

We are over clear water now. There was a transitional zone of a kilometer or two where the ice cover broke up, and since then it's been sea punctuated only





by occasional independent drift ice. There is a steady sea current of about 4 knots in the same direction as the wind. From time to time—when the clouds permit most light to pass—the sea itself appears to tilt, though this is, of course, merely an optical illusion.

**16 July 1897**

**Unknown location**

We no longer know where we are or what direction we are traveling. Below us: the dark flowing sea. Behind us: the world we have known has vanished from sight. Ahead of us: what mystery, what doom?

**17 July 1897**

**A strange new land**

When we awoke this morning, we noticed a change in the quality of the air. Ahead of us, we could see the glow of the rising sun. We have no clear sense of how far we have traveled, but are quite certain we must have passed over the North Pole and are now heading east. I may err significantly in judging our progress. I trust my appraisals, but trust is not the foundation of science, and henceforth I shall consider my conclusions tentative until objectively verifiable.

Our altitude has risen from 8–10 meters up to 30, and we re-deployed the drag ropes in hopes of regaining some maneuverability. The air is rather hazy, with visibility only good to a few kilometers, but we all had the impression of hills rising on all sides, our well occupying the bottom of a natural reservoir of some sort. The temperature rose sharply as we emerged, climbing to at least 10°C in the space of half a kilometer, and we hastily shed our outer layers of coat.

We saw scattered islands and then an expanse of shoreline rising ahead of us. All pieces of land showed shoreline bluffs of perhaps 2–10 meters, cut by stream channels and occasional collapse, and then hilly interiors covered with a dense jungle of unfamiliar trees. Strindberg regretted for the first time, he said, never having gone into the hot wilds of the lands we know back behind the well, and Andrée and I promptly agreed. Were we to face a coniferous forest, or tundra, or any other feature of our beloved Scandinavia, between us we should no doubt analyze it promptly and thoroughly. We shall have to muddle on as best we may here.

The islands seemed uninhabited by fauna. The shore was a different matter. As we approached, a flock

of birds rose from the shelter of tree-summit nests ... or what we at first took to be birds. It is difficult to judge distance and velocity against the persistently hazy background and generally unfamiliar conditions. We soon realized that they were much larger than we'd expected, and scarcely birds at all, for all that they flew. Instead, they had the bare skins and fangs and talons seen in reconstructions of the vanished dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures. These, of course, were altogether full of vitality, and hastened to meet us. We were still staring in shock when their talons first tore at *Eagle's* canopy, opening up long gashes.

In a flash, I saw what we must do. Andrée and I had experimented with scale models back in Sweden to test schemes for rapid ascent and descent. This was not the sort of contingency for which we'd planned, of course, but preparation was, as it so often is, the handmaiden of success in the face of the strangest adversity. I shouted to the others to fall prone, and they did. I then tugged at ballast and drag ropes so as to give us a very rapid ascent, the strange lizard-birds following us. We shot up several hundred meters, and I felt dizzy from it. Then, as the creatures swarmed all around us, I pulled out the sails and made a series of adjustments, ending with the shut-off of *Eagle's* pilot furnace. We plummeted nearly as fast as we'd risen. Finally, with a prayer to the spirits of wise engineering and chemistry, I lit a flare and tossed it up into the sunlit sky, barely able to track its arc.

It flew just as I'd hoped, fortunately. It intercepted the largest stream of hydrogen from our canopy's inner bag and ignited. In a flash, a pillar of fire engulfed two of our attackers. They in turn carried sparks to other hydrogen trails, which also flamed into defensive pyroclasm as I steered us down to within 5 meters of ground level and inland, away from their nests. The last I saw of them, they were wheeling in blind, burning agony, seeking to get away from us.

I slumped then, and was grateful beyond words that Strindberg and Andrée were willing to see to repairs. My own time passed in a daze.

*Later:*

Whatever the light may be above us, it is *not* Sol as we have known that mighty orb. It remains constantly in the sky overhead, never rising or setting. We retreated to the cabin and drew the curtains to get some relief from the apparently eternal day outside.



## Day 2

I have decided to switch to this tally of perceived days since our arrival in in this strange new land. I can only estimate the passage of time based on how often we sleep. The task of reconciliation with our native calendar will be difficult in any event, and this reckoning is relevant to our present experience.

We have continued to sail in what I would call a southerly direction if I had any confidence in such bearings. The haze remains. So does the sensation of curvature, and we have debated the matter extensively. Strindberg believes we are in a chamber that may occupy much of the space within the Earth and that it is an entirely real phenomenon. Andrée agrees that we must be in some interior realm, but regards it as no more than an optical trick of some kind. Engineer Fraenkel must record himself as undecided, unwilling to embrace Strindberg's hypothesis because of its implications but also unwilling to commit himself to operating in the sort of massive perceptual delusion Andrée's approach would require. This is not the sort of matter for which academic study or even Arctic field experience can much prepare one, I fear.

In broad overview, the land remains fairly constant. In detail, it varies endlessly. There are miniature volcanoes up to half a kilometer high, and arching ridges of continuous mild lava flow precisely as I'd imagined might have caused the ice features we saw while approaching the well. The ash surrounding recent eruptions provides the only interruption from very dense vegetation that runs right up to the water's edge. Streams and rivers cut across this lowland, descending from heights we cannot see through the haze.

Wildlife of all kinds flourishes below us. We have seen more of the lizard-birds, but they did not molest us. (Perhaps we carried some reek of the well? I cannot imagine any natural organism delighting in its conditions.) Shaggy creatures reminiscent of mammoths trample the undergrowth, and so do peculiar flightless birds standing up to 3 meters tall, who display the fiercest of dispositions. I recognize some beasts as clearly related to our paleontologists' reconstructions of the dinosaurs, some of what appear to be contemporary species greatly enlarged, and some chimerae that baffle my powers of description. Fortunately, Strindberg photographs them all.

It has taken us two days to recharge our gas stores properly, but now we maintain a satisfactory height of 100 meters above the treetops, perhaps 200–300 meters above ground level, and in the gentle breezes

that seem to constantly flow to or from the well's vicinity, Andrée's sails perform as well as anyone could ask. This is not the pole, to be sure, but it is a world of marvels and I rejoice that I am here to see it.

## Day 3

It is storming. I am barely able to stand, let alone write. The lightning is fantastic. More later.

## Day 4

So ends the aerial lifespan of *Eagle*, I fear. Just as the storm was clearing, a mighty downdraft slammed us against what appeared to be the most massive fern imaginable, and its jagged hide ripped at canopy, gondola, and sustaining ropes alike. We tumbled to the ground in jerks of 1–5 meters between each collapsing branch, and finally landed on the ground with a great crash. It is fortunate that the rich soil cushioned us, or it may have been the end of us then and there. As it is, we are all quite sore, and are managing to deploy our tents only very slowly. Cannot write more now.

*Later:*

Creatures that seemed half-tiger, half-lizard came to prey on us. We had to climb, for they would not climb after us. We spent the afternoon and evening teetering on narrow branches 10 meters up, until those flightless birds chased our would-be predators away, killing all but two and dashing in pursuit of those. Then we were alone again, to tremble in private.

## Day 5

Indeed, there is not the slightest hope of repairing the *Eagle* without sophisticated machinery such as we did not bring and cannot fabricate in this wilderness. We are now concentrating on adapting our sledges for wheeled travel, hoping to make carts that we can pull without too much struggle. Consultation revealed quickly that all of us feel a desire to continue "south" and see what lies ahead.

We discovered that we are not alone in this strange land. While gathering wood, I noticed unmistakably human footprints near the closest stream. I judge that they were at least a week old and seemed to proceed from upstream (which is to say, ahead) toward downstream (which is to say, toward the sea and well behind us). I summoned the others, but several hours of scrutiny revealed no further sign of human life. We shall proceed carefully, hoping for neutrality or even char-



ity but prepared for savagery, should it be offered us.

### Day 7

We took a day of rest, and set forth “early” today, or at least so it seems to us. We make use of the trail blazed by those unknown others. Our carts handle not particularly gently, but not as harshly as I’d secretly feared. We manage an average of about 1–1.5 kilometers per hour of effort, and it could easily have been much worse than that. The worst of it is the enlarged gnats and other such vermin, who share their smaller kin’s fondness for human flesh and blood and can seek it much more aggressively. I caught myself on several occasions about to fire my pistol at one of the pests, before reminding myself what a foolish waste of ammunition that would be. Andrée has rigged clever swatting devices out of frayed drag ropes, and these do help, but even so, it is not like a garden trek.

### Day 8

We have found a village! And a remarkable thing it is, reminding us of something by M. Verne or perhaps that wonderful classic, *Swiss Family Robinson* by Mr. Wyss. It is arboreal, rising around and within a dozen giant trees, a three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle of platforms, rope bridges, and ladders, with chambers carved out of some trees. Baskets of all sizes and shapes have been cleverly fastened to rope networks, and carry cargo of all sorts.

We found no one present, but clearly the place is not abandoned. Some of the baskets were laden with fruits,



grains, and unfamiliar but well-seeming breads. Fire pits had been carefully banked, and fire stores rested near each. There seemed to be nothing in the way of personal belongings, however: it was as if this village was something like a hostel or hunting lodge, rather than the makers’ actual home.

It is difficult to gauge the makers’ level of civilization. We find no metals in their construction, but given the peculiar magnetic properties of this land, perhaps that’s merely intelligent caution—we have found our metal tools sometimes heating or sparking for a few minutes, and have already suspected that before our journey is done, we will have to discard many or all of them. Certainly the practical engineering on display in



pulleys, levers, arches, and so on is superlative. I could do no finer job myself, and I do not believe I know an engineer who could.

What a find this is! Strindberg alternately curses the fate that shattered some of his negative plates and blesses the fate that preserved so many. Certainly without his record, few will believe this account.

*Later:*

We have encountered the makers, and vice versa. For the moment they are ranged below us, circling the tree we chose for our rest, four dozen men and women and a dozen children staring quietly up at us. Their skin is a peculiar bronze such as I have never seen before, nor heard of outside medieval travelers' fables. They stand as tall as we do, and their health seems excellent. Their hair is dark, in shades from a medium brown to pitch black, their eyes likewise dark. They wear finely woven tunics and trousers, and thick-soled sandals, all decorated in zigzag stripes several inches wide in the brightest of colors, somewhat suggestive of Latin American fashion. They carry bows (and perhaps other weapons) inside their large satchels.

We woke from our nap to find them there, and in the thirty or so minutes since then, they have made no move to climb up any of the ladders. Andrée called down greetings in Swedish, Norwegian, English, and French; I added German, and Strindberg, Italian. They responded to each call with a call of their own, and we felt sure that they switched between at least three languages before settling on the one that is apparently their own tongue. Andrée spoke for us thereafter, and their chief respondent developed an increasingly accurate mimicry of his verbal style. A useful skill for a diplomat is that, I should think, for it must provide insight into others' minds even before meaning is established.

I have gone around several of the trees, and showed the tribe that we have disturbed none of their belongings. This provoked a strange sigh, that I think must be a gesture of satisfaction, just as (Burton tells us) there are tribes to whom the shake of the head signifies yea and the nod nay. I have endeavored also to isolate specific features like a rope and a pulley and ascertain their words for them, but with limited success. I believe it is time to descend among them, and see if the appearance of peace continues.

## Year 3, Day 183

After much conversation, Andrée, Strindberg, and I have decided to leave. We have lived side by side with the villagers for seven years now, by my estimation, and have learned much from them. We have made this our home, but it is not our home, and we have never given up on seeing our loved ones again. Andrée, in particular, has never stopped working on some means of getting us home, and he is convinced that he has finally succeeded. Strindberg has never stopped thinking of home and has often expressed his desire to return to civilization. For my part, I believe the whole world should know what we have discovered here. Although the journey will be dangerous, the three of us are fully committed to the attempt.

We are leaving today, and God willing, will be back amongst our friends and loved ones soon.

TELEGRAM

May 19, 1936

Sent by: Tromsø, Norway

Received at: Berlin, Germany

DECODED

Confidential. Fraenkel expedition proceeding.

Von Wartenburg

journals acquired. Thule



# ⊕ INTRODUCTION



Prepare yourself for the pulp adventure of a lifetime. *Hollow Earth Expedition* transports you to a savage world beyond imagination. Pay no attention to the naysayers, the doubting Thomases, and the nonbelievers who mock the existence of an inner Earth. You're leaving them all behind to take a fantastical journey!

How do you get there, you ask? There have been whispers of entrances through volcanoes, caves, or either of the Poles. Perhaps that crazy old scientist with the drilling machine knows the way. Whatever route you and your fearless band of explorers take to reach this unexplored land, there are wonders awaiting you: lost civilizations with technology and treasures currently unknown to man; creatures long thought extinct on the surface world; and a sun that never sets.

If you desire glory, riches, fame, or discovery of the unknown, this is the place for you. Be you an explorer, a scientist, a reporter, an occultist, or a terminally ill man seeking the legendary healing properties of this utopia—there's something for everyone in the Hollow Earth.

But beware, my friend, the path you are taking is filled with dangers. Dinosaurs rule the land: the carnivorous ones will try to eat you, and the wary herbivores won't hesitate to crush you. There are strange and deadly plants that you've never even read about. Plus, you'll have to deal with threats from the surface world. Secret societies vie for control of mankind's greatest discovery. The Thule Society—an occult group with ties to Nazi Germany—seeks the Hollow Earth and

won't take kindly to interference with their nefarious plans, and the millennia-old Terra Arcanum will stop at nothing to keep its existence a secret. And aside from all that, there are unfriendly natives to contend with.

Trifling matters like these won't hold back your intrepid group. You've put together a talented and capable party of explorers, and are prepared for every eventuality. You have a map, you have the manpower, and you have the determination. It's time to forge ahead, brave traveler, and experience adventure beyond your wildest dreams!

## What is Pulp Adventure?

Pulp adventure stories are fast-paced, sensational, and thrilling tales that were published in mass production magazines. The plot, the alluring cover art, and the inexpensive prices combined to make pulp fiction wildly popular from the late 19th century through the 1950's. The best-known and most enduring characters were created in the late 20's through the 40's. From these decades come such characters as The Avenger, Doc Savage, The Shadow, Tarzan, and Conan the Barbarian.

Although the pulp adventures were comprised of many different types of stories (science fiction, mystery, adventure, horror/occult, westerns, etc.), there are certain conventions that hold true throughout the genre.



- Pulp heroes come from all walks of life. They can be wealthy or on the edge of poverty, highly educated or illiterate, but they are all men and women who possess qualities that set them apart from ordinary folks. Even those who seem rough around the edges exhibit key qualities of bravery, integrity, and honesty. They're not perfect and they have their flaws, but their motivations are pure and they're very difficult to corrupt.
- Pulp villains, on the other hand, are not just bad—they're irredeemably wicked. They might hide their true nature behind a pleasant smile or a kindly demeanor, but their moral compass is broken beyond repair. There's next to no chance that heroes can negotiate with the villains—they won't be swayed from their nefarious plans.
- Characters in the pulps are not troubled by moral dilemmas. What's right is right, and what's wrong is clearly wrong. Heroes and villains are extremely unlikely to be steered off course. A hero's sidekick or a villain's moll just might switch to the other side, but the stars of the story should remain true to their characteristics.
- In pulp stories, right in the midst of an exciting moment—just when the hero is in a perilous situation and doesn't know what will happen—the scene ends! The action cuts to other characters to see what they're up to, and the hapless fellow in dire straits is left hanging as to his fate!

## What is Hollow Earth Expedition?

*Hollow Earth Expedition* is a roleplaying game that follows in the grand tradition of pulp adventure storytelling. Set in the tense and tumultuous 1930s, it is inspired by the literary works of genre giants Edgar Rice Burroughs, Jules Verne, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Within these covers you'll find all the action-packed, two-fisted adventure that you can handle!

As a pulp adventure game, *HEX* has all the elements you've come to expect from that genre; however, it also has its own conventions that make it unique.

- Finding a route into the Hollow Earth is no simple matter, but it's much easier to accomplish than finding the way out. Character versus environment is an essential and central conflict in the game; if it were easy to escape, there would be no sense of satisfaction or accomplishment when the characters resurface.
- Heroes don't just rely on shotguns and explosives. Human ingenuity triumphing over the savage and the

bestial is a key convention. There's nothing quite as exciting as outwitting your opponents!

- In *HEX*, the 1930s were a time of great faith in scientific discoveries, accomplishments and benefits. Super-science ruled the day, and superstitions were on the wane. Heroes are much less likely to believe in the supernatural than were their predecessors, but they are likely to run afoul of cults and secret societies with strange powers and abilities.
- In a dangerous place like the Hollow Earth, it's comforting to stick by the other expedition members. However, it's inevitable that somebody will become separated from the group. Perhaps the biologist can't resist going to look for that rare, previously assumed extinct plant that he spotted off the trail. The starlet might be kidnapped by a native tribe, or maybe the group gets split up by stampeding dinosaurs. It will be more challenging for both the expedition party and the Gamemaster, and should not be overused, but separation is a pulp genre mainstay and a guiding *HEX* convention.

## What is Roleplaying?

In essence, roleplaying is interactive storytelling. It's an opportunity to gather with friends—both old and new—to tap into your creativity, spin a yarn, and make it come to life. *Hollow Earth Expedition* is a roleplaying game that will provide you with countless hours of imaginative entertainment.

The history books will tell you that roleplaying first came about in the 1970s, when people started playing fantasy wargames with miniature figurines, and when the very first RPG book was published. But roleplaying has been around for much longer than that. After all, what child hasn't played some form of house, or cops-and-robbers? Those games are much less sophisticated than those we engage in as adults, but it goes to show that the fundamentals of roleplaying games, if not the mechanics, have been with us for a long time.

As we've grown up, so has the hobby of roleplaying. Much has changed since that first book was published. There is now a myriad of genres available to explore: fantasy, superheroes, science fiction, horror, and pulp, to name just a few. Just as exciting, we have a variety of gaming methods to consider: ranging from broad rules allowing for intensive storytelling, to hack-and-slash combat with detailed rules, and everything in-between.

*Hollow Earth Expedition* is a pulp roleplaying game with larger-than-life heroes and villains, endless adventure, and fast-paced action. The subterranean action is



# ⊕ Introduction

powered by *Ubiquity*, an innovative role playing game system that emphasizes storytelling and cinematic action. It provides you with the tools and flexibility to play the kind of game you want to play.

## How to Use this Book

*Hollow Earth Expedition* is conveniently divided into chapters to allow the reader to reference specific parts of the game.

**Chapter 1: Setting** summarizes the historical details of the world in the 1930s, particularly 1936.

**Chapter 2: Characters** gives step-by-step guidance for creating a variety of pulp characters.

**Chapter 3: Rules** explains how to resolve actions and challenges.

**Chapter 4: Combat** provides all the tools needed to be a two-fisted adventurer!

**Chapter 5: Equipment** describes weapons, gear, and vehicles of the era, as well as weird scientific inventions.

**Chapter 6: Gamemastering** includes information on how to apply pulp adventure concepts and conventions to your *HEX* roleplaying game.

**Chapter 7: The Hollow Earth** shares a few of the secrets and mysteries of the Hollow Earth.

**Chapter 8: Friends and Enemies** lists some of the people and organizations that will help or hinder your expedition.

**Chapter 9: Bestiary** describes many (but not all) of the animals and plants one might encounter inside the Hollow Earth.

**Sample Adventure** can be run as a stand-alone adventure or as the beginning of a longer campaign.

**Appendix** contains a wealth of pulp era resources to inspire Gamemasters and players both.

And now, without further ado, we invite you to go explore the fantastic world of *Hollow Earth Expedition*. There's a whole world of adventure inside...





## ⊕ CHAPTER 1: SETTING



To the men and women of 1936, the 1930s aren't history, they are today: full of hope and fear, opportunity and obligation, and fraught with uncertainty about tomorrow. We can look back and see the course of history during the years between them and us, but they didn't know what was to come, and for them it wasn't guaranteed that things must go a certain way. When they looked around, this is what they saw.

### *Recent History*

**25 years ago:** It was 1911. Republican William Howard Taft was President of the United States, and Liberal Herbert Henry Asquith was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Marie Curie won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for her discovery of radium and her invention of a process to isolate it from other elements for study. Aviation was advancing by leaps and bounds: Jimmie Erickson took the world's first aerial photographs (of San Diego, California), and Eugene B. Ely was the first to land his airplane on the deck of a ship (the *USS Pennsylvania*). Mexico was in the middle of a civil war; China's millennia of imperial rule ended as nationalists toppled the last emperor; in the U.S., the terrible Triangle Shirtwaist Factory disaster roused a fresh wave of labor protests and efforts to rein in the untrammelled power of business. American explorers discovered the lost city of Macchu Picchu in the remote mountains of Peru. All of these stories (and more) were

splashed across banner headlines, and chronicled in the lurid prose of the time; most everyone over the age of thirty-five in this present day of 1936 remembers these events.

**10 years ago:** It was 1926. World war had come and gone, blighting a generation in both the Old World and the New. In 1911, the Communists had been a group of angry intellectuals to whom only the most obsessed worriers paid any attention; in 1926 they ruled what had been the Russian empire. The international effort to overthrow them by military force was over, and the Communists were still in charge. Fanatical anti-alcohol crusader Carrie Nation had died in 1911, but by this time, Prohibition had been a United States law for six years—with no end in sight. Taft's control of the White House had given way to Wilson (the war-mongering idealist), then to Harding (the good-natured dupe of crooks and con men). It was now with Republican Calvin Coolidge, whose quiet manner was great fodder for vaudeville humor. Asquith's administration had given way to Lloyd George's wartime government, and then to a period of uncertain parliamentary control. Conservatives Law and Baldwin each headed administrations; Labour MacDonald had a turn (and lost his position over accusations of Communist sympathy that rested on forged evidence), and then Stanley Baldwin was back again. Someone was the first to fly over the North Pole, but the argument about whether that was Roald Amundsen or Richard E. Byrd would rage for years. A



coal miners' strike escalated into a general labor uprising in Britain; Baldwin's government responded with martial law until the strike collapsed, leading to lasting resentment on all sides. The newspapers covered it all, as did the newsreels with their musical fanfares and dramatic narration. Almost everyone greater than the age of twenty in 1936 remembers a lot of it (even if the details blur together after a while).

**5 years ago:** It was 1931. The 1920s hadn't been the golden era of prosperity that some people claimed—after all, general strikes and revolutionary movements don't catch on when life is so good. But the '20s were certainly better than what followed. One after another, the world's stock markets collapsed in 1929, and a fraction of the world's wealth just disappeared. In Britain, MacDonald was back in power, presiding over a coalition of the Labour and Conservative parties, and it wasn't going very well. In the U.S., famous engineer and humanitarian Herbert Hoover, who'd led the post-war relief effort that saved so many lives in 1919, found himself unable to respond to the new depression with anything helpful. Things had become bad by 1929 and they seemed to be getting worse. Japan was busily building an empire, exploiting China's ongoing disorder to claim mainland territory. The authorities in India were dealing as best they could with the unorthodox uprising led by lawyer Mohandas Gandhi. The newsreels showed it all (or tried to) and what they couldn't show the newspapers described. Anyone older than a child in 1936 remembers much of it.

**Last year:** It was 1935, and the world was rapidly changing. Prohibition was finally finished in the United States, and so was the Republican Party. Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt came to power for the first time in the election of 1932, promising changes that would free Americans from misery and fear. Conservatives and the upper classes could (and did) say that he was almost as bad as the Communists, but to most Americans the New Deal programs Roosevelt set in motion were a chance at a better life. MacDonald's coalition government, on the other hand, collapsed, and Stanley Baldwin became Prime Minister once again, using radio as skillfully as Roosevelt in support of a much more restrained response to the crises of the day. Germany's Chancellor Hitler looked ridiculous to many newsreel viewers, but his speeches made equally brilliant use of the radio, and he seemed to be charting a different way out of the depression. Only the most dedicated observers of the Asian scene were likely to notice the growing influence of a young Communist leader in China named Mao Zedong, but the ongoing

war in China was certainly newsworthy. It felt to many people like the fate of the world was once again hanging in the balance, and people in this year of 1936 still argue about just what happened last year and what it all meant.

It's now 1936, a year in which a great many surprises are in store for the world.

## *The Care and Feeding of Details*

Gamers are a contentious group. We argue constantly over which ingredients to use in our rituals of shared invention and discovery. The truth is, the answer that's right for some doesn't have to be right for everyone. This is especially relevant when it comes to the use of history in adventure roleplaying.

Some gamers relish the nitty-gritty of historical detail. It would genuinely bother them to play an adventure set in February 1936 and have Boulder Dam providing electricity, since historically its generators didn't go online until October. Others are doing pretty well if they remember that 1936 is after World War I and before World War II, and they don't much care about details as long as there are stylish suits and big bands around. In between these extremes are a whole range of possibilities. There's no innately right answer, just what helps you have fun. Before play, spend some time talking about this explicitly, giving everyone a chance to discuss expectations and identify potential trouble spots.

There are also some general considerations to keep in mind when thinking about using historical facts in play.

### *Different people know different things*

You can go to an encyclopedia and learn things about 1936 that people living then didn't even know. It would be decades, for instance, before the Western world had good information about what Stalin was doing to his subjects, and Sun Yat Sen seemed much more important to the Republic of China than he does today. This isn't just about the obvious matter of not knowing the future, though it does matter that people in 1936 couldn't be sure that Hitler would foil all attempts short of war to rein him in, that the U.S. would stay out of the European war until dragged into it after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and so on. It's about the things going on *in 1936* that weren't reported, or were misunderstood, or otherwise escaped notice.



Of course, not everyone in a specific historical moment will agree upon what's happening. Your character may well have privileged information. Diplomats know things the public doesn't, as do scientists, historians, and others who work in specialized careers. Nor does that apply only to technical information: the players and fans of a sport, of a musical style, or of an artistic method all know things most people don't. The people of one country often know something that others don't; fascist and communist crimes against humanity were no secret to their victims, it's just that few people in the wider world listened when given the chance. If there's a bit of period lore that you'd really like to bring into play, just ask yourself—what sort of person knows this?—and make your character that sort of person.

### *Dates are just dates; lives have meaning*

There are many historical stories rich in dialogue that no real person would be likely to speak. Science fiction authors have a nickname for the sort of speech that's just an excuse for the author to deliver a lecture: that's an "As you know, Bob" moment. "As you know, Bob..." says the professor, and then he tells the characters things that are obvious to them. Monty Python's Flying Circus once presented a historical drama featuring similar lectures and the flashing caption "Some dialogue verified by Encyclopedia Britannica." Fortunately, it's not hard to avoid that trap.

Real people, and interesting fictional ones, usually talk about events not in abstract recital, but by connecting them to personal meanings. A man celebrating his 40th birthday in 1936 might reminisce about signing up to fight in World War I just after his 18th birthday (or his 21st, if he's American), while an American woman of the same age might identify her family's first store-bought radio and the election of the first woman to the U.S. House of Representatives as more vivid in her memory than the escalation of tensions that brought the U.S. into the war. People often blur recollections together with things that may have happened a few years apart, joined under headings like "when I was a kid" or "as I was growing up." They get things muddled and transposed, too. Even if you personally always keep chronologies in order, you must have noticed that many people don't, because it's not the dates but the personal events that matter to them. Judge the importance of things to your character and you'll get a more vivid portrayal.

### *Everybody has views*

Quite apart from secrets and deliberate deceptions, people's perceptions of past and present are shaped by

concerns of different kinds. Take popular mythology and folklore, for instance, and look at how different eras have told the story of the American Revolution: whether it was God liberating the world through His chosen vessel among nations, a reactionary conspiracy to subvert and suppress genuine revolution, the inevitable product of purely material economic interactions, or something else. People are usually very sincere in their views about what's happening and why, even when observers find it all very strange. Americans of the 1930s were much less convinced than their descendants a few generations later that marketplaces could be the foundation of a lasting economy and society; they saw the escalating cycle of booms and busts since the American Civil War as quite possibly heralding the end of the capitalist era. It's like that with anything that hooks people's attentions: they try to understand what it all adds up to, but sometimes the math goes awry, or there may well be more than one good answer. Fully as important as questions like "What did your character witness, and what was just news from afar?" is the one, "How does your character think and feel about it?"

### *Facts should enhance play, not detract from it*

For pulp adventure, a good basic rule of thumb is that if an extra historical detail opens up a new Harding possibility and lets a player say "Yes! Then I can do this cool thing!" it belongs in the game; if it doesn't do that, it probably doesn't belong. The original pulp stories were none too careful about every little detail, and neither are their latter-day successors in movies and comics. Most fundamentally, the fact that there's a hollow earth should signal to everyone playing that this is not a game of strict historical realism. How much adjustment helps and when it starts to hurt people's sense of characters and world is a personal matter, and there's no right amount for everyone. But at least consider, when it looks like something fun has to be shut down because it clashes with history, whether history may wish to step out of the room for a snack while play continues.

## *Economy*

Unemployment fluctuated up and down a bit, but was about 25% for most of the '30s. As bad as those national numbers are, they don't tell the story of how bad things were regionally. Whole communities in the Midwest disappeared thanks to the Dust Bowl, and towns everywhere that depended on one or a few key businesses could collapse when those failed.



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There were fifty-three million Americans in the labor force; forty-four million of them had regular jobs. Ten million still worked on farms, though that number was shrinking every year. Four million worked for the government, including those in the New Deal public works programs. Of the rest, two-thirds worked in goods-producing industries (manufacturing, mining, and construction), the rest in service industries such as sales.

There was widespread support for formal restrictions on work hours, but that wouldn't come on the national level for another two years (when the Fair Labor Standards Act set the work week first to forty-four hours, then to forty, and introduced a minimum wage of twenty-five cents per hour). In 1936, work weeks of fifty to sixty hours were common, and the modern weekend wasn't yet routine: many employees had to work at least half-days six or even all seven days a week, so their rest time was never more than half a day at a time.

### Work and Costs

In 1929, the average salary in the U.S. was \$2,300 dollars. In 1932, it was \$1,500.

#### Everyday items:

Bread	\$0.09 a loaf
Milk	\$0.14 a quart
Ice cream	\$0.20 a pint
Ice cream	\$0.30 a quart
Sandwich	\$0.10
Ham, steak, or pork dinner	\$0.25
Man's shave and haircut	\$0.30
Woman's haircut and style	\$1 or more

#### In the Sears & Roebuck catalog:

Man's suit	\$25-45
Man's shirt	\$0.99 to \$3
Man's shoes	\$9 to \$18
Man's coat	\$32 to \$72
Woman's blouse	\$1 and up
Woman's skirt	\$1 and up
Work dress	\$3 to \$28
Corset	\$5 to 15
Slip	\$20 to \$35
Radio	\$15 to \$200

(or more, depending on features)

Gas stove	\$25 and up
Electric washing machine	\$35 and up
Electric sewing machine	\$25 and up

#### In New York City:

Single hotel room with bath	\$3
Double hotel room with bath	\$4

(One dollar more or less in many other cities.)

Before the crash, labor organizing efforts had been most successful among workers in skilled crafts. The American Federation of Labor represented workers in these fields, and did well, but that wasn't where most workers were. Union membership fell in the years after the crash, and seemed likely to continue declining, except for unexpected legislation from the Roosevelt administration. The 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act explicitly made collective bargaining legal in all lines of work; previously there'd been much argument (in both good faith and bad) that unionizing and collective action by workers simply wasn't allowed in some parts of the economy. The 1935 National Labor Relations Act required businesses to negotiate with any union supported by a majority of employees. Local and job-specific unions sprang up in response to these new opportunities, and their leaders quickly began talking to each other. The Congress of Industrial Organizations split off from the AFL and dedicated itself to supporting unions in the manufacturing world. By 1936, their ranks were growing by leaps and bounds, and tensions between union supporters and opponents ran very high.

Similar conditions held in the rest of the industrialized world. Nations with relatively conservative governments intervened in social affairs without a master plan. Nations with more liberal governments carried out more systematic interventions, only to find cascading complexities and, usually, organized opposition from conservative movements hoping to derail things. Totalitarian regimes, it was said, could get things done; the classic defense of Hitler was "at least he makes the trains run on time." In fact, neither he, Mussolini, Stalin, or any of the age's other tyrants could do that. As an economist fleeing the Nazis said later, "He could shoot those who said the trains were late."

## Clothing

As with many aspects of life, there was fashion as seen in the movies, newsreels, and magazines, and clothing as actually worn by people who had to pay for it.

The Depression slowed clothing purchases overall. People used what they had longer, and made more repairs themselves or had tailors make more for them, and all but the wealthiest families sewed more of their own clothes than had been common in the '20s. The world's aristocracies carried on more-or-less without interruption, of course, but that's one of the privileges of enduring wealth and status.



The fashion designers' ideal woman of the '20s was angular and somewhat boyish in style. Women with more curves pulled themselves into corsets and restraints or made do as best they could. By the mid-1930s, designers had become interested in a different ideal: the woman with noticeable hips and curving shoulders. Now it was the ex-flappers' turn to make do. The standard for hemlines fell in the early '30s to ankle length, and stayed there throughout the decade. Squared shoulders were very common, and so were necklines low enough to suggest cleavage without actually flashing any naughty bits. Most dresses had at least some gathering at the waist, and skirt tops and bottoms received more attention than they had in the '20s, with elaborate designs, ruffles below, and decorative yokes above.

Hats remained important and expected, with the pillbox hat most common for the general public and berets for those feeling a bit more dashing. Brimmed hats came and went in popularity, brims getting more elaborate as the decade passed.

Both pumps and flat shoes for women usually featured rounded toes and wide heels. Slip-on styles became popular in the '30s, though real buckles and lacings continued to show more class than sewn-on counterfeits. Some of this change was practical, reducing the costs of maintaining a wardrobe by eliminating less necessary expenses such as laces. Two-tone designs appeared in the 1930s, and had become very popular by 1936.

Men's fashions went through at least as many changes in detail and overall style as women's, and this was a new development. Up through the 1920s, designers hadn't done much with the basics of male wardrobes. But in the late '20s, they started noticing that many men would follow fads if fads were offered to them. As is usual with fashion, capricious developments could set major trends. It's a fact that sales of men's undershirts declined a bit in the '30s. Supposedly, legions of men discarded their undershirts after Clark Gable started doffing his shirt on-screen to reveal bare manly chest beneath. In practice, most men continued to use undershirts because the practical reality of sweating hadn't changed any, but many did make an effort to appear ruggedly ready and Gable-like when they could.

The standard for the early and mid-'30s was a single-breasted jacket over a solid color or wide plaid shirt. Some designers were pushing double-breasted jackets in 1936, but they weren't having nearly as much success as they would in the next few years. Throughout the decade, details changed a lot, providing excuses to sell

new garments to those in a position to afford them.

Formal garments for both sexes generally followed the movies' leads. Women and men bought the outfits that their favorite stars were wearing, or sought similar designs. Most people bought fewer luxury outfits than they had before the crash and gave extra attention to preserving the ones they had, but a dazzling new look for a celebrity could set off a run of sales.

A genuine revolution in clothing was underway in 1936. Up until the '30s, the manufacturers of synthetic fabrics, and clothing designers using them, had gone to great lengths to imitate real fabrics. The original goal was to provide a good facsimile of expensive fabrics at a much lower cost. In 1935, the DuPont company introduced nylon, which didn't try to resemble anything but itself, and it caught on well with the public because it is durable and easy to clean. Nylon versions of clothes intended for use anywhere there might be grime and stains sold well, as did lightweight nylon garments like stockings. Women's underwear was about to become much lighter and somewhat less complicated, though this was just beginning in 1936 and confined to those willing to experiment with significant changes to their usual practice.

## Entertainment

### Radio

The most popular medium for entertainment (and also news) was radio. Radios were in mass production, the technology well understood by manufacturers and benefiting from very large economies of scale, and didn't take a lot of money or support on the part of consumers. In the United States, two out of three homes had at least one radio, and they were nearly as popular elsewhere in the industrialized world. In colonies and less developed nations, radios might be held in common by a family, clan, or village, and they could be found much farther away from Western civilization than Westerners might believe possible. Travelers' tales told of encountering radio listeners in the depths of jungles and on mountain heights. Furthermore, radio had popular trust in a way newspapers didn't; advertisers found that listeners took radio more seriously as a source of useful information.

Audiences listened to a wide range of programs: news, comedies, dramas, sermons and debates, sports coverage, almost any gathering where someone could set up a microphone. Radio let people hear their leaders not after the fact (like on newsreels), but in present



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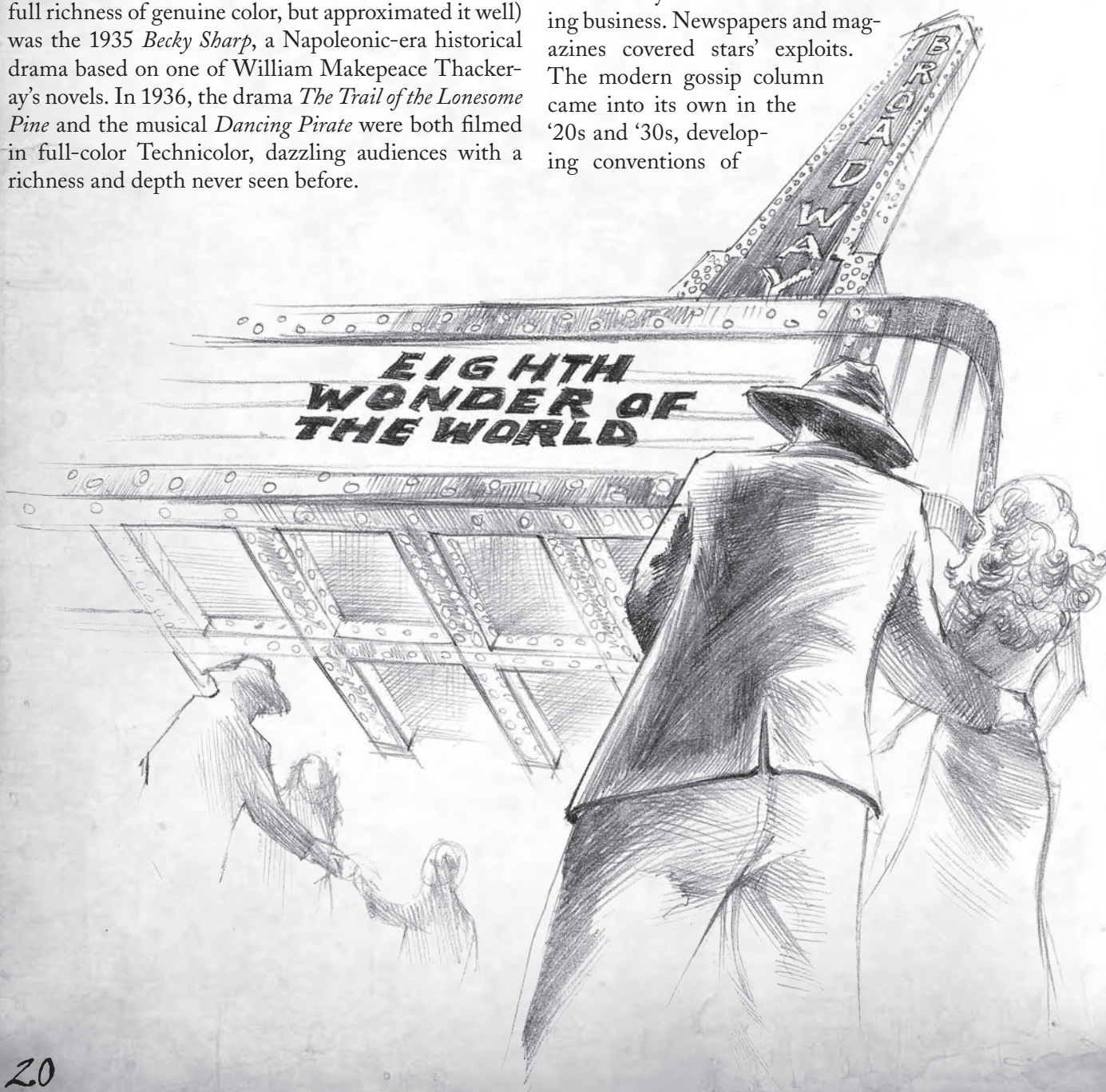
time, speaking directly to them. Politicians who used radio effectively tended to flourish.

### Movies

The movie industry was in the midst of radical changes in 1936, all the while operating extremely profitably. Feature-length movies with full sound became commonplace in the late '20s and early '30s, and by 1936 silent movies simply weren't being made by major studios. Directors and technical crews continued to explore the possibilities sound offered, learning by trial and error how to better record and reproduce it all. The next revolution was color. Full-color cartoons debuted in the early '30s. The first feature film recorded in three-strip Technicolor (which didn't have the full richness of genuine color, but approximated it well) was the 1935 *Becky Sharp*, a Napoleonic-era historical drama based on one of William Makepeace Thackeray's novels. In 1936, the drama *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* and the musical *Dancing Pirate* were both filmed in full-color Technicolor, dazzling audiences with a richness and depth never seen before.

There was intense competition in all of this: studios, camera manufacturers, film companies, and distributors entering into deals and schemes in search of an advantage over rivals. There was actual industrial espionage, with hired thieves stealing information and artifacts from rivals, along with efforts to bribe out information, buy the loyalty of inside reporters, and so on. Some of it was partially funded by organized crime, where bosses thought they might get some useful leverage; much of it was simply the natural result of greedy people staring at each other over a playing field with very high stakes involved. The public seldom heard about any of it, preferring to follow news of celebrities.

Celebrity news was its own booming business. Newspapers and magazines covered stars' exploits. The modern gossip column came into its own in the '20s and '30s, developing conventions of





coy suggestion and brutal exposure that remain part of journalistic standard practice (albeit toned down by developments in libel and slander law). The studios fought for coverage of their chosen favorites; some actors endured this, and some tried to use it for their own advantage. The rights to cover important stories were often bought at a high price, and covert deals were common.

Hitler's rise to power had consequences in Hollywood. Some of Germany and Austria's best talent had come to America in the 1920s, but many more came after 1933. They brought with them experience, technical expertise, and personal perspectives very unlike those already on the spot; the clash and synthesis of ideas produced both dramas and comedies of lasting popularity. At the same time, growing conservative disapproval of the cinematic glorification of immorality fed demand for increased action by Will Hays' Motion Picture Production Code—the "Hays Office" given authority by the studios to enforce standards of decency. Some of the more extreme conventions of sex and violence found in '20s films did go away, but filmmakers didn't all go along delightedly with this, and there was constant struggle to define the new boundaries of acceptable depiction.

### Records

The music recording industry almost disappeared in the Great Depression. Sales of records dropped 95% from 1928 to 1932, and returned only very slowly. Radio offered more than enough musical variety for many listeners, and didn't require new purchases. Companies did continue to make new recordings, seeking out new genres and performers in hopes of finding something that might earn them more sales, but the industry didn't become healthy again until the Depression was over.

### Sports

Sport and politics merged in an usually dramatic way in 1936. The International Olympic Committee assigned host cities for Olympics several rounds in advance, and when Berlin was chosen, few had yet heard of Hitler or the Nazis. In the meantime, however, Hitler had come to power and he decided to use the Olympics as a showcase for Nazi supremacy. The athletic venues were indeed stunning; architect Albert Speer had given full rein to his monumental style. The results were also stunning, but not in the way Hitler might have wished. African-American runner Jesse Owens earned world fame for his four gold medals. The practical demonstration that the Nazi regime

couldn't guarantee superior human beings contributed significantly to their opponents' morale in tough times during the war to come.

The big development in sports around the world during the 1930s was the trend toward professional organizations. Teams formed leagues, and leagues and professional associations hosted tournaments and annual competitions. The 1930s saw the first Football World Cup (in 1930), the first National Football League championship (in 1933), and the first Masters in golf (in 1934).

## Travel

In Europe and North America, the automobile came into its own after the Great War. People of all social classes drove their cars around town and on much longer trips. Elsewhere they remained either luxury items for the very rich or tools for business—particularly the growing variety of trucks tough enough to operate in harsh climates. The railroads still carried the vast majority of goods and people over long distances, but highway traffic was growing all the time; at the outbreak of the Great War, U.S. railways carried essentially all traffic going more than a few dozen miles, but during the Great Depression, automobiles and trucks carried a quarter of the nation's cargo and a third of its human traffic. The automotive share continued to grow even as the Depression dragged on.

Travel across the seas meant using ships. The days of the greatest, most luxurious floating palaces were already past, but there was plenty of luxury for those who could afford it, along with less glamorous options for those needing to move people and goods without fanfare. There was intercontinental air travel, but it was still rare. Amphibious planes (e.g., the *China Clipper*—rendered so lovingly in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*) and their runway-dependent cousins crossed the Atlantic and Pacific in multiple steps: for the Atlantic, going not far from one coast to a relatively short ocean hop up north and then back down the other coast; for the Pacific, relying on refueling stops at convenient islands. Aviation pioneers continued to push the boundaries of sustained flight, but the days of regular non-stop flights across the seas were still to come. Most people crossed the water on its surface.

### Automobiles

In 1936, automobiles were a well-developed feature of the landscape. The days of wild experimentation were over; the forward engine and closed body were



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standard, and most models put the major controls in about the same place. Inventions like four-wheel drive were made multiple times, sometimes through copying, more often through independent discovery, but it hadn't yet caught on in major lines. The days of proliferating manufacturers were over, too. Consolidation began in the 1920s as the efficiencies of scale allowed large firms to buy out small ones, and accelerated after the 1929 crash, as the firms that managed to stay afloat scavenged the remains of rivals who couldn't.

Economic hardship meant that many people couldn't afford to buy new cars as often as they'd like, and reliable models of the 1920s (like the Ford Model A and Austin Seven) remained in regular use. New cars were likely to be luxury vehicles, made for those whose wealth survived the crash or who'd managed to make good money since then. Companies like Cadillac and Bugatti focused their attention on this reduced but still viable market, and did well for themselves.

Modern movies and television shows generally feature a limited range of car and truck styles for the simple reason that there aren't all that many well-preserved cars and trucks from that period, nor all that many good reconstructions. The roads of 1936 didn't have the diversity of vehicles found in most cities of the early 21st century, but there was still a lot: shiny sedans and sports cars competing for space with well-worn but maintained cars ten years old or more, and antique-looking relics from the early 1920s and earlier. Some trucks of 1936 looked quite modern, with enough capacity for speed that a little streamlining actually mattered, while others were angular boxes only half-covering powerful but simple engines.

Outside the industrialized part of the world, the mix of cars was even more eclectic. Luxury models show up wherever the sophisticated rulers of technologically backward nations and colonies gather, even where driving over poorly paved or non-existent roads will quickly ruin their suspensions and turn them into immobile relics for driveway display. Cars considered too primitive by 1936's European and American buyers still find markets elsewhere, both new and used, since simpler designs mean easier maintenance.

A new car cost anywhere from a few hundred dollars (for a typical Model A or similar sedan) to \$5,000 or more for luxury models. Gasoline averaged about \$0.15 - \$0.17 per gallon throughout the 1930s.

### Trains

Nearly every major city in the industrialized world, many outside it, and many smaller cities and towns offered some combination of subway and streetcar service in 1936. There was a major boom in freeway construction after World War II, and many of those freeways were laid down along the routes streetcars had used. But the streetcars had been there first, often for decades, and neighborhoods had been born and grown up alongside them. Patterns of settlement that many 21st century people assume followed the freeways actually came before them; freeways let residents take the same routes at higher speeds, but had less to do with laying the shape of metropolitan areas like the infamously sprawling Los Angeles than most people think.

Most streetcars ran on electricity, either drawn from wires overhead or from cables laid beneath the road surface. In some areas they ran on gasoline or some other fuel carried on board, but the heyday of self-powered streetcars had passed in the early 20th century. Streetcar systems of the '30s covered much wider areas than most modern bus systems do, stretching far out into suburbs and outlying towns, and running far more frequently than most buses do now. Major lines offered cars every few minutes nearly every hour of the day or night.

Fares were ten cents in most cities. Some transit systems tried to hold the 1920s line of five cents, others had gone past a dime to as much as fifteen or twenty cents, but the ten-cent fare was typical.

### Aircraft

The golden age of zeppelins was short-lived, and in 1936 it was mostly over. There had always been some concern about the safety of huge hydrogen-filled craft, and while the *Hindenburg* disaster was still a year away, proponents of heavier-than-air aircraft made good propaganda use of any mishap with zeppelins and dirigibles. Helium was a much safer substitute, but politics got in the way of its use; the United States was the world's largest producer of helium, and the Roosevelt administration had concerns about selling it in large quantities to the Nazi Germany-based Zeppelin company.

Heavier-than-air flight, meanwhile, went from strength to strength. Serious pioneers continued to push the boundaries of speed and distance: by 1936, Howard Hughes had flown around the world in a mere three days. Meanwhile, stunt pilots and daredevils filled air shows and races in many countries. The basic



requirements for an airplane weren't so expensive that a dedicated would-be pilot of moderate means couldn't build one over time, while increasingly sophisticated models were available for recreational and commercial use. Regular service connected some of the cities in North America and Europe, with more routes opening up all the time. Tickets for these flights could cost hundreds of dollars for long flights, and they remained very much part of the world of luxury travel, but increasing volume of air traffic continued to bring the prices down. A flight that cost one thousand dollars in 1930 might cost only one or two hundred dollars by the outbreak of World War II.

### *Ships*

The 1930s were good years for ocean travel, at least as a luxury. Rich people continued to travel, even in the depths of the Depression, and while the biggest ocean-crossing aircraft might hold a dozen or two of them, an ocean liner could carry hundreds, and in far greater comfort. The big liners of the day took four to five days to cross the Atlantic, and did so regularly. The disaster of the *Titanic* was history now, and safety lessons learned from its mistakes were common practice.

Less glamorous travelers also relied on ships. Immigrants, refugees, and business travelers all utilized ships to carry their goods as well as their persons; the days of planes capable of hauling large cargoes for civilians were still far away.

Bigger, less personally connected cargo also relied on ships, but the now-standard container ship hadn't yet been invented. Some British companies experimented with standardized containers in the 1930s, but didn't find their results very impressive, particularly given the costs of building a whole new line of containers for the purpose. Container ships didn't come

into their own until after World War II, when military demand did what civilian demand hadn't, and forced a market of interchangeable containers into being. In the meantime, cargo ships required skilled handlers to safely load and unload wildly mixed sizes and shapes of containers. Bad packing could literally doom a ship: unbalanced loads could lead to capsizing in high seas, falling loads could breach holes in weak hulls, and many more calamities could develop. Shipping was much riskier in the '30s than it would be in decades to come.





# The State of the World

The world of 1936 is in trouble. Bad things have been happening, and it looks like more trouble is coming. Thoughtful men and women worry about what they can do to change the tide, while their less thoughtful neighbors just struggle to get by.

The Great War ended less than 20 years ago, and almost every adult in the Western world knows someone who suffered serious damage or died in it. It began like any number of traditional wars, then grew into a monster that devoured nations, and concluded not so much with one side winning as with the other collapsing faster. When it finally did end, people on all sides hoped that there would never again be such a tragedy. The Allied powers' leaders rode the wave of hope and fear into the peace conferences of 1919, and...it didn't work out. The actual treaty terms were a hodge-podge of idealistic speculations, side deals and arrogant misunderstanding of distant conditions. The League of Nations, which was created to unite the world as an effective force for peace, was crippled at birth and nearly bled to death following successive injuries.

The underlying problem is a simple one: it's much easier to claim that the responsibility for war, whether the last one or the next, is someone else's fault than it is to admit that one's own nation and choices have anything to do with it.

The old international order, with relatively small governments not very active in the daily lives of their subjects, has been blown away. Very few architects of the new order, with much larger, much more active regimes, set out to make it happen; it was mostly a response to one crisis after another.

## The Clash of Isms

Almost everyone agreed that the world was in real trouble in 1936: things had gone bad, and they weren't getting better very quickly. But there was no agreement about just what had gone wrong, or what people should do about it.

### Capitalism

The conventional wisdom of the age, capitalism held that limited government and free-market capitalism remained the world's best options, and that while the Depression certainly was bad, efforts to impose solutions from outside the market would end up doing more harm than would efforts to fix things from with-

in. Opinions about the desirable level of government involvement in social matters ranged from lots to none, and this debate would have been intense and polarizing even without the pressure of other ideologies.

### Socialism

The general trend in liberal-leaning capitalist societies, and much more popular in Europe than the U.S., socialism took the position that when democracy and capitalism conflicted, democracy should prevail. The government would play a more active role in society, whether by directly managing key industries and other organizations or simply by giving orders that existing organizations must follow. Conservative capitalists tended to regard socialism as what liberal capitalism would inevitably drift into, while liberals often saw themselves as the balance point between socialist and conservative excesses.

### Communism

The applied version of the Marxist theory, communism promoted the idea that the state, in its role as champion of the people, ought to directly run the whole of society. Stalin had succeeded Lenin as both the leader of the Soviet Union and as the advocate of transforming the world into one communist order, which would give rise to utopia. In practice, the Russians and others under Soviet rule proved hard to transform, and Stalin's regime included ever more brutal suppression of dissent. But it also had one of the world's most effective propaganda apparatus, and little of the ghastly death toll and immense suffering became known elsewhere. Up until Stalin destroyed much of his accumulated worldwide good will by allying himself with Hitler to partition Poland, many desperate people saw Soviet communism as a beacon of hope in the darkness of the Depression.

### Fascism

Fascism also taught the unity of all aspects of a society under the state, but on very different lines. Communism claimed to be scientific and directed toward the future, while fascism aimed to liberate the true people of a nation from present troubles and reclaim a mythic age of past glory. Fascism's enthusiasm for industry and applied science made it appealing to many displaced and needy workers, who saw hope for improving their condition so long as they remained loyal subjects. German and Italian militaristic programs made them appear to be recovering from the Depression a lot more effectively than most capitalist countries.



In addition, there were a host of short-lived and less famous alternatives, from technocracy to efforts at establishing new religious regimes. The modern student's first reaction to many of these is, "You're kidding." Histories of popular thought and life during the Depression will supply many creeds far stranger than anything most players would be likely to invent on their own.

### *Isms at War: The Spanish Civil War*

In July of 1936, the contenders for post-liberal authority went directly to war. In 1931, the King of Spain abdicated and a new democratic constitution was ratified as the basis for the Second Spanish Republic. A coalition of forces ranging from centrist republicanism to thorough socialism governed for the next five years. General Francisco Franco led a military coup after several other right-wing uprisings failed, and the Spanish Civil War became the proving grounds for rival theories.

Hitler's Germany provided arms and training for Franco's Nationalist army, as did sympathizers throughout Europe and America. Franco was enthusiastically supported by a hard-line faction within the Roman Catholic Church due to his opposition to secularism and defense of clerical privileges; this was a major objection to Catholic involvement in politics for those who saw Franco as part of the problem, not part of the solution. With Luftwaffe backing, air power played a more significant part than in any previous war, foreshadowing elements of the blitzkrieg strategy to come.

Stalin's Soviet Union backed the Republican forces, along with an extremely mixed alliance of anarchists, romantic revolutionaries, anti-clerical crusaders, and liberals and socialists of various flavors. The Abraham Lincoln Brigades brought together American would-be defenders of the republic and tried to give them at least the rudiments of training. Over the next three years, the Soviet forces would systematically undermine and betray those they'd sought as allies, but few on the

Republican side suspected any such thing in 1936. In the end, Soviet insistence on unshared authority and Nazi efficiency in command and production doomed the Republic, and Franco founded a nationalist government in 1939 that would endure for decades.

## North America

### *United States of America*

#### **Population 128 million**

The United States had 48 states throughout the '30s. Alaska had been U.S. property since 1867 and a territory since 1912; its statehood was still more than twenty years in the future. Hawaii had been U.S. property since 1896, but under more complex circumstances: a coalition of American and European businessmen first forced a crippling constitution on the native Hawaiian queen and then overthrew her in a coup in 1893. Then they worked with sympathetic American politicians to suppress evidence of native preferences for a return to self-rule rather than union with the U.S., and succeeded in bringing it under U.S. rule in 1896. It became a territory in 1900, and became a state after World War II. Few pulp stories have drawn on this tangle for a mastermind or nefarious scheme, and this is an unfortunate oversight.

Franklin Roosevelt won his first reelection campaign in 1936, carrying 46 of the 48 states. The New York Yankees beat the New York Giants in the World Series. The Academy Award for best picture went to *Mutiny on the Bounty*, and Eugene O'Neill won the Nobel Prize for literature.

### *Canada*

#### **Population 11 million**

Canada had been a united dominion since 1867, and the 1931 Statute of Westminster confirmed that no act of Parliament would apply to Canada without Canadian consent. The process of gradual independence would continue throughout most of the 20th century. Liberal Mackenzie King was the Prime Minister of Canada for much of the 1920s. Five years of Conservative rule under Richard Bedford Bennett ended in 1935, with Canada in worse shape than the U.S.; Bennett had tried reforms somewhat like FDR's, but more haphazardly and with less success. King set about wider reforms as soon as he returned to office, but a year later, in 1936, Canada was still suffering from much higher unemployment and social displacement.

### **Historical Context**

This mini-gazetteer isn't a comprehensive guide to every nation on Earth in 1936. Instead, it aims to provide some context about the countries from which characters may hail and the kinds of exotic destinations to which they may go in the course of their adventures. There is no substitute for real history if you want all the details.



# Chapter One

## Mexico

### Population 18 million

Mexico had just begun to recover from a long civil war when the Great Depression struck. Conflict that began in 1911 ended officially in 1920–21 with the emergence of a president acceptable to most Mexicans, other than the most conservative clergy and landlords—but they had the money and resources to continue fighting. In 1929, Mexican president Plutarco Elías Calles organized the National Revolutionary Party (NRP). He won the support of enough rebel commanders to bring the long struggle to an end, and promptly monopolized all branches of government for the party. The official doctrine was that the NRP was a “three-legged stool” bringing together the workers, peasants, and bureaucrats, but in practice, one of those groups would always dominate the others. Civilian president Lázaro Cárdenas completed the transformation in 1934 by exiling the retired Calles, demonstrating that the military was now also subject to the party’s leadership. He hadn’t yet enacted many of his ambitious policies in 1936, but it was no secret that he supported anti-fascist forces in the Spanish Civil War (and offered asylum to refugees from Spain) or that he wanted to nationalize the oil industries and use their wealth to fund education and other programs for Mexico’s many needy people.

## Central and South America

The major political theme throughout Latin America was the conflict between autocratic power, associated with old landholding families and the military, and reform-minded groups, representing various combinations of middle and lower classes. Military coups were all too common; whether the army wanted to rule or preferred to designate a ruler, there was little hope of stopping it. The countries not described in more detail are the ones that weren’t in the midst of another round of revolt or just recovering from one—no news sometimes *is* the best news.

The ancient civilizations of South America were still mysterious in many ways. Expeditions continued to find unsuspected ruins showing empires that once stretched farther than 19th century scholars imagined. Meanwhile, researchers in universities back home puzzled over esoteric languages and symbols. Mystics associated South American sites with the legacy of Atlantis and other lost races, and even with information about—and access to—the world beneath the surface of the earth.

## Argentina

### Population 12 million

Before the Great Depression, Argentina was one of South America’s success stories. Several administrations in succession managed to balance the concerns of foreign investors with the needs of the country’s own working and middle classes, producing economic growth, political stability, and relief from much of the country’s long-standing poverty. The 1929 crash put an end to that. The loss of foreign money brought down industry after industry, and the military forced would-be reformers out of power, ushering in an administration concerned with law and order above all. Left-wing groups grew and cooperated, and political violence escalated sharply. In 1936, the outcome of that struggle was still uncertain, with reactionary groups across the Americas fearing that Argentina might become socialist or even communist. (In fact, a fascist faction took power, allied with the Nazis until conveniently joining the Allies right at the end of World War II.)

## Bolivia

### Population 2 million

One U.S. diplomat referred to Bolivia as South America’s designated loser. When it first became independent in the early 19th century, its prospects were bright with great fuel development resources. But it fought a series of wars against nearly all its neighbors, sometimes invading, sometimes being invaded, and eventually lost control of its assets. In 1904 it lost access to the Pacific (Chile gained control of that sea-front), and in 1935, the three-year Chaco War against Paraguay ended with more loss of land, people, and resources. The traditional ruling class was thoroughly discredited in popular sentiment, but there wasn’t yet a clear alternative, and civil strife erupted nearly everywhere among would-be masters of the country. In 1936 the government nationalized the oil industry and founded a government-run corporation to manage all of Bolivia’s oil and related finances. With this increase in stakes, political rivalries intensified, and it wasn’t until after World War II that something resembling stable government returned. In the meantime, the country’s natural resources and its archeological heritage remained largely unexamined, since few explorers could provide their own armies for security.

## Brazil

### Population 41 million

In 1930, Getúlio Dornellas Vargas (the governor of a Brazilian southern states) led a revolution against the country’s rural aristocracy. Long-time pressure for



modernization and the misery of the Great Depression combined to unite the military, urban workers, peasant farmers, and most of the rest of the country against an elite still ruling in almost medieval style. Vargas embarked on a program of social relief very similar to Roosevelt's New Deal. Indeed, the two men admired each other's early efforts and took inspiration from one another. But where Roosevelt managed to hold to his course, Vargas found himself needing the help of more reactionary forces to maintain order. The Brazilian government became increasingly repressive and committed to industrial power regardless of the social cost. By 1936, there was widespread disillusionment, and hope or fear that another revolution might be necessary. (In fact, in 1937, Vargas would adopt a policy explicitly based on fascist examples, and would go on to claim dictatorial powers in 1938.)

The Amazon River basin remained by far the largest stretch of unexplored land in the New World. Much of it had never been flown over or crossed at ground level by any European, and thanks to migration and warfare, the tribes living in a particular area might not know much about those who had come before them. It was a mystery and challenge that drew explorers, scientists, artists, entrepreneurs, and would-be conquerors—almost all of whom would experience some measure of disappointment.

## *Chile*

### **Population 4 million**

In 1936, Chile was emerging from a decade of civil war. A 1924 coup by the military and conservative legislature against a reform-minded president touched off a whole series of takeovers and counter-coups. In 1932, stability returned with the rise of the middle-class Radical Party, who promoted an expanded role for the government in the style of the New Deal and managed to retain their influence in successive coalitions. Foreign investment and local business gradually began to pick up, though plenty of wartime damage remained.

## *Ecuador*

### **Population 2 million**

Democracy came late to Ecuador: it wasn't until a revolution in 1895 that a government representing people other than those of the church and aristocracy came to power. Its reforms lasted just as long as the money coming from the world demand for cocoa. When cocoa revenue slumped in the 1920s, civil strife loomed. A military coup in 1925 gave way to civilian rule by the immensely popular José María Velasco Ibarra, but in 1935 he was deposed by another coup

and took up leading the resistance again. This cycle would continue for decades.

## *Nicaragua*

### **Population 1 million**

In 1909, U.S. Marines invaded Nicaragua and took over. They stayed until 1933, then withdrew and left in power the reactionary regime of Anastasio Somoza García, who had long-standing ties to the U.S. military and commercial interests. Former guerilla commander Augusto César Sandino participated in the new coalition in hopes of making some constructive difference, but found himself repeatedly frustrated. In 1934, Somoza's forces assassinated Sandino, and in 1936, Somoza took exclusive control; his family would continue to run the country for decades.

## *Uruguay*

### **Population 2 million**

Uruguay was another of the rare South American success stories. Strong leadership at the start of the 20th century left the country with wide-ranging welfare services and the peaceful participation of most of the country's major groups in its politics. These managed to survive successive administrations, too, and the benefits were obvious enough that the usual opponents of reform, including the landed aristocracy and the military, made no attempt to undo them. Uruguay also managed to escape most of the warfare that its neighbors plunged into repeatedly, focusing instead on less destructive competition like hosting the first World Cup soccer tournament in 1930. (Falling agricultural prices after World War II would darken the picture greatly, but the 1930s were as gentle on Uruguay as on any country.)

# *Europe*

## *France*

### **Population 41 million**

Before the Great War, France pursued a policy of elaborate fortifications and complex strategies; all of these failed completely in the face of a German advance using strategy and tactics that French generals could have taken into account but didn't. France did build new fortifications (the famous and ultimately useless Maginot Line) on the German borders in the 1920s, but Leon Blum, elected as France's first socialist Prime Minister in 1936, reflected the popular will with his determination to negotiate whatever it would take to keep France out of another war. France's domestic ten-



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sions were not as extreme as the violence that Mussolini exploited in his rise to power, but they were bad enough with a militant right wing quite ready to field mobs and militia against its left wing rivals, versus a public that simply wasn't ready to lose another generation in a war against Germany.

### *Germany*

#### **Population 67 million**

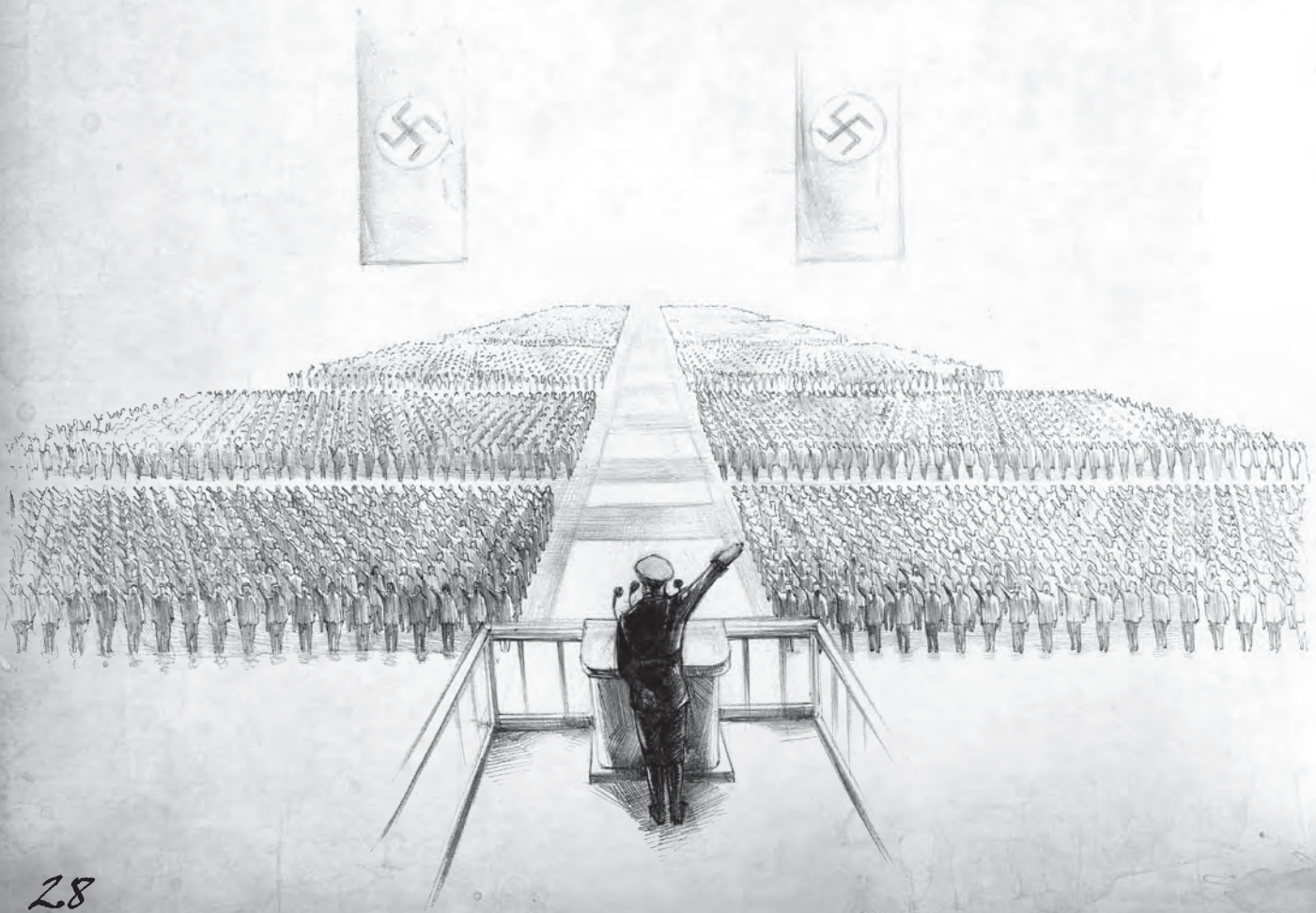
The Weimar Republic was established in 1933, when Chancellor Hitler abolished all political parties other than his own and took control of the nation's industrial and social life. Industries now faced quotas for production, part of a master plan aimed at making Germany ready for a war against the lesser peoples all around it. Public works on a grand scale, and a willingness to engage in as much deficit spending as the great plan required earned the Nazis considerable public support. It wasn't that every German was keen for endless war, totalitarian subjugation of thought, and genocide, but they could see for themselves how nobody else's response to the Depression worked better.

In 1936 Hitler took one of the great decisive steps toward war. The 1919 Versailles Treaty forced Germany to give up control of the Rhineland, one of its most productive mining and manufacturing regions, and to purge it of everything of military value. Hitler ordered his troops back into it in 1936, and while the Allied powers complained, none of them did anything substantial to stop the move. Hitler took this as a sign that he could keep pressing.

### *Irish Free State*

#### **Population 3 million**

The Irish Free State was very much a nation still in the making. In 1916, a republican revolt tried to throw off British rule of Ireland. It failed, but British executions of its leaders roused popular sentiment in a way that the revolt itself had not. In 1919, as the British government struggled with the aftermath of the war, a new republican movement declared Irish independence again, and armed conflict with British troops began. A 1921 cease-fire led to negotiations culminating in the 1922 grant of dominion status to Ireland. It wasn't independence,





exactly, but it was much more home rule than had been the case for centuries. Successive rounds of legislation earned the Irish Free State more and more self-control, and by 1927, Irish-elected officials held all the practical power. The Free State's second Prime Minister, Eamon de Valera, came to power in 1932 and continued the process. In 1937 he would outright replace the original constitution with a new one establishing Eire, the foundation of Irish government. In 1936 that was still in the future, but the trend was clear and popular.

## *Italy*

### **Population 42 million**

Italy, the first of the fascist nations, was one of Europe's newer countries. For most of history, the Italian peninsula was divided among many regional powers and city-states, often dominated partly or completely by other countries. Unification only took place in 1861, with Rome and other holdings of the Papal state brought into the union in 1870. That was well within the living memory of many of Italy's people, and the sense of a valuable new thing vulnerable to loss had a great deal to do with fascism's popularity. In the 1920s, rival private armies of left and right wing fought through the country, with mob violence common in many cities and civil order a matter of paying off as many thugs and warlords as possible. Benito Mussolini, leader of some of the most effective right-wing forces, was invited by Italy's weak king to become Premier in 1922—a decade before Hitler's election in Germany.

Mussolini started off leading a wide coalition of groups from reactionary to liberal, but by 1925 he'd maneuvered his original allies out of power and established the Fascist Party as the only legitimate force in the Italian state. Massive public works earned him popular support, particularly after the 1929 crash, and propaganda kept the public roused against a variety of enemies. In 1935, he ordered war against the African nation of Abyssinia, providing an outlet for all the accumulated military stores, including the first major use of chemical weapons since the end of the Great War. The League of Nations protested, but was unable to do anything to actually stop him; the League's failure here doomed it to irrelevance in the face of future crises. When the Spanish Civil War broke out, Mussolini provided support to Franco, and found himself in the beginnings of an alliance with Hitler.

## *Poland*

### **Population 34 million**

The First Polish Republic boasted one of the first modern written constitutions in Europe in 1791, but

it soon disappeared as a nation, carved up among its occupying neighbors. The Second Polish Republic emerged in 1919, thanks to the terms ending the Great War. Even Allied support didn't make it a sure thing: the Soviet Union spent two years in an ultimately fruitless war of conquest against the new nation. In 1926, a military coup led by Josef Pilsudski brought the Sanacja ("sanitation") movement to power. Pilsudski himself never ruled directly, but no one led the government without his sanction until his death in 1935, and even then, those who had enjoyed his favor remained in charge. An often unstable coalition of forces of the left, center, and right aimed at improving Poland's "moral hygiene", Sanacja aimed to eliminate corruption and control inflation. It achieved some success, but factional feuding after Pilsudski's death ultimately contributed to Poland's vulnerability in the face of German aggression. In 1939, the Second Polish Republic would disappear beneath the German *blitzkrieg*, and a sense of doom was already in the air in 1936.

## *Union of Soviet Socialist*

### *Republics (Soviet Union)*

### **Population 100 million**

By far the largest country in Europe was the Soviet Union, though "country" might not be the right term for a single regime presiding over more than a dozen captive governments and dozens of ethnic backgrounds. Stalin held absolute power, ruling through the official institutions of Soviet government when it was convenient and through networks of spies and henchmen when it suited him. The Soviet Union was in the midst of a huge effort at modernization in 1936, made without regard for the human cost. In particular, family farms were abolished and farmers set to work on huge collective farms, which were supposed to be more efficient. They could possibly even have been so, were it not for corruption at every level and the simple human resistance to an order to completely change one's way of life. Literally millions of people died of starvation as crop yields fell, despite the Soviet Union controlling some of the world's most productive farmland. Stalin's growing paranoia only made things worse, as repeated purges of alleged spies and saboteurs cost the government many of its most knowledgeable workers.

## *The United Kingdom (Great Britain)*

### **Population 46 million**

The United Kingdom was the largest of the Allied powers. Like everywhere else, it was suffering under the Depression. Stanley Baldwin's government couldn't suppress fears and needs any better than its successors,



and protest marches far larger than those in the U.S. continued to take place. Like all European nations (including Germany and the Soviet Union), it continued to struggle with the problem of wartime losses. The generation of men in their late 30s and early 40s in 1936 was vastly reduced because so many had died, fighting in the Great War. The consciousness of loss shaped both internal disputes and responses to developments like Hitler's growing aggression. Many people were simply unwilling to risk such loss again. It didn't help the cause of more vigorous diplomacy that many of its champions seemed outright uncaring about the human cost of war, and uninterested in what a good plan might require others to give up. This was part of the reason why war-making nations could get away with their actions for so long.

## The Middle East

### Turkey

#### Population 14 million

The Ottoman Empire was among the casualties of the Great War, replaced with a new, secular republic under Mustafa Kemal in 1921. Kemal, whose nickname Attaturk meant "Father of the Turks," set about building a new Turkish society with brutal efficiency. Old-fashioned customs were outlawed, Western-style clothing and education made mandatory, and widespread state authority over private life asserted to make sure things were fitting Attaturk's plans. Early efforts at establishing competing political parties were suppressed, the last of them in 1930, and there was no further talk of such things until after the next war. Attaturk would die in 1938, and his chosen successor Ismet Inonu would conclude a treaty with Germany to keep Turkey neutral throughout the war.

### Palestine

#### Population 1 million

In the British Mandate of Palestine, the seeds of future trouble were already sprouting some obvious problems. After the Great War, Britain had accepted authority over the area, which used to be part of the Ottoman Empire, with vague hopes of supporting the growing Zionist movement among European Jews. Palestine might become home to a new Jewish community of some sort. Unfortunately, the details were complicated. Years of diplomacy ended with the British ruling that Jewish immigrants could settle in the western part of the mandate, but not in Transjordan, the much larger area east of the Jordan River. More than a hundred

thousand Jews immigrated in the 1920s, rousing the hostility of the resident Arabs, who felt swamped. Subsequent British efforts to restrict immigration made neither side happy: would-be immigrants entered illegally, and natives felt that the British weren't serious about the mandate terms that called for protecting and developing Arab institutions and society. A campaign of terrorist violence led by Jewish extremist groups Irgun and the Stern Gang, would continue up until the next war. Inevitably, extremist Arab violence rose in response.

### Syria

#### Population 3 million

Syria had been given to France as another of the mandates over ex-Ottoman territory, and was designated early for a rapid movement toward independence. The French government wasn't keen to support this movement once it actually had control, and throughout the 1920s, nationalist violence and repression escalated. In 1936, Syrian leaders negotiated a treaty of independence and Hashim al-Atassi won election as Syria's first prime minister. France refused to ratify the treaty and maintained its occupation, leaving Atassi largely powerless. He would resign in protest in 1938, and the struggle would continue for another decade.

### Lebanon

#### Population 1 million

Lebanon was also a French mandate, and unlike Syria, classified so that France could maintain control for the long term. To enhance the scope of its direct authority, the French government played games with the boundaries, assigning to Lebanon areas whose people and geography were both traditionally connected to Syria. Lebanon itself was a more-or-less even mix of Christian and Muslim adherents, but the extra lands added many Muslims and Druze. The 1926 constitution granted by France required the president to be a Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim. As the Muslim population grew faster than the Christian parts of Lebanon, dissatisfaction with these requirements grew, and fed sectarian tensions. Even so, Lebanon was far more peaceful than its neighbors, and Beirut was a popular resort, the "Riviera of the Middle East", throughout the 1930s.

### Saudi Arabia

#### Population 13 million

In the 19th century, various noble families fought for control of the Arabian peninsula. Between 1902 and 1932, Sultan Abdul Aziz ibn Saud gradually defeated all his rivals and united the peninsula under a single



house. The European powers granted recognition to his achievement, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia became a formal reality in 1932. Very few people outside the kingdom actually cared about these developments, because the kingdom had no obvious resources. The discovery of large oil reserves wouldn't happen until 1938, bringing in governmental and private oil companies seeking any bargain they could strike to get a share of the riches.

## *Iraq*

### **Population 3 million**

Iraq was another new nation created out of remnants of the Ottoman Empire. Britain arbitrarily stuck together three separate areas and put them under the rule of Emir Faisal, who had led the Arab revolt against the Ottomans. In theory he held power from 1921, but in practice he didn't gain real authority until 1932, when the mandate period ended and British forces withdrew. In the meantime, huge oil fields were discovered and rights granted to a British company named the Iraqi Petroleum Company. Faisal accepted this as part of the price of his power, as did his son Ghazi, who succeeded him on the throne in 1933. The Kurds and others pushed into Iraq by distant boundary negotiators weren't yet organized enough for effective protest, and wouldn't be until well after the next war. Faisal and Ghazi were able to rule less repressively than some of those who came later in large measure because their subjects were still conditioned to accept a remote, absolute authority with little questioning.

## *Africa*

Africa was a continent in transition. The Great War ended with the Central Powers forced to give up their colonies around the world, and the Allied Powers taking control of them with local authorities given varying levels of authority. The war proved to local independence movements that Europeans could be beaten, and leaders of the push to take back Africa learned how to deal successfully with their European rulers. Unfortunately, this movement wasn't smooth or unopposed: wherever native movements gained ground, there were some Europeans willing to push back with the degree of violence they thought necessary and appropriate. In the 1930s, nothing decisive came of this—it would take World War II and the further weakening of European assets to shift the balance of power further. To the people of the '30s, the outcome of the ongoing struggle was a mystery.

## *Abyssinia (Ethiopia)*

### **Population 10 million**

Abyssinia was an outright war zone in 1936. Italian troops invaded in October 1935 and formally annexed the country in May 1936. The League of Nations made no effective response, and Italy continued the war until the outbreak of World War II. Emperor Haile Selassie, who took the throne in 1930, fled to exile but remained in close contact with the Ethiopian resistance. His status as the only African monarch of a never-colonized nation also made him a figure of prophetic significance in the Rastafarian movement just emerging in Jamaica.

## *Algeria*

### **Population 7 million**

Algeria was one of the most thoroughly conquered parts of Africa; France treated it as part of France itself, not just a colony, with its territories (or at least their French-descended occupants) represented in the French national government. The Arab subjects could become citizens, but only at the cost of renouncing their right to be governed by Muslim law in personal matters—a deal few were willing to make. The resistance efforts of the '30s weren't well-organized, simply flaring up when subjects got angry enough to try to do something about the colonial government and dying down when the government response was too strong.

## *Egypt*

### **Population 15 million**

Britain granted formal independence to its colony in Egypt in 1922, but British troops and officials remained present and influential, and the country's own leaders didn't really get to make their own decisions until after the next war. Sixteen-year-old King Faruq tried to juggle British interests with his own and those of the Wafd Party—whose leaders pressed for the union of independent Egypt and independent Sudan.

## *French Equatorial Africa*

### **Population 9 million**

The federation of French Equatorial Africa united four French colonies in 1910 under a Governor-General holding office in the Congo. At its heart were the French lands running north from the Congo river, organized as a response and challenge to Belgian holdings across the river. In 1936, this was still the classic jungle of deepest darkest Africa: settlements, farms, and mines carved out of the dense forests at hideous cost in money and lives, and maintained by brutal tyranny in most places. From there the federation went on through savannah and lighter forests up to the southern edge of the Sahara



desert, with a handful of trade routes running through oases to reach Algeria and Libya.

## *French West Africa*

### **Population 15 million**

France brought together eight of its colonies in western Africa in a federation in 1904, directed by a Governor-General who held office in Senegal, the oldest of France's possessions in that part of the continent. The boundaries of the colonies making up the federation shifted considerably every few years, as new administrations adjusted the maps to suit their various visions of what was going on and how things might be made more efficient. Centuries ago, before Europeans arrived, some of Africa's most advanced empires flourished in the great river valleys. When the European slave trade developed from an occasional venture into the foundation of a whole economy, those empires' descendants and the tribes around them were the ones most heavily enslaved.

In the 19th century, before the abolition of slavery in Europe and the United States, there were some utopian efforts to solve the slave problem by helping (or forcing) them to return to Africa. A few of those ventures survived up until World War II, resulting in First-World-born and acculturated black people trying their best to live alongside neighbors like them in ethnicity but wildly different in culture.

## *Kenya*

### **Population 2 million**

Kenya was a British crown colony; its authorities were appointed in Britain and native leaders were granted far less representation than in Egypt. The interior highlands supported rich farms and coffee fields, and the British settlements there were among the most thoroughly successful in Africa. The settlers' political and social suppression of the Kikuyu tribes who'd lived there for centuries fueled the first long-lasting native protest movement: the Young Kikuyu Movement, founded in 1921. It gained in popularity among the natives as successive generations of colonists tried to consolidate their power more completely. The lowlands are tropical, mostly humid, and unsuitable for large-scale agriculture. Pirates still maintained havens on the coast in the '30s, preying on colonial traffic in between imperial efforts to clean them out.

## *Libya*

### **Population 8 million**

This was one of the newest of Africa's countries, created in 1934 when Italy merged its colonies of Tripolita-

nia and Cyrenaica into the single government of Libya. The central part of Africa's Mediterranean coast had long been part of the Ottoman Empire, but in 1911 Italy launched a war of conquest, in part to give the still-new Italian nation a sense of shared triumph. When Mussolini came to power, he made completing the conquest an early goal, but it never worked entirely: there was serious violent resistance all the way up until World War II, when Italy had to use its troops elsewhere.

## *Morocco*

### **Population 2 million**

France began exerting some control over Morocco's affairs at the beginning of the 19th century, and strengthened its hold until Morocco was a French colony in all but name by the start of the 20th century. The sultan continued to reign, but he had no power to interfere with the doings of French merchants and settlers. Offices full of French civil servants administered French law to the French people in Morocco, and overrode local law and practice as it suited them. One resistance movement rose and collapsed in the '20s; in 1936, another was brewing.

## *Rhodesia*

### **Population 2 million**

Many adventurers tried to build empires of their own during the 19th and 20th centuries. Few succeeded so thoroughly as Cecil Rhodes—a unique combination of industrialist, diplomat, mercenary, and visionary. He negotiated deals with tribal lords where he could, assembled armies and conquered elsewhere, and earned the sometimes-secret backing of the British government for his ventures in the interior of southern Africa. He died in 1902, but Britain held on to his conquests, exploiting them as best the empire could. "The next Rhodes" was the status sought by would-be empire builders before and after the Great War, until World War II and the rise of the United Nations made it much more difficult.

## *South Africa*

### **Population 8 million**

The first European presence in South Africa was Dutch. Later, English traders and settlers came, and tensions between the two groups escalated throughout the 19th century until the Boer wars at the end of the 19th century and the start of the 20th. When peace came at last, Britain controlled the whole southern tip of the continent. The Afrikaners (Dutch-descended colonists) had kept the native peoples in an altogether inferior position, and Britain's Union of South Africa



continued the tradition. But the Afrikaners also found themselves at a disadvantage against the British, and Afrikaner activists pushed politically within the system and in some cases violently outside it. Many Afrikaners admired Hitler's racial attitudes and Nazi efficiency, and hoped that in any future conflict, Germany might help them against the British.

## *Sudan*

### **Population 6 million**

Larger in land than Egypt but smaller in population, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan was jointly owned by Great Britain and Egypt. A British Governor-General oversaw a council of both British and Egyptian officials, with most Egyptians regarding Sudan as their property to use as they saw fit. The Wafd Party tried, with limited success until the next war, to kindle Sudanese people's sense of themselves as equals to and allies of Egyptians; in Sudan, the authorities treated this as dangerous subversion.

# *Asia and the Pacific*

## *Australia*

### **Population 6 million**

Australia was a nation in the making in 1936. Until 1900, the British presence had been divided into six independent colonies. In 1901, the unified Commonwealth of Australia was created. The 1931 Westminster Act gave it a degree of self rule, but Australia didn't actually ratify the act until 1942. Since Australia's economy rested mostly on agricultural exports, like wool and wheat, the collapse of global trade in the Great Depression hit it very hard. The United Australia Party, a newly created conservative party, took power in 1932 and Prime Minister Joseph Lyons led the country for the rest of the '30s. Like many other leaders, he had to be content with efforts at halting further collapse and very gradual steps toward recovery.

## *China*

### **Population 450 million**

China's final imperial dynasty had been weakening for decades, with internal rebellion and dissent, and foreign pressure whittling away both its resources and its leaders' resolve. A military coup in 1911 forced Emperor Puyi to abdicate. Social reformer Sun Yat Sen, who wasn't involved in the coup but had international fame as an advocate of progressive change, helped organize a new republic, which lasted only a handful of years. General Yuan Shikai, the actual power behind the coup, pushed

Sun to the margins, then tried to declare himself emperor in 1915, only to abdicate and die the following year. After that, whoever could seize power on the scale of cities and provinces did, and China entered a period of practical anarchy. After Sun died in 1925, his efforts to reunite the country unsuccessful, two major rivals emerged: the Communist Party of China, which was strongest in the north, and the Kuomintang or Nationalist Party, which held power in the south. To most of the world, Chiang Kai-shek and his Kuomintang were the real government of China. The Kuomintang and Communists had a formal alliance against the Japanese, but in practice the Communists were much more ready to fight. Nationalist leadership was oriented toward skimming profits and staying out of danger when possible, and many Nationalist officials were quite willing to collaborate.

## *French Indochina*

### **Population 21 million**

France took control of the various pieces of the Vietnamese peninsula in the mid-19th century, and still held onto them. The local kings and emperors remained in place, but were powerless. The collapse of imperial China put fresh pressure on the colonial regime, though, with native independence movements driven by the hope that what had happened in China could happen for them, too. Representatives of the factions in China and of the Japanese government, for their part, tried to recruit the locals so as to direct Indochinese uprisings to their own advantage. It was all getting messy, and would get far worse.

## *India*

### **Population 350 million**

The British government was trying to appease Indian desire for more independence without actually giving up control of extremely valuable land and resources. The British-appointed viceroy gained locally chosen advisors in the early 20th century, and various aspects of the administration of routine law passed into Indian hands after that. But the Indian National Congress (INC) led the movement to drive the British out completely. Former lawyer Mohandas Gandhi had returned to his homeland from South Africa in 1920, and quickly rose to prominence in the INC as others recognized his conviction and inventive genius for tactics. Nationwide demonstrations of civil disobedience began in the early '20s, with increasingly sophisticated coordination throughout the '20s and '30s. The British response to this fluctuated between flustered cooperation and moments of hasty violence, which only earned the INC that much more respect.



## Chapter One

### *Japan*

#### **Population 65 million**

War was essential to the workings of Japan's imperial system. Centrally coordinated industrialization called for raw materials and cheap labor, neither of which Japan could produce in abundance, and trade was always vulnerable to the whims of others. Conquest would give Japan what it needed from other countries. Its victories against Germany's Pacific colonies in the Great War let it participate in the 1919 peace conference as one of the great powers, and it was prominent in the League of Nations. In 1931, Japan conquered the northwestern Chinese provinces in Manchuria and set up a puppet government ruled by the last Chinese emperor, who'd been driven off the Chinese throne in 1911. When the League of Nations objected, Japan simply left the League. Further Japanese incursions provoked escalating Chinese resistance, and a major Sino-Japanese war would erupt in 1937. In the meantime, Japan's various democratic parties proved unable alone or in combination to restrain the growing power of the Imperial military, who were the country's practical rulers throughout the Great Depression.

### *Philippines*

#### **Population 2 million**

In 1936, the Philippines were just entering a new stage in independence. At the end of the 19th century, U.S. troops had conquered the country and waged a brutal, sometimes genocidal war against the resistance. Step by step, though, U.S. power receded, and in 1935 the Commonwealth of the Philippines was created with Filipinos holding real power for the first time in the 20th century. It even had the right to elect a resident commissioner to participate in the House of Representatives. The damage of war and the general misery of the Great Depression made the transition to local power that much harder, with some factions fearing the speed of change and others trying to slow it down. But the Commonwealth managed to survive, and even to reconstitute itself after Japanese occupation in World War II.

## *Unknown Territory*

In the 1930s, there were still large areas of land and sea not well known, if at all, to the Western world. There was room for brave men and women to go places nobody—at least nobody civilized—had ever been before.

Antarctica was the target of multiple expeditions every year throughout the decade. Aviators flew across the interior, discovering new mountain ranges and valleys, while groups relying on dog sleds probed inland from the coasts. Aviators also took the lead in exploring the Arctic; Soviet aviators in particular made ever longer trips, though the greatest push wouldn't begin until 1937.

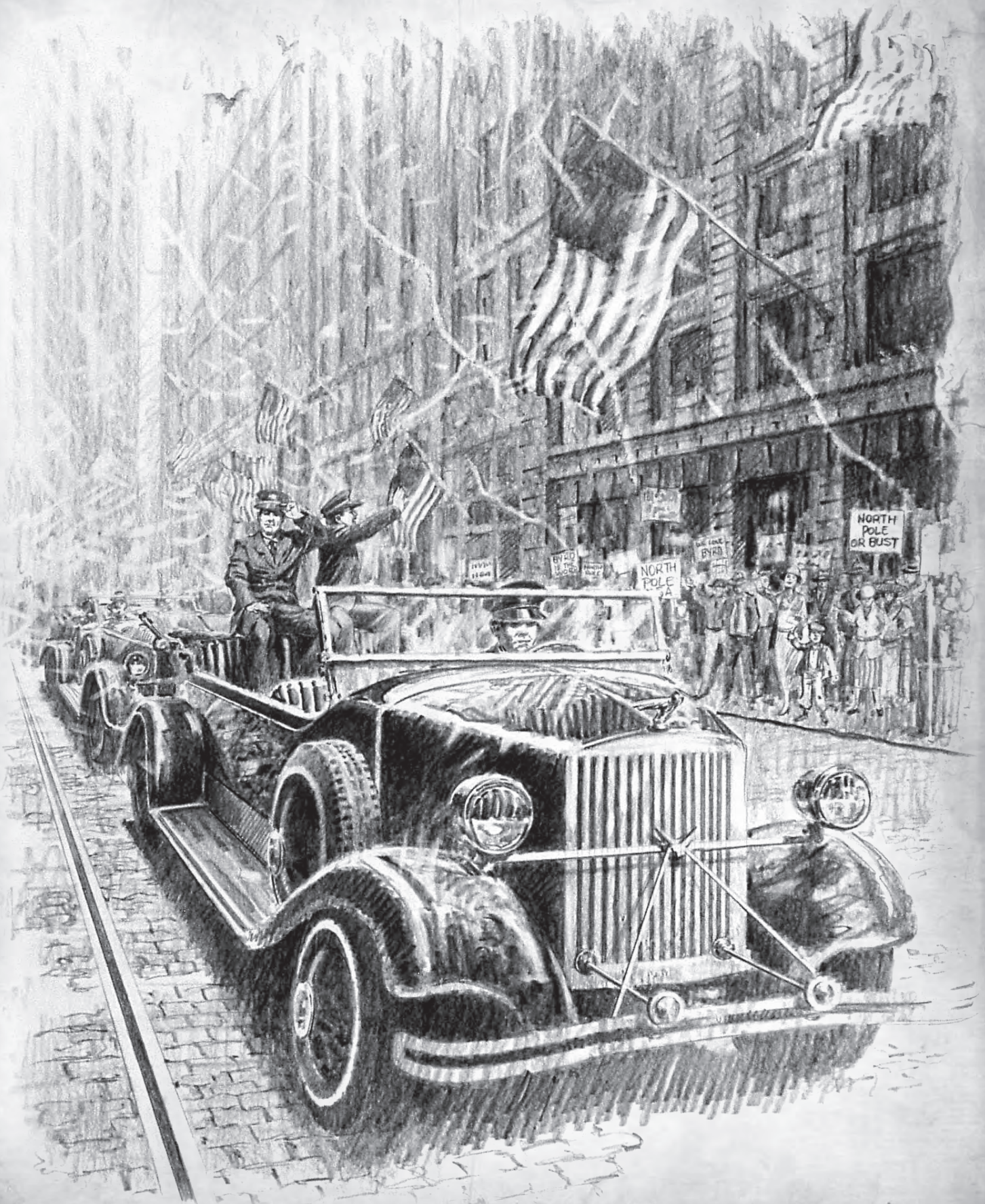
The general geography of Africa, Asia, and South America was established by the '30s, but there were countless discoveries yet to be made. Nobody really knew just how extensive the Amazon's network of tributaries was, for instance, nor what secrets might lurk in those jungles. Likewise with the mountains of inner Asia and the nomadic tribes living in the valleys and steppes between them, the vast forests of northern Asia and North America, and so on. Then there were caves being discovered all the time, including vast networks in Indonesia and Central America.

And, of course, there was the world within.

Discoveries made by men and women ahead of their time is an important part of pulp adventure. It's easy enough to capture this in play by making judicious use of discoveries that didn't really happen until later. For instance, in 2006, anthropologists discovered a Stonehenge-like observatory using standing stones to help identify astronomical events (i.e., the position of the sun at the solstices far up a northern tributary of the Amazon River), dating back to the dawn of the Christian era, the first century AD. It came as a major surprise, since the scholarly consensus until then had been that no society capable of building such things had ever flourished in the Amazon basin. A pulp explorer could easily make that discovery in 1936, and likely find the thing still in use by natives whose exotic civilization combined scientific wisdom and peculiar religious convictions, for peril, benefit, or both.

The same is true of just about anything else. Jet engines? A cheap way of manufacturing television tubes? A rig rotating multiple X-ray machines so as to produce an early version of the CAT scan? The supersquids of the South Pacific? They may all be fair game, depending on the focus of a campaign. Furthermore, half the fun is combining later science or technology with 1930s attitudes about it all. History is there to be used.







## ⊕ CHAPTER 2: CHARACTERS



Characters are the driving force behind *Hollow Earth Expedition* and it is their goals and motivations that move the story along. As a player, your job is to create a character through which you will interact with the game world and take an active part in the story. You assume your character's role every time you play, and you get to watch him grow and develop over time. With luck, your character will become a great hero who suffers setbacks and performs amazing feats—just as film and literary characters do.

Character generation is a relatively simple process that you can easily do on your own. However, it's best for players to create their characters all together under the supervision of the Gamemaster so he can answer questions and guide you through the creation process.

The character generation process begins with choosing your character Archetype and Motivation, then translating those into the traits and statistics used in the game. You have a certain number of character points with which to purchase your character's basic traits: Attributes, Skills, Talents, and Resources. You will get to determine your character's relative strengths and weaknesses in each of these areas. You also get to make up your character's background—his or her life story up until the game begins. Once the character generation process is complete, you should have a good feel for who your character is, what he wants, and how to play him during the game.

### CHARACTER GENERATION OVERVIEW

#### Step One: Archetype (p. 39)

Choose an Archetype or make up one of your own. Your Archetype represents your character's role and is used as a guide for character creation.

#### Step Two: Motivation (p. 41)

Choose a Motivation or make up one of your own. Your Motivation represents your character's driving goal and gives him a reason to be in the game.

#### Step Three: Primary Attributes (p. 43)

Choose Attributes. You have 15 Attribute points to buy Primary Attributes ratings, which are purchased on a one-for-one basis. You must put at least one point, but no more than five points, in each of the six Attributes.



[illegible][illegible]

## Step Four: Secondary Attributes (p. 46)

Calculate Secondary Attributes. Your Secondary Attribute ratings are calculated based on your Primary Attributes:

**Size = 0** (Average Human)

**Move** = Strength + Dexterity

**Perception** = Intelligence + Willpower

**Initiative** = Dexterity + Intelligence

$$\mathbf{Defense} = \mathbf{Body} + \mathbf{Dexterity} - \mathbf{Size}$$

**Stun** = Body

**Health** = Body + Willpower + Size

## Step Five: Skills (p. 48)

**Choose Skills.** You have 15 Skill points to purchase Skill Levels, which are purchased on a one-for-one basis. You may purchase up to five levels in any one Skill at character creation.

**Skill Specializations (Optional):** You may want to have your character specialize in a particular aspect of a Skill. Every time your Specialization applies to an action, you receive a +1 bonus to your Skill roll. Skill Specializations cost a half-point each, and you must have at least one Skill Level in a Skill to purchase a Specialization for it. You may only have one Specialization in any one Skill at character creation. Advanced Skill Specializations may be purchased with experience points during play.

## Step Six: Talents and Resources (p. 60)

Choose one Talent or one Resource. Talents represent your character's special abilities while Resources represent your character's power, wealth, and influence. Talents are never lost, but Resources may be gained or lost during play.

Step Seven:  
Flaws (Optional) (p. 76)

Choose a Flaw. Flaws represent your character's physical, mental, or social shortcomings. If your character is hurt or hindered by his Flaw during play, you earn Style points that may later be spent for bonus dice on a roll. Taking a Flaw at character creation gives your character one starting Style point.



## Step Eight: Experience (p. 79)

Spend starting experience points. Your character starts play with a certain amount of life experience. You have 15 experience points to spend on Primary Attributes, Skill Levels, Skill Specializations, or additional Talents and Resources. Unspent experience points may be carried into play with Gamemaster approval.

Trait	Experience Point Cost
Primary Attribute	New Attribute Level x 5 points
Skill	New Skill Level x 2 points
Skill Specialization	3 points
Talent	15 points
Resource	15 points

**Note:** The Gamemaster may vary the amount of starting Experience points depending on the power level of the game he is running. If a player is creating a new character who is joining an existing party, he may be given additional starting Experience points so as not to lag behind the other characters.

## Step Nine: Finishing Touches

Now that you have determined your character's skills and abilities, it's time to fill in the rest of the details. Name your character and write a physical description. Make up a character background and pick out his gear. Your character is almost ready to play!

## Step Ten: Style (p. 79)

Calculate starting Style points. If you took a Flaw during character creation, you start play with one Style point. The Gamemaster may award additional Style points for writing a character background, creating props or costumes, or other activities.

## EXAMPLE OF CHARACTER CREATION

Alex wants to play an action-oriented character. After talking to the Gamemaster and the other players, he narrows his choices down to the Adventurer, Hunter, and Soldier Archetypes. He likes the idea of fighting dinosaurs, and thinks it would be fun to play a character that specializes in hunting large animals. He chooses Big Game Hunter as his Archetype.

Alex then looks for a Motivation for his Big Game Hunter character. After reading the Motivation descrip-

tions and talking to the Gamemaster, he narrows down his choices to Duty, Fame, and Survival. All three Motivations would work for a Big Game Hunter, but he decides that his character's primary reason for going to the Hollow Earth is to hunt dinosaurs and bring back trophies. Therefore, he selects Fame as his character's Motivation.

Alex is now ready to buy Primary Attributes for his character. He has fifteen points to spend; he immediately puts five points into Dexterity because it is the basis for the Firearms Skill. Unfortunately, this leaves him with ten points—just enough to buy a rating of 2 in each of the other five Attributes. Alex doesn't want his character to be average everywhere else and he's unwilling to drop anything down to a 1. Reluctantly, he drops his character's Dexterity rating to 4, giving him one extra point to spend. After looking over all the Attributes, he decides to put the extra point into Willpower. He wants his character to be able to stand his ground in the face of a charging dinosaur without losing his cool.

With all of his Character's Primary Attributes selected, Alex calculates the Secondary Attributes. His character is an average human, so he is automatically Size 0. He calculates the rest of the Secondary Attributes and comes up with Move 6, Perception 5, Initiative 6, Defense 6, Stun 2, and Health 5. He has a fast, perceptive character with good defense. Alex is pleased with how his character is turning out so far.

Alex has fifteen points to spend on Skills for his character. He looks over the Skill list and promptly picks out Firearms, Stealth, and Survival; these Skills seem essential to a Big Game Hunter. Alex also wants his character to be able to do more than just shoot a gun, so he chooses Athletics, Brawl, and Melee. His character could have picked up a language or two in his travels, so he also selects Linguistics.

With fifteen points to spend, Alex can buy two Skill Levels in each Skill and still have a point left over. Unfortunately, this doesn't make Alex's character as skilled in Firearms and Survival as he wants him to be, so he has to cut something. He decides that Linguistics isn't as critical to his character concept, and scratches it off the list. This gives Alex two more points to spend, so he puts one each in Firearms and Survival. With his remaining point Alex buys two Specializations—Firearms: Rifles and Survival: Tracking. That's more like it!

Alex gets to choose one Talent or Resource for his character for free. This one is easy for him. He scans the list, and zeroes in on the Skill Aptitude Talent, which he applies to his character's Firearms Skill. His character now has a natural ability with guns, giving him a +2 bonus to his Firearms rating.

Although it is not required, Alex decides to take a Flaw for his character. He's getting a clear picture in his head of a



*cocky and overconfident Big Game Hunter: he's the kind of guy that goes hunting wild animals with a single round of ammunition because "that's all I need." He decides to take the Overconfident Flaw because it sounds like fun, and it will help him earn Style points during play.*

*Now it's time for Alex to spend his character's starting experience points. He could raise some of his character's Skills, or maybe improve one of his Attributes. Instead, he goes back to the Talents list and buys the Accuracy Talent. He wants his character to be a skilled marksman. After all, he'll have to make every shot count.*

*Alex is nearly done creating his character. Now he just has to fill in the rest of the details by writing a character background, picking out starting equipment, and calculating his starting Style points.*

## ARCHETYPES

The first step in character creation is choosing an Archetype to play. Archetypes represent classic roles and iconic character types for you to portray. Think of them as concepts and stereotypes for you to build upon, not as templates of skills and abilities.

Choose the Archetype that most appeals to you (or that will fit best with the other characters) and put your own spin on it. What kind of Doctor is your character? A Jungle Doctor or a Big City Doctor? How is your character unique or different? Answering this question will help guide you as you create your character.

There are many different Archetypes; the ones most common to Hollow Earth Expedition are listed below. Feel free to come up with one of your own if none of these suit you, but make sure to get your Gamemaster's approval first.

### Academic

Academics are bookish and smart, pursuing knowledge for its own sake. They are often students or college professors who spend their time researching or teaching a particular subject matter (e.g., history, anthropology, or linguistics). As such, they are founts of useful information and very helpful to any expedition. Not all Academics are confined to the library. Many of them thrive and excel in the field.

**Examples:** Cultural Anthropologist, Famous Historian, Ancient Language Specialist

### Adventurer

Adventurers are always on the move in an endless quest for danger and excitement. They are typi-

cally well traveled and often have a useful skill, such as piloting a plane, which makes them an asset to any expedition. They are experienced at getting into and out of tight spots and can fight when the situation calls for it. Adventurers are fiercely independent and tend to do things for their own reasons.

**Examples:** Daredevil, Flying Ace, Smuggler

### Celebrity

Celebrities are famous for their talent, their looks, their wealth, or for performing an amazing or outrageous action. They often have some useful skill or ability and can bring attention (for good or ill) to any expedition they join. Some Celebrities have tired of the spotlight, or care more for their craft than the notoriety that comes with it. These individuals will go to any lengths to either find inspiration or simply to get away from it all.

**Examples:** Hollywood Starlet, Movie Director, Playwright

### Criminal

Criminals have broken the law or been framed for a crime, and are usually on the run from the authorities. They are seen as untrustworthy and unless they're trying to go straight, they will try to keep their past a secret. Criminals bring many useful things to an expedition, including money and connections, but may be a

### Building a Party

Talk to the other players about the Archetypes each of you will be playing. Just like in a real expedition, everyone should know what role their character fills in the party. In addition, make sure to define each character's area of expertise. You don't want to end up far from home without a critical skill or ability! The game will be smoother and more fun if everyone knows how his or her character contributes to the expedition.

By the same token, it's a good idea to talk about character Motivations with the other players. You don't have to be explicit about your character's Motivation if you don't want to, but it helps to know which ones are incompatible with the rest of the party. Even if everyone knows their character's role, the game could dissolve into infighting if characters have conflicting goals. Discussing Motivations ahead of time lets the group set the level of inter-personal conflict they'd like to have in the game.

Check with the Gamemaster if there are any questions about which Archetypes or Motivations are best suited for the game.



## Chapter Two

liability if their crimes follow them.

**Examples:** Con Man, Innocent Fugitive, Gangster

### Doctor

Doctors are highly educated medical professionals who bandage wounds, treat diseases, and dispense medicine. They fill a vital role in any expedition, as having a skilled doctor along can make the difference between life and death for explorers. Unfortunately, finding qualified doctors willing to go exploring is difficult, so some expeditions have to make do with under-trained or unlicensed doctors.

**Examples:** Jungle Doctor, Ship Surgeon, Veterinarian

### Engineer

Engineers are skilled at building and repairing items and equipment. They usually specialize in a specific craft such as carpentry or blacksmithing. They don't mind getting their hands dirty and they love to figure out how things work. When an expedition's success depends on a vehicle or piece of machinery working properly, there had better be a good Engineer in the party!

**Examples:** Blacksmith, Civil Engineer, Vehicle Mechanic

### Explorer

Explorers are obsessed with going where no one has gone before and returning to a hero's welcome. They are often expedition leaders who push themselves and their followers to the limits of human endurance to reach a goal. Explorers spend long periods away from civilization and tend to be solitary and laconic individuals, though some are dynamic and charismatic leaders.

**Examples:** Cartographer, Fearless Leader, National Hero

### Hunter

Hunters are expert scouts and trackers, hunting animals for food and/or sport. They also track people, which is useful for bounty hunting or search-and-rescue operations. They are often deadly with ranged weapons, but they may seek to challenge themselves by using less effective weapons. With their ability to protect and provide for other people, they are a huge benefit to any expedition they join.

**Examples:** Big Game Hunter, Native Guide, Tracker

### Missionary

Missionaries are men of the cloth called to spread the word of God. They are usually educated, well traveled, and willing to go into the deepest, darkest wilderness to save souls. Some Missionaries are learned scholars who joined the church just for the education. They make excellent additions to an expedition, as they tend to be gifted diplomats and often have minor medical training.

**Examples:** Evangelist, Jesuit Priest, Theologian

### Moneyman

Moneymen are wealthy and influential people who can afford to finance pet projects and invest in wild schemes. They almost always want something in return for their patronage, usually more wealth, power, or prestige. Some Moneymen will choose to join an expedition to protect their investment; others go to great lengths for philanthropic causes. Despite the name, Moneymen are women as often as not.

**Examples:** Eccentric Tycoon, Financier, Movie Producer

### Occultist

Occultists are fascinated by the arcane and unknown in the world. They have an ear for strange rumors and they live to investigate mysteries. They have unique philosophical and religious views that can make them seem unbalanced or insane. Occultists often possess unusual information, a rare artifact, or an extraordinary ability that makes them invaluable to an expedition.

**Examples:** Fortuneteller, Occult Investigator, Spiritualist

### Reporter

Reporters are always trying to get the scoop on a story or an exclusive interview with an important person. They are creative and persistent individuals committed to getting the full story, either because they want front-page material or because "people have a right to know." Reporters often cover expeditions from the field in order to provide their first-hand account of the experience.

**Examples:** Biographer, Investigative Reporter, Photographer



## Scientist

Scientists are committed to experimental investigation of the natural world. They tend to focus on life sciences such as botany or zoology, or hard sciences such as geology or physics. Scientists are highly intelligent and extremely knowledgeable in their particular field, making them ideal expedition members. They are usually calm and logical, but often there is a fine line between genius and madness.

**Examples:** Eccentric Inventor, Naturalist, Theoretical Physicist

## Soldier

Soldiers are professional warriors trained to fight in a variety of environments and situations. Whether they are battle-hardened members (or ex-members) of the armed forces or just hired muscle, they tend to think that any problem can be solved with the appropriate use of force. Soldiers operate under orders from either a commanding officer or an employer who hired them to protect the expedition.

**Examples:** Government Agent, Ex-Marine, Soldier-of-Fortune

## Survivor

Survivors have escaped some kind of disaster or personal catastrophe. They may be victims of a shipwreck or plane crash, or they may be fleeing religious or ethnic persecution. They could be stranded and desperately trying to find a way home, or refugees looking for a new place to call home. Survivors typically join expeditions as a way to escape their current predicament.

**Examples:** Castaway, Political Refugee, Stranded Traveler

## MOTIVATIONS

After selecting an Archetype, the next step is to choose your character's Motivation. Motivation represents your character's driving goal or greatest desire. Characters are complex, like real people, but there is one thing they want above all else, and it drives their actions.

Identifying your character's primary Motivation is particularly important in *HEX* because very few people will travel to the ends of the earth just to see what's there. Fewer still will chase a myth to see if it's true, or have the faith to believe in something that is openly ridiculed by others. Understanding why your character

### Drama, Conflict, and Motivation

Drama pulls us into a story and makes us care how it turns out. It occurs when the good guys meet the bad guys, making us wonder what will happen next. In essence, drama is created when characters with conflicting goals meet each other. We don't know what's going to happen, but we're sure it's going to be exciting! Characters' opposing motivations create conflict, which in turn creates drama and engages us in the story. Therefore, it is important to think about your character's Motivation and how it relates to the other characters in the party. Be aware of which character will be your character's main conflict. To create an interesting and engaging game, the Gamemaster needs to ensure that the villains' Motivations conflict with the player characters' Motivations, and vice versa.

is seeking the Hollow Earth gives your character a real, solid reason to be there and invests her in the game.

Motivation not only helps you roleplay your character, it also directly impacts play. In game terms, pursuing your character's Motivation earns you Style points that can be exchanged for bonus dice whenever you need them. Roleplaying your character's Motivation is not only fun, it makes him stronger and more versatile too!

Check with the Gamemaster to see which Motivations are best suited for the game, as he may have selected certain Motivations as the central themes. These represent conflicts and issues that will crop up again and again over the course of the story. Taking a theme as your character's Motivation will get him more involved in the game, and give you more opportunities to earn Style points.

Choose a Motivation that appeals to you and works well with the other characters. Heroes and villains with differing motivations create conflict and drama, but player characters with mismatched Motivations can be problematic. Work with your fellow players to choose Motivations that work for everyone.

There are many different Motivations to consider for your character, but the ones most common to *HEX* are listed below. Feel free to make up new Motivations or create your own interpretations of those listed here, but be sure to get your Gamemaster's approval first.

## Duty

Your character has a strong sense of duty and obligation. He always does what's right and always keeps his word, even if it puts him on the wrong side of the law. He might be seeking the Hollow Earth because



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he was ordered to find it, or he may be honor-bound to accompany someone. Whatever the reason, he'll do whatever is required to fulfill his responsibilities.

You earn Style points when your character acts responsibly or convinces someone to keep their word.

**Possessed by:** Doctors, Soldiers, Criminals

### Escape

Your character may have ended up in the Hollow Earth by accident and want nothing more than to go home again. On the other hand, she may be fleeing from something in the outside world. Perhaps it's something so horrible that she'll go to the ends of the earth to get away from it. It could be a painful memory, or she might be on the run from the law. She's desperate to escape her circumstances, whatever they may be.

You earn Style points when your character escapes from danger or helps someone run from her past.

**Possessed by:** Adventurers, Criminals, Survivors

### Faith

Your character is a true believer. He is devoted to a higher power, or motivated by other strongly held beliefs. Alternately, your character might have his faith rooted in the conviction that the Hollow Earth is real. He may have seen—or may possess—evidence that the Hollow Earth is real. It could be a rare geological anomaly, the Garden of Eden, or the home of an advanced civilization that speaks to him through his dreams. He's convinced of its existence and will do anything to find it.

You earn Style points when your character's viewpoint is supported or he converts someone to his beliefs.

**Possessed by:** Academics, Missionaries, Occultists

### Fame

Your character craves attention and loves the spotlight. She may be famous for being talented and beautiful, or for performing some great deed. She may still be waiting for her big break. Regardless, she wants everyone to know her name. Grand adventures like finding and exploring the Hollow Earth are a great way to get press—and she'll do anything to get her name in print.

You earn Style points whenever your character does something noteworthy or increases her reputation.

**Possessed by:** Celebrities, Explorers, Reporters

### Greed

Your character is always looking for a quick buck or dreaming of the next big score. He may want to plunder the Hollow Earth's natural resources to sell its artifacts to the highest bidder, or he may go simply because he's being well paid to explore it. All he cares about is money and he's willing to do whatever it takes to get it.

You earn Style points when your character gets his hands on something particularly valuable or makes a lot of money.

**Possessed by:** Adventurers, Criminals, Moneymen

### Love

Your character will do anything for love, even volunteer for an exotic expedition to prove her devotion, or vow to find a loved one who has gone missing. Her feelings may or may not be returned by the other person, but that hardly matters; she is pursuing her heart's desire and will follow wherever it leads.

You earn Style points whenever your character does something romantic or persuades someone to follow his heart.

**Possessed by:** Celebrities, Explorers, Reporters

### Power

Your character craves power above all else. Whether it takes the form of immortality, controlling others, or defeating his enemies, it's all he ever thinks about. He will go to any lengths—even to the center of the earth—to get what he's after. It's his destiny, and he will destroy anything or anyone that gets in his way.

You earn Style points whenever your character acts selfishly or persuades someone to use their power for personal gain.

**Possessed by:** Moneymen, Occultists, Scientists

### Revenge

Your character has been wronged and cannot rest until she gets revenge on her enemies. She might want vigilante justice, or just to make the offender stand trial for his crimes (perhaps to clear her own name). On the other hand, she may have been ridiculed for her crackpot theories and sworn to prove them all wrong.

You earn Style points when your character settles a score or encourages someone to seek vengeance.

**Possessed by:** Hunters, Scientists, Survivors



## Survival

Your character will do anything to stay alive: eat insects, tree bark, or his dead companions if it comes to that. He might be stranded, or seeking out survival situations to test his mettle. He may even be less concerned with his own existence than the well-being of others.

You earn Style points when your character defies death or saves someone's life.

**Possessed by:** Doctors, Hunters, Survivors

## Truth

Your character is obsessed with knowledge, discovery, and truth. She feels a sense of joy when she unravels a mystery or discovers something new. She wants to share what she knows with the world. People have a right to know what is going on and she's going to make sure they get all the facts.

You earn Style points whenever your character makes a discovery or persuades someone to share a secret.

**Possessed by:** Academics, Reporters, Scientists

## ATTRIBUTES

Human beings have the natural ability to think, move, and act. Everyone possesses these abilities to different degrees. Some people are just tougher, smarter, or more persuasive than others. We may not think about it much, but our natural abilities affect how we interact with the world around us.

Your character is no different. Each character has Attributes that represent his or her natural abilities. In game terms, Attributes are the basis for all of your character's Skills and special abilities. Virtually every die roll that you make in the game will involve one of your character's Attributes.

Attributes are separated into two categories: Primary Attributes and Secondary Attributes. Primary Attributes represent your character's inherent physical, mental, and social prowess. Primary Attributes are also used to calculate Secondary Attributes, which represent your character's size, movement speed, perception, and combat abilities.

Primary Attributes are rated from one to five, but exceptional characters may have higher ratings. Secondary Attributes are typically rated between one and ten. Player characters may not have zero Attribute ratings (except for Size), as that indicates a complete lack of ability in an area. However, non-player characters and animals may have zero Attribute ratings.

Primary Attribute Rating	Ability	Secondary Attribute Rating
0	Abysmal	0 – 1
1	Poor	2 – 3
2	Average	4 – 5
3	Good	6 – 7
4	Great	8 – 9
5	Excellent	10 – 11
6 or more	Amazing	12 or more

## Attribute Rolls

An Attribute is rolled if there isn't a Skill applicable to a given situation, such as when a character is trying to recall a bit of information, keep his balance, or lift something with brute strength. In these cases, the dice pool is equal to double the appropriate Attribute rating. Examples of Attribute rolls are given with each Attribute description.

## PRIMARY ATTRIBUTES

### Body

Body represents your character's constitution and toughness. It determines how much damage your character can take and how resistant he is to injury. It also determines how long he can go without food and water. Characters with high Body ratings are rugged and tough, while characters with low Body ratings are frail and sickly.

**Note:** Your character's Size rating modifies his maximum Body Attribute. A Size 1 character has a maximum Body rating of 6; a Size -1 character has a maximum Body rating of 4.

### Body Rolls

Body is rolled when your character attempts to fight off a disease, resist the effects of a drug or poison, and to determine how long your character can hold his breath.

### Resistance

**Dice Pool:** Body rating x 2

**Type:** Reflexive Action

Make a Body roll when your character is poisoned or exposed to a contagious disease. The Difficulty of the roll depends on the potency of the toxin or disease. Failing the roll means that your character is poisoned, or has contracted the illness and will suffer its effects (see Diseases, p. 133 and Poisons and Drugs, p. 136).



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Disease/Toxin	Difficulty
Mild food poisoning	1
Common cold	2
Malaria	3
Snake venom	4
Cyanide	5

### Dexterity

Dexterity represents your character's speed, coordination, and agility. It determines your character's ability to avoid damage, and how quickly he reacts to danger. It is also the base for ranged combat, stealth, and piloting skills. Characters with high Dexterity ratings are quick and graceful, while characters with low Dexterity ratings are slow and clumsy.

### Dexterity Rolls

Dexterity is rolled when your character tries to catch something before it falls or snatch something before someone else does. It also determines how well your character keeps his balance under hazardous conditions.

#### Balance

**Dice Pool:** Dexterity x 2\*

**Type:** Reflexive Action

Make a Dexterity roll when your character is in danger of losing his balance. The number of successes you roll must equal or exceed the Difficulty of the task being attempted in order for your character to keep his footing. Failing to roll enough successes means that your character loses his balance and falls (see falling, p. 135).

Balance	Difficulty
Walking on uneven ground	1
Walking across a log	2
Hopping from stone to stone	3
Walking along a narrow ledge	4
Walking a tightrope	5

\* Characters with the Athletics or Acrobatics Skill may substitute either Skill rating for this roll.

### Strength

Strength represents your character's vigor and muscle power. It determines how much damage your character does in close combat, and how much weight she can carry. It is the base for close combat and athletic skills. Characters with high Strength ratings are strong

and powerful, while characters with low Strength ratings are weak and lethargic.

**Note:** Your character's Size rating modifies his Strength Attribute. A Size 1 character has a maximum Strength rating of 6; a Size -1 character has a maximum Strength rating of 4.



### Strength Rolls

Strength is rolled any time your character tries to lift or break an object through brute force. It also includes shoving another character, or taking an item away from someone.

#### Feats of Strength

**Dice Pool:** Strength x 2\*

**Type:** Standard Action

Make a Strength roll when your character attempts to pick up an item. The Difficulty of the task depends upon the weight of the object. Failing to roll enough successes means that your character did not pick up the item, or only partially lifted it.

Weight	Difficulty
50 lbs.	1
100 lbs.	2
250 lbs.	3
500 lbs.	4
750 lbs.	5

\* Characters with the Athletics Skill may substitute that Skill rating for this roll.



## Charisma

Charisma represents your character's confidence and personality. It also determines how persuasive and attractive your character is to others. It is the base for interpersonal and performance skills. Characters with high Charisma ratings are charming and magnetic, while characters with low Charisma ratings are rude and unattractive.

## Charisma Rolls

Charisma is rolled whenever your character tries to charm or ingratiate himself to someone else. It also represents your character's ability to befriend animals.

### Influence

**Dice Pool:** Charisma x 2\*

**Type:** Standard Action

Make a Charisma roll whenever your character tries to influence a non-player character (NPC). The Difficulty of the task is equal to the NPC's Willpower rating. Allies loyal to you are easier to sway, so you receive a +2 bonus to your Charisma roll. Conversely, sworn enemies are harder to influence, so you suffer a -2 penalty to your Charisma roll.

The Gamemaster determines the NPC's initial attitude toward your character and each success rolled in excess of their Willpower rating improves their attitude by one step. Failing to roll enough successes degrades the NPC's opinion of your character by one step for each success fewer than the required number.

Attitude
Loyal (+2 bonus)
Helpful
Friendly
Neutral
Unfriendly
Hostile
Enemy (-2 penalty)

\* Characters with the Diplomacy Skill may substitute that Skill rating for this roll.

## Intelligence

Intelligence represents your character's reason and intellect. It determines how well your character senses the world around him and how quickly he reacts to danger. It is the base for all knowledge and craft skills. Characters with high Intelligence ratings are clever and observant, while characters with low Intelligence ratings are dim-witted and inattentive.

## Intelligence Rolls

Intelligence is rolled whenever your character tries to recall a piece of information or commit something to memory. It also determines how proficient your character is at recognizing patterns and putting information together.

### Reason

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence x2\*

**Type:** Reflexive Action

Make an Intelligence roll when your character tries to make sense of a piece of information or understand the reasons behind a series of events. The difficulty of the roll depends on the complexity of the information or situation. Failing this roll means that your character is unable to figure it out, or only figures out part of what is going on.

Reason	Difficulty
Clear directions	1
Complex instructions	2
Bizarre situations	3
Esoteric information	4
Arcane mysteries	5

\* Characters with the Investigation Skill may substitute that Skill rating for this roll.

## Willpower

Willpower represents your character's courage and resolve. It determines how hard it is for others to manipulate your character. It also represents your character's will to live, and determines how much damage he can take in combat. Characters with high Willpower ratings are courageous and determined, while characters with low Willpower ratings are craven and gullible.

## Willpower Rolls

Willpower is rolled when someone tries to manipulate your character or when her life is in danger. It also represents her resistance to pain and torture.

### Courage

**Dice Pool:** Willpower x 2

**Type:** Reflexive Action

Make a Willpower roll whenever your character is in a life-threatening situation. The difficulty of the roll depends on how threatening the situation is. Failing this roll means that your character is shaken and will try to remove herself from the situation as soon as possible.



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Courage	Difficulty
Facing danger	1
Being hurt or wounded	2
Being maimed or disfigured	3
Facing certain death	4
Facing a slow and agonizing death	5

## SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

### Size

Size represents your character's height, weight, and bulk. Unlike other Secondary Attributes, Size is not calculated: it is set at zero for average human characters. Larger and smaller Sizes are generally for children, animals, and non-human characters.

Your character's Size rating modifies his Defense, Health, and maximum Body and Strength ratings. It is also subtracted from his Stealth and attack rolls. Larger characters are easier to hit, but they're stronger and take more damage to kill. Conversely, smaller characters are harder to hit, but are weaker and take less damage to kill.

For example, a Size 1 character, being both bigger and stronger than average, may have maximum Body and Strength ratings of 6. He also receives a +1 bonus to his Health rating. Unfortunately, his size makes him a larger target and makes it more difficult for him to hit smaller creatures. Therefore, he suffers a -1 penalty to his attack and Defense rolls. See p. 123 for more information on how Size affects combat.

### Move

Move represents how fast your character moves during combat and while walking or running.

Your character's Move rating is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Move} = \text{Strength} + \text{Dexterity}^*$$

*\* Characters with the Athletics Skill may substitute that Skill rating for their Move rating.*

Characters with high Move ratings are strong and fast, while characters with low Move ratings are slow and easily tired. A character's Move rating is used to calculate how fast he can walk, run, swim, climb, and jump. See the chart below to convert Move ratings to distance.

### Perception

Perception represents your character's ability to notice and interpret her surroundings. It also represents her ability to focus her attention and remain vigilant over long periods of time. The more successes you roll, the more observant your character will be. In some cases, your roll will be opposed by another character's Stealth roll. Failing to roll enough successes means that your character misses something or overlooks a vital piece of information.

Size	Attack/Defense	Health	Max. Body/Strength	Height/Length	Weight	Example
8	-8	+8	14	50-100 ft.	50-100 tons	Brontosaurus
4	-4	+4	10	25-50 ft.	10-50 tons	T. Rex
2	-2	+2	8	15-25 ft.	1-10 tons	Mammoth
1	-1	+1	6	7-15 ft.	500 lbs.-1 ton	Cave Bear
0	0	0	5	5-7 ft.	100-500 lbs.	Human
-1	+1	-1	4	2-5 ft.	10-100 lbs.	Dog
-2	+2	-2	3	1-2 ft.	1-10 lbs.	Monkey
-4	+4	-4	1	6 in.-1 ft.	1/2-1 lb.	Toad
-8	+8	-8	0	6 in. or less	1/2 lb. or less	Insect

Move	Combat (turn)	Swimming (turn)	Climbing (turn)	Horizontal Jump*	Vertical Jump*	Walk (hour)	Run (hour)
1	5 ft.	2.5 ft.	2.5 ft.	2.5 ft.	1 ft.	1/2 mile	1 mile
2	10 ft.	5 ft.	5 ft.	5 ft.	2 ft.	1 mile	2 miles
3	15 ft.	5 ft.	5 ft.	5 ft.	3 ft.	1.5 miles	3 miles
4	20 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.	4 ft.	2 miles	4 miles
5	25 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.	5 ft.	2.5 miles	5 miles
6	30 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft.	6 ft.	3 miles	6 miles
7	35 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft.	7 ft.	3.5 miles	7 miles
8	40 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.	8 ft.	4 miles	8 miles
9	45 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.	9 ft.	4.5 miles	9 miles
10	50 ft.	25 ft.	25 ft.	25 ft.	10 ft.	5 miles	10 miles

*\*If your character does not have a running start, his jumping distance is halved.*



Perception = Intelligence + Willpower

Characters with high Perception ratings are insightful and observant, while characters with low Perception ratings are oblivious and unaware.

## Initiative

Initiative represents how quickly your character reacts to danger. It also determines when he acts during a combat round. The more successes you roll for Initiative, the earlier your character acts during combat.

Your character's Initiative rating is calculated as follows:

Initiative = Dexterity + Intelligence

Characters with high Initiative ratings are quick and vigilant; characters with low Initiative ratings are slow and often surprised.

## Defense

Defense represents your character's toughness and ability to evade attacks. This includes avoiding an attack and protecting vulnerable areas. An attacker must roll more successes than your character's Defense rating to hurt her. If they roll fewer successes, the attack misses. If the attacker rolls more successes than your Defense rating, your character takes that much damage. See p. 125 for more detail on Defense and damage.

Your character's Defense ratings are calculated as follows:

Defense = Passive Defense + Active Defense – Size

Passive Defense = Body rating

Active Defense = Dexterity rating

Characters with a high Defense rating are tough and hard to wound, while characters with low Defense ratings are weak and easily hurt.

Sometimes your character will only get to use her Active or Passive Defense rating. This normally occurs when your character is unable to evade an attack or when her attacker is only trying to touch her. Some bonuses and penalties will only apply to your Active or Passive Defense ratings. In certain cases, your character may lose her Active Defense rating completely, leaving her with only her Passive Defense rating.

## Stun

Stun represents your character's ability to shrug off damage and keep fighting. If your character takes more damage than his Stun rating in a single blow, he is stunned and loses his next action. If your character takes more damage than twice his Stun rating in a single blow, he is knocked out for a number of minutes equal to the amount of excess damage he took.

Your character's Stun rating is calculated as follows:

Stun = Body rating

Characters with high Stun ratings are resilient and determined fighters, while characters with low Stun ratings are weak and easily dispatched.

## Health

Health represents your character's vitality and capacity to take damage. This covers both Lethal and Nonlethal damage. Your character can take up to her Health rating in damage without suffering any ill effects. When your character's current Health rating drops below zero, she falls unconscious. When she reaches –5 Health, she dies. See p. 130 for more information about healing and damage.

Your character's Health rating is calculated as follows:

Health = Body + Willpower + Size

Characters with high Health ratings are robust and resistant to wounds; characters with low Health ratings are weak and fragile.

### Negative Health

Small characters tend to be weak and fragile creatures. As such, they receive a penalty to their Health and maximum Body ratings. This may result in a small character starting with a negative Health rating, which is ignored at the start of play. When the character takes his first wound, the new Health rating takes effect. This usually results in the character falling unconscious; however, a character with a starting Health of –4 or lower will die as soon as he takes his first wound.



## SKILLS

Skills represents your character's training and education over the course of his life. They cover a wide variety of topics and activities—everything from negotiating a business deal in a foreign language to performing acrobatic stunts on the wing of a plane. The specific Skills you choose for your character will reflect his personality and background. Professors and mercenaries, for example, will have very different areas of expertise. Use your character's Archetype as a guide when selecting Skills.

### Base Attribute

Each Skill is based on an Attribute that represents your character's natural ability with a particular Skill. Even if your character has no training, he may still have some proficiency. To be a real expert, however, he needs to invest time and energy into mastering a Skill.

### Skill Levels

Skill Levels represent the amount of effort your character has put into learning a Skill, either through formal education or hands-on experience. Your character's Skill rating is calculated by adding a number of Skill Levels to the appropriate Base Attribute rating.

Skill Level	Skill Rating
0	Base Attribute -2
1	Base Attribute +1
2	Base Attribute +2
3	Base Attribute +3
4	Base Attribute +4
5	Base Attribute +5

You may not purchase more than five Skill Levels in any one Skill during character creation, but additional Skill Levels may be purchased with experience points during play.

### Skill Ratings

Skill ratings represent your character's overall expertise with a particular topic or activity. More importantly, they determine the number of dice you use when making a Skill roll. Typical Skill ratings are between zero and ten, though exceptional characters may have higher ratings.

Skill Rating	Ability
0 - 1	Abysmal
2 - 3	Poor
4 - 5	Average
6 - 7	Good
8 - 9	Great
10 - 11	Excellent
12 or more	Amazing

## Skill Specializations

Skills cover a broad range of topics and activities, but you may choose to have your character specialize in a specific aspect of a Skill. A Skill Specialization represents a specific topic, activity, or item that your character is particularly familiar with. For example, your character may be better with pistols or rifles than with other firearms. Whenever your character's Specialization applies to the action being taken, you receive a bonus die to your Skill roll. You must have at least one Skill Level in a Skill to specialize in it, and you may not purchase more than one Specialization in a particular Skill during character creation.

There are countless different Skill Specializations for each Skill; the ones most common to *HEX* are listed below. Feel free to come up with your own Specializations, but be sure to get Gamemaster approval first.

## Advanced Skill Specializations

You may use your experience points during play to purchase additional Specializations in a Skill. In fact, you may even choose to purchase the same Skill Specialization more than once, giving your character a greater expertise in a specified area. If your character has an advanced Skill Specialization, you will receive additional bonus dice (up to a maximum of five) each time that Specialization is called into play. For example, if your character already has a Skill Specialization in Rifles, purchasing Rifles again would give your character Rifles +2. Every time he uses a rifle in combat, he will get two bonus dice to his Firearms roll.

## Untrained Skill Rolls

You may normally make a Skill roll even if your character has no Skill Levels in a particular Skill. Your character's untrained Skill rating is equal to the associated Base Attribute with a -2 penalty, plus or minus any conditional modifiers. If this lowers your dice pool to zero or less, you'll automatically fail the roll unless you



Skill	Attribute	Specializations and Disciplines
Academics*	Intelligence	History, Law, Literature, Philosophy, Religion
Acrobatics	Dexterity	Balance, Breakfall, Contortion, Juggling, Tumbling
Animal Handling	Charisma	Cats, Dogs, Horses, Birds, Reptiles
Archery	Dexterity	Blowguns, Bows, Crossbows, Nets, Slings
Art*	Intelligence	Music, Painting, Photography, Sculpture, Writing
Athletics	Strength	Climbing, Jumping, Running, Swimming, Throwing
Brawl	Strength	Dirty Tricks, Grappling, Kicking, Punching, Throws
Bureaucracy	Intelligence	Academia, Business, Government, Legal, Military
Con	Charisma	Bluff, Fast Talk, Lies, Tricks, Seduction
Craft*	Intelligence	Carpentry, Chemistry, Electronics, Mechanics, Medicines
Demolitions	Intelligence	Defusing, Dynamite, Gunpowder, Improvised, Incendiary
Diplomacy	Charisma	Etiquette, Leadership, Negotiation, Persuasion, Politics
Drive	Dexterity	Buses, Cars, Motorcycles, Tanks, Trucks
Empathy	Intelligence	Body Language, Emotions, Intuition, Lies, Motives
Firearms	Dexterity	Archaic, Pistols, Rifles, Shotguns, Submachine Guns
Gambling	Intelligence	Cheating, Blackjack, Craps, Poker, Roulette
Gunnery	Intelligence	Artillery, Bombs, Cannons, Machine Guns, Rockets
Intimidation	Charisma	Interrogation, Orders, Staredown, Threats, Torture
Investigation	Intelligence	Crimes, Enigmas, Interview, Research, Search
Larceny	Dexterity	Lockpicking, Pickpocketing, Safecracking, Security, Sleight of Hand
Linguistics	Intelligence	Codes, Deciphering, Gestures, Lip Reading, Translation
Medicine	Intelligence	Diagnosis, Diseases, First Aid, Surgery, Veterinary
Melee	Strength	Axes, Clubs, Knives, Spears, Swords
Performance	Charisma	Acting, Dancing, Musical Instrument, Oratory, Singing
Pilot*	Dexterity	Aircraft, Balloons, Drilling Machines, Ships, Submarines
Ride	Dexterity	Bulls, Camels, Elephants, Horses, Mules
Science*	Intelligence	Biology, Chemistry, Engineering, Geology, Physics
Stealth	Dexterity	Camouflage, Disguise, Hiding, Shadowing, Sneaking
Streetwise	Charisma	Black Market, Carousing, Hagglng, Rumors, Scrounging
Survival	Intelligence	Foraging, Hunting, Navigation, Shelter, Tracking

\* Specialized Skill

get some help, take more time, or spend Style points on the roll. Though most Skills can be rolled untrained, a Specialized Skill (i.e., Academics, Art, Craft, Pilot, or Science) cannot be rolled without at least one Skill Level in that Skill.

## Specialized Skills

Some Skills are so broad or complex that you are required to focus on a single discipline. Each discipline is treated as a separate Skill, and must be purchased individually at the normal cost for Skill Levels. (Specializations for these disciplines may be purchased at normal cost with the Gamemaster's approval.)

**Example:** Clay is selecting Skills for his Academic character and wants to buy three general Skill Levels in Science. The Gamemaster explains that Clay cannot do this because Science is a Specialized Skill, so he must choose a specific discipline to purchase instead. After thinking it over, Clay decides to purchase three Skill Levels in the Archeology discipline. If Clay wanted to purchase the Chemistry discipline as well, he would

have to buy it as its own Skill.

Because of their broad scope, Specialized Skills cannot be rolled untrained unless you have at least one Skill Level in a related discipline. If your character has one or more Skill Levels in Mechanics, for example, he could make an untrained Electronics roll using his Mechanics rating with a -2 penalty.

## Skill Synergy

Whenever your character has one or more Skills applicable to a given situation, you receive bonus dice to your Skill roll. Always use the highest appropriate Skill rating for the roll, but gain +2 bonus dice for each applicable Skill with a rating of 4 or higher (maximum of +10 bonus dice). Skill ratings lower than 4 do not provide any bonus. For example, if your character is trying to communicate with a native, and your character has Linguistics 6 and Anthropology 4, you would roll 8 dice for your Skill roll (6 dice for your character's Linguistics rating with +2 bonus dice for his Anthropology rating).



## Teamwork

In some situations, characters may work together to complete a project. Each character must have an applicable Skill rating of 4 or higher. The character with the highest Skill rating makes the roll with +2 bonus dice for each person assisting him (maximum of +10 bonus dice). If three characters are trying to fix a damaged airship, and your character has Mechanics 5 and the other two characters have Mechanics 4, you would roll 9 dice for your Skill roll (5 dice for your Mechanics rating with +4 dice for your two assistants).

## Skill Descriptions

### Academics

*Specialized Skill*

**Base Attribute:** Intelligence

Academics represents general knowledge of the Humanities and Liberal Arts, acquired through formal education or intensive self-study. Your character has spent time studying a particular subject (such as history, philosophy, or religion) and can discuss this topic at length.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Uneducated in this field
2 – 3	Knows a little about this field
4 – 5	Well-versed in this field
6 – 7	Advanced knowledge of this field
8 – 9	Recognized expert in this field
10 – 11	World-famous in this field

Your character must focus on a specific discipline:

- History: The study of human history from pre-historic to modern times
- Law: The study of law and the understanding of various legal practices
- Literature: The study of literature, and familiarity with writers and their works
- Philosophy: The study of logic, thought and the meaning of life
- Religion: The study of theology, and familiarity with various religious beliefs

### Acrobatics

**Base Attribute:** Dexterity

Acrobatics represents experience and training in performing highly demanding physical feats such as contortion, juggling, and tumbling. This skill is often performed before an audience but has more practical uses as well, such as balancing on a narrow ledge or

breaking a fall. Characters with this Skill may substitute their Acrobatics rating for Dexterity rolls.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	No acrobatic ability
2 – 3	Amateur juggler or contortionist
4 – 5	Skilled gymnast or escape artist
6 – 7	Gifted and talented acrobat
8 – 9	Able to escape from virtually any bonds
10 – 11	World-class circus performer

Your character may specialize in the following activities:

- Balance: The ability to keep balance in risky and dangerous situations
- Breakfall: The ability to break a fall and take less damage
- Contortion: Your character's ability to contort her body into unusual shapes
- Juggling: The ability to juggle multiple objects simultaneously
- Tumbling: The ability to roll, flip, and jump with grace and style

### Animal Handling

**Base Attribute:** Charisma

Animal Handling represents the ability to train and care for animals. This covers befriending or domesticating an animal, working with it, and teaching it basic commands. Not all animals are capable of learning tricks, and wild animals are unlikely to obey commands until your character has earned their trust.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Little to no rapport with animals
2 – 3	Can befriend domesticated animals
4 – 5	Can teach domesticated animals tricks
6 – 7	Can train animals for specific jobs
8 – 9	Can teach wild animals tricks
10 – 11	Can make wild animals obey commands

Your character may specialize in the following animals:

- Cats: The ability to work with cats, tigers, and other large felines
- Dogs: The ability to work with dogs, wolves, and other canines
- Horses: The ability to work with horses, mules, and donkeys
- Birds: The ability to work with carrier pigeons, falcons, and other birds
- Reptiles: The ability to work with lizards, snakes, and other reptiles



# Archery

**Base Attribute:** Dexterity

Archery represents proficiency with primitive ranged weapons, including bows, crossbows, and slings. It also covers the use of more exotic weapons such as blowguns, nets, and bolas. This skill is more common among primitive peoples and those who have spent time living among them.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	No experience with archery weapons
2 – 3	Has shot a bow once or twice
4 – 5	Generally hits the target
6 – 7	Skilled hunter
8 – 9	Expert marksman
10 – 11	Deadly at any distance

Your character may specialize in the following weapons:

- Blowguns: Proficiency with blowguns and other breath-powered weapon
- Bows: Proficiency with short bows, longbows, and various arrows types
- Crossbows: Proficiency with different crossbows and bolt types
- Nets: Proficiency with nets and other ranged entanglement weapons
- Slings: Proficiency with slings and various projectile types

# Art

*Specialized Skill*

**Base Attribute:** Intelligence

Art represents experience and training in a specific art form. It covers a wide range of artistic disciplines such as painting, sculpting, and writing. Characters with this skill are able to create, design, or critique art within their chosen field.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Little creativity or originality
2 – 3	Amateur or hobbyist
4 – 5	Competent artist
6 – 7	Gifted and talented artist
8 – 9	Well-respected expert
10 – 11	World-renowned master

Your character must focus on a specific discipline:

- Music: The ability to write and compose songs and musical scores
- Painting: The ability to draw, illustrate, and paint images
- Photography: The ability to take photographs and

develop pictures and film

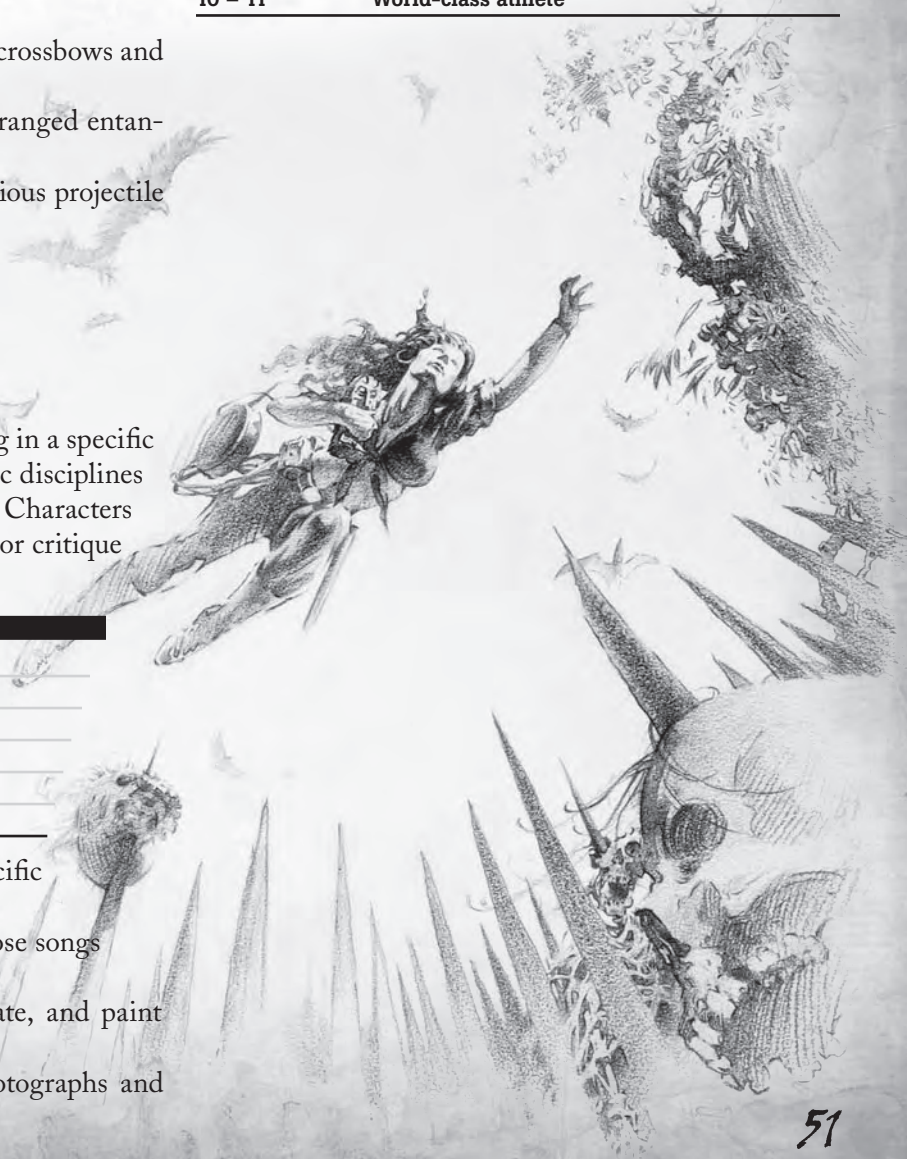
- Sculpture: The ability to carve and sculpt both busts and statues
- Writing: The ability to write poetry, novels, and short stories

# Athletics

**Base Attribute:** Strength

Athletics represents a talent for performing common physical activities such as running, jumping, and swimming. It also covers climbing and throwing—including throwing weapons in combat. Characters with this Skill may substitute their Athletics rating for both their Move rating and Strength rolls.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	No athletic ability
2 – 3	Amateur athlete
4 – 5	Capable athlete
6 – 7	Gifted and talented athlete
8 – 9	Recognized sports star
10 – 11	World-class athlete





## Chapter Two

Your character may specialize in the following abilities:

- Climbing: The ability to scale trees, walls, and other obstacles
- Jumping: The ability to leap horizontally or vertically into the air
- Running: The ability to run over short and long distances
- Swimming: The ability to swim across rivers, lakes, and other bodies of water
- Throwing: The ability to throw objects accurately and over a great distance

### Brawl

**Base Attribute:** Strength

Brawl represents your character's ability to fight with his bare hands. It covers everything from disciplined martial arts maneuvers to clawing and biting. Characters with this skill are not only adept at hand-to-hand combat, they are able to easily knockdown, incapacitate, or throw their opponents.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Never been in a fight before
2 – 3	Ineffective fighter
4 – 5	Competent brawler
6 – 7	Skilled at martial arts
8 – 9	Expert at hand-to-hand combat
10 – 11	Your character's hands are deadly weapons

Your character may specialize in the following attacks:

- Dirty Tricks: The ability to do whatever it takes to hurt an opponent
- Grappling: The ability to grapple and immobilize an opponent
- Kicking: The ability to use knees and feet to hurt an opponent
- Punching: The ability to use hands and elbows to hurt an opponent
- Throws: The ability to flip an opponent or knock him to the ground

### Bureaucracy

**Base Attribute:** Intelligence

Bureaucracy represents knowledge and understanding of administration and organization. It also includes familiarity with different kinds of power structures such as business enterprises, academic institutions, and various levels of government. Characters with this skill know how to manipulate the system to get what they want.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Knows nothing about bureaucracy
2 – 3	Knows a bit about how organizations work
4 – 5	Competent administrator
6 – 7	Successful businessperson
8 – 9	Authority on government regulations
10 – 11	World-renowned bureaucrat

Your character may specialize in the following organizations:

- Academia: Knowledge and understanding of university policies
- Business: The ability to manage and run a business enterprise
- Government: Knowledge and understanding of governmental regulations
- Legal: The ability to understand and navigate the legal system
- Military: Knowledge and understanding of military protocol

### Con

**Base Attribute:** Charisma

Con represents a talent for lies and deception. It covers bluffing, fast-talking, seduction, and tricking others. Characters with this skill may get what they want, but they are mistrusted and may have to quickly move on before the marks realize they've been duped.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Cannot tell a lie
2 – 3	Can tell little white lies
4 – 5	Fools some of the people some of the time
6 – 7	Professional con man or swindler
8 – 9	Consummate pick-up artist
10 – 11	Can talk anyone into doing anything

Your character may specialize in the following deceptions:

- Bluff: Your character's ability to appear stronger or weaker than she really is
- Fast Talk: Your character's ability to get what she wants by fast-talking someone
- Lying: The ability to lie convincingly and with sincerity
- Tricks: Your character's ability to trick someone into doing what she wants
- Seduction: The ability to seduce someone with charm and wit



## Craft

### Specialized Skill

**Base Attribute:** Intelligence

Craft represents experience and training in a specific profession or trade. It covers a wide range of technical and craftsman skills, such as carpentry, electronics, and mechanics. Characters with this skill are able to build, repair, or modify items in their chosen craft.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	No idea what tool to use
2 – 3	Amateur or hobbyist
4 – 5	Journeyman
6 – 7	Skilled craftsman
8 – 9	Respected artisan
10 – 11	World-renowned master craftsman

Your character must focus on a specific discipline:

- **Carpentry:** The ability to build and repair wooden structures and furniture
- **Chemistry:** The ability to prepare and create various chemical compounds
- **Electronics:** The ability to build and repair electronic devices such as radios
- **Mechanics:** The ability to build and repair mechanical devices such as engines
- **Medicines:** The ability to prepare and create various tonics and medicines

## Demolitions

**Base Attribute:** Intelligence

Demolitions represents an ability to set and defuse bombs and explosives. This includes handling dynamite, gunpowder, and napalm. It also includes making homemade and improvised explosive devices. Characters with this skill are able to create tunnels and mines, as well as raze buildings and structures.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Should never be allowed near explosives
2 – 3	Can set off fireworks
4 – 5	Trained to handle high explosives
6 – 7	Professional miner or sapper
8 – 9	Well-known demolitions expert
10 – 11	Can make a bomb out of almost anything

Your character may specialize in the following explosives:

- **Defusing:** The ability to disarm and dispose of explosive devices
- **Dynamite:** The ability to work with dynamite and nitroglycerin
- **Gunpowder:** The ability to work with black powder explosives

- **Improvised:** The ability to work with homemade explosives
- **Incendiary:** The ability to work with napalm and Greek fire

## Diplomacy

**Base Attribute:** Charisma

Diplomacy represents experience and training in handling various social situations. This covers leadership, etiquette, and politics. It also covers negotiation and swaying others to a particular point of view. Your character is inspiring and has the ability to motivate others. Characters with this skill may substitute their Diplomacy rating for Charisma rolls.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Usually says the wrong thing
2 – 3	Awkward in social situations
4 – 5	Good social skills
6 – 7	Inspiring leader
8 – 9	Respected diplomat or ambassador
10 – 11	Can defuse nearly any hostile situation

Your character may specialize in the following fields:

- **Etiquette:** The ability to act appropriately in a variety of situations
- **Leadership:** The ability to motivate and inspire others
- **Negotiation:** The ability to bargain with someone and make a deal
- **Persuasion:** The ability to sway others to a particular point of view
- **Politics:** The ability to obtain and hold on to political power

## Drive

**Base Attribute:** Dexterity

Drive represents the ability to drive a variety of wheeled and tracked vehicles. This covers cars, trucks, motorcycles, buses, and tanks. Characters with this skill are able to drive with speed and precision, perform dangerous stunts, and maneuver with ease.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Dangerous and unsafe driver
2 – 3	Inexperienced driver
4 – 5	Professional bus or truck driver
6 – 7	Race car or tank driver
8 – 9	Daredevil or stunt driver
10 – 11	Can make a vehicle do almost anything

Your character may specialize in the following vehicles:



## Chapter Two

- **Buses:** The ability to drive a large, multi-passenger vehicle (e.g., a bus or trolley)
- **Cars:** The ability to drive a small passenger vehicle (e.g., a car or taxi)
- **Motorcycles:** The ability to drive a motorcycle with or without a sidecar
- **Tanks:** The ability to drive a tracked vehicle (e.g., a bulldozer or tank)
- **Trucks:** The ability to drive a large cargo vehicle such as a truck

## Empathy

**Base Attribute:** Intelligence

Empathy represents the ability to read people and understand their feelings and motivations. This includes interpreting body language and detecting lies, as well as general intuition and gut feelings about a situation. Characters with this skill have very good instincts and are hard to fool.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Gullible and easily manipulated
2 – 3	Can pick up on obvious emotions
4 – 5	Sensitive to other people's emotions
6 – 7	Very good at reading people
8 – 9	Highly intuitive and perceptive
10 – 11	No one can keep secrets from your character

Your character may specialize in the following areas:

- **Body Language:** The ability to accurately read another's body language
- **Emotions:** The ability to correctly identify someone's emotional state
- **Intuition:** The ability to get the feel of an ambiguous situation
- **Lies:** The ability to detect when someone is lying
- **Motives:** The ability to figure out someone's true motivation

## Firearms

**Base Attribute:** Dexterity

Firearms represents proficiency with guns and firearms. This includes pistols, rifles, shotguns, black powder weapons, and more advanced firearms such as submachine guns. Characters with this skill are able to shoot and maintain all manner of firearms with skill and accuracy.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Never used a gun
2 – 3	Shot a gun once or twice
4 – 5	Generally familiar with firearms
6 – 7	Skilled marksman
8 – 9	Expert sharpshooter
10 – 11	Deadly at any range

Your character may specialize in the following weapons:

- **Archaic:** Proficiency with black powder pistols and rifles
- **Pistol:** Proficiency with all calibers of pistols and revolvers
- **Rifle:** Proficiency with all calibers of rifles and carbines
- **Shotgun:** Proficiency with all gauges of shotguns
- **Submachine Gun:** Proficiency with all calibers of submachine guns

## Gambling

**Base Attribute:** Intelligence

Gambling represents expertise at games of skill and chance. It covers classic games such as poker, blackjack, craps, and roulette. It also includes more exotic games. Characters with this skill have better than average luck and usually walk away from the gaming table with more money than they started with.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Easy mark
2 – 3	Loses more than he wins
4 – 5	Familiar with most games
6 – 7	Wins more often than he loses
8 – 9	Makes living as a professional gambler
10 – 11	World-renowned gambler

Your character may specialize in the following games:

- **Cheating:** The ability to cheat at a variety of games of chance
- **Blackjack:** Skill at playing blackjack, and knowledge of its variant rules
- **Craps:** Skill at playing craps, and knowledge of its variant rules
- **Poker:** Skill at playing poker, and knowledge of its variant rules
- **Roulette:** Skill at playing roulette, and knowledge of its variant rules



# Gunnery

**Base Attribute:** Intelligence

Gunnery represents skill and accuracy with emplaced and vehicle-mounted weapons. It covers artillery, bombs, cannons, and more exotic weapons such as rockets and torpedoes. Characters with this skill are able to destroy enemies with various types of heavy weapons.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Danger to himself and others
2 – 3	Inexperienced with large guns
4 – 5	Qualified to use heavy weapons
6 – 7	Skilled bombardier or tank gunner
8 – 9	Expert Gunnery marksman
10 – 11	Rarely, if ever, misses a target

Your character may specialize in the following weapons:

- Artillery: Skill with mortars, field guns, and other indirect fire weapons
- Bombs: Skill with bombs, depth charges, and other unguided weapons
- Cannons: Skill with cannons, tank guns, and other direct fire weapons
- Machineguns: Skill with heavy machineguns and other anti-infantry weapons

- Rockets: Skill with rockets, torpedoes, and other guided weapons

# Intimidation

**Base Attribute:** Charisma

Intimidation represents the ability to browbeat and frighten people. It includes making threats, barking orders, and interrogation. If the situation calls for it, your character can even torture someone to get what he wants. Characters with this skill are imposing, and generally given a wide berth.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Doesn't scare anyone
2 – 3	Not very scary or assertive
4 – 5	Knows how to threaten someone
6 – 7	Intimidating drill sergeant
8 – 9	Expert interrogator or torturer
10 – 11	Has a palpable aura of menace

Your character may specialize in the following activities:

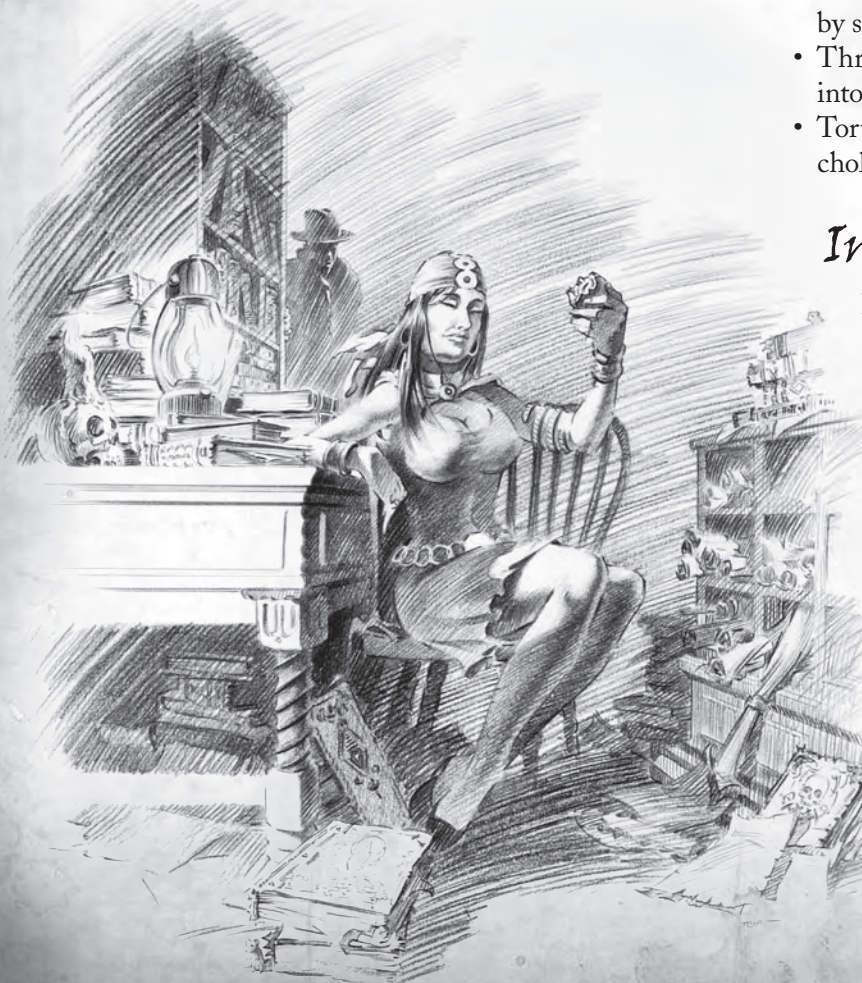
- Interrogation: The ability to get information out of someone verbally
- Orders: The ability to get someone to obey direct orders
- Stare-down: The ability to get someone to back down by staring at them
- Threats: Your character's ability to scare someone into giving him what he wants
- Torture: Your character's ability to physically or psychologically torture someone to get what he wants

# Investigation

**Base Attribute:** Intelligence

Investigation represents the ability to search for clues and uncover evidence. It also includes researching information and piecing together the clues that your character discovers. Your character is able to interview someone to get their story or get his questions answered. Characters with this skill are able to unravel virtually any mystery. Characters with this skill may substitute their Investigation rating for Intelligence rolls.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Often jumps to the wrong conclusion
2 – 3	Amateur detective or mystery buff
4 – 5	Policeman or trained investigator
6 – 7	Private detective or investigative reporter
8 – 9	Government agent or forensic investigator
10 – 11	World-famous crime solver





## Chapter Two

Your character may specialize in the following activities:

- **Crimes:** The ability to investigate crime scenes and look for clues
- **Enigmas:** The ability to unravel mysteries and solve enigmas and riddles
- **Interview:** The ability to interview someone and get answers to questions
- **Research:** The ability to do legwork and research to find answers
- **Search:** The ability to search an area for clues and hiding places

### Larceny

**Base Attribute:** Dexterity

Larceny represents an aptitude for stealing and robbing. It covers everything from petty theft such as picking someone's pocket, to disabling an alarm system and cracking a safe. Characters with this skill are able to steal anything that catches their eye, no matter how tricky the security.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Often caught red-handed
2 – 3	Can perform crude magic tricks
4 – 5	Skilled thief or burglar
6 – 7	Talented magician or pickpocket
8 – 9	Veteran safecracker or security expert
10 – 11	Can steal virtually anything at any time

Your character may specialize in the following activities:

- **Lockpicking:** The ability to pick a lock using any available tools
- **Pickpocketing:** The ability to pick someone's pocket without anyone noticing
- **Safecracking:** The ability to crack a safe using a variety of methods
- **Security:** The ability to set up or bypass security systems and alarms
- **Sleight of Hand:** The ability to palm small items and perform magic tricks

### Linguistics

**Base Attribute:** Intelligence

Linguistics represents knowledge and understanding of language structure. It covers encrypting written messages, translating spoken languages, reading lips, and understanding gestures. It also represents the number of additional languages your character speaks. Characters with this skill are proficient translators and usually fluent in many different languages.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Fluency in no additional languages
2 – 3	Fluency in one additional language
4 – 5	Fluency in two additional languages
6 – 7	Fluency in four additional languages
8 – 9	Fluency in eight additional languages
10 – 11	Fluency in sixteen additional languages

Your character may specialize in the following areas:

- **Codes:** The ability to encrypt languages and break secret codes
- **Deciphering:** The ability to decipher texts, carvings, or tablets
- **Gestures:** The ability to communicate through the use of expressive gestures
- **Lip Reading:** The ability to understand someone by reading their lips
- **Translation:** The ability to translate spoken words from one language to another

### Medicine

**Base Attribute:** Intelligence

Medicine represents medical training and experience. It covers the diagnosis and treatment of diseases for both humans and animals. It also includes bandaging wounds and performing surgery. Characters with this skill are able to treat illnesses, tend to wounds, and save people's lives.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Does more harm than good
2 – 3	Knows one or two folk remedies
4 – 5	Nurse or medic
6 – 7	General practitioner
8 – 9	Respected surgeon
10 – 11	World-famous doctor

Your character may specialize in the following fields:

- **Diagnosis:** The ability to diagnose an illness by observing the patient's symptoms
- **Diseases:** The ability to prevent and treat a disease with the proper medication
- **First Aid:** The ability to bandage wounds, stop bleeding, and revive a patient
- **Surgery:** The ability to perform necessary surgery to correct a medical condition
- **Veterinary:** The ability to examine and treat animal maladies

### Melee

**Base Attribute:** Strength

Melee represents proficiency with a variety of hand-held weapons. It includes common weapons such as





clubs and knives, as well as more archaic weapons such as axes, swords, and spears. Characters with this skill are deadly with virtually any hand-held weapon.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Has to be careful not to cut herself
2 – 3	Has swung an axe once or twice
4 – 5	Has taken some fencing classes
6 – 7	Dangerous knife-fighter
8 – 9	Expert swordsman
10 – 11	Can turn anything into a deadly weapon

Your character may specialize in the following weapons:

- Axes: Proficiency with axes, polearms, and other chopping weapons
- Clubs: Proficiency with maces, clubs, and other blunt weapons
- Knives: Proficiency with knives and other small bladed weapons
- Spears: Proficiency with spears, lances, and other extended weapons
- Swords: Proficiency with swords, rapiers, and other bladed weapons

## Performance

**Base Attribute:** Charisma

Performance represents the talent for entertaining people through performance arts such as acting, dancing or singing. It also covers playing musical instruments and delivering a rousing speech. Characters with this skill are fun and interesting, entertaining, and can often move their audience to laughter or tears.

### Skill Rating Description

0 – 1	Appalling performer
2 – 3	Novice or amateur performer
4 – 5	Competent and reliable performer
6 – 7	Gifted and talented performer
8 – 9	Popular and acclaimed performer
10 – 11	World-renowned performer

Your character may specialize in the following performance arts:

- Acting: The ability to play the part of a character or impersonate a specific person
- Dancing: The ability to jump and dance with style and grace
- Musical Instrument: The ability to play a musical instrument with precision and flair
- Oratory: The ability to deliver a persuasive and motivational speech
- Singing: The ability to sing with power and subtlety, with or without music

## Pilot

*Specialized Skill*

**Base Attribute:** Dexterity

Pilot represents your character's ability to pilot complex and unusual vehicles. It covers the operation of aircraft, ships, sailboats, and more exotic vehicles such as drilling machines and submarines. Characters with this skill are able to pilot a specific vehicle with skill and expertise.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Accident waiting to happen
2 – 3	Inexperienced pilot
4 – 5	Qualified pilot or helmsman
6 – 7	Commercial pilot or ship's captain
8 – 9	Daredevil or stunt pilot
10 – 11	Can make a vehicle do almost anything

Your character must focus on a specific discipline:

- Aircraft: The ability to pilot both airplanes and zeppelins
- Balloons: The ability to pilot balloons of all shapes and sizes
- Drilling Machines: The ability to pilot tunneling or drilling machines
- Ships: The ability to pilot ships of all shapes and sizes
- Submarines: The ability to pilot a submarine or submersible vessel



## Ride

**Base Attribute:** Dexterity

Riding represents your character's aptitude for riding all different kinds of mounts, including horses, mules, camels, and more exotic animals. Some mounts are only available inside the Hollow Earth. Characters with this skill are able to ride expertly and control their mounts in combat.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Likely to get thrown from the mount
2 – 3	Little experience riding animals
4 – 5	Has taken riding lessons
6 – 7	Skilled horseman
8 – 9	Famous jockey or horse racer
10 – 11	World-renowned horseman

Your character may specialize in the following mounts:

- Bulls: The ability to mount and ride oxen and bulls without falling off
- Camels: The ability to mount and ride a camel without falling off
- Elephants: The ability to mount and ride an elephant without falling off
- Horses: The ability to mount and ride a horse without falling off
- Mules: The ability to mount and ride a mule without falling off

## Science

*Specialized Skill*

**Base Attribute:** Intelligence

Science represents your character's education and training in the physical or life sciences. It covers biology, chemistry, geology, engineering, and physics. It also covers mathematics and experimental methods for these disciplines. Characters with this skill are trained in a specific science and can experiment in their chosen field.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Uneducated in this field
2 – 3	Knows a little about this field
4 – 5	Well-versed in this field
6 – 7	Advanced knowledge of this field
8 – 9	Recognized expert in this field
10 – 11	World-famous in this field

Your character must focus on a specific discipline:

- Biology: Knowledge of botany, zoology, and experimental methodology
- Chemistry: Knowledge of chemical compounds and experimental methodology

- Engineering: Knowledge of engineering principles and design methodology
- Geology: Knowledge of minerals and natural resources, and their composition
- Physics: Knowledge of forces, motion, and experimental methodology

## Stealth

**Base Attribute:** Dexterity

Stealth represents the ability to avoid detection in a variety of circumstances. It covers shadowing someone, hiding, and sneaking about. It also includes your character's affinity for disguising herself and others. Characters with this skill leave no trace of where they have been and are hard to detect.

**Note:** Your character's Size rating modifies your Stealth rolls. It is harder for larger characters to go unnoticed, while smaller characters are more difficult to spot.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Clumsy and obvious
2 – 3	Played hide and seek as a child
4 – 5	Knows how to cover her tracks
6 – 7	Hunter or private detective
8 – 9	Elite spy or saboteur
10 – 11	Can walk on rice paper and not leave a trace

Your character may specialize in the following activities:

- Camouflage: The ability to hide objects or people by blending them into the surroundings
- Disguise: Your character's ability to disguise herself
- Hiding: The ability to hide by blending into the surroundings
- Shadowing: The ability to follow someone without being spotted
- Sneaking: The ability to move without being seen or heard

## Streetwise

**Base Attribute:** Charisma

Streetwise represents the ability to get information and items from the criminal underworld. It includes buying and selling items on the black market, haggling over prices, and scrounging for used items. It also covers carousing, gathering information, and rumor-mongering. Characters with this skill are well informed and able to get their hands on virtually any item.



Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	Sticks out like a sore thumb
2 – 3	Spent a little time on the streets
4 – 5	Knows how to handle himself on the streets
6 – 7	Criminal, mobster, or gang member
8 – 9	Gang leader or mob boss
10 – 11	The head of an international crime ring

Your character may specialize in the following areas:

- **Black Market:** A talent for buying and selling items on the black market
- **Carousing:** A talent for getting into nightclubs and having a good time
- **Haggling:** A talent for getting items and services for lower prices
- **Rumors:** A talent for gathering information and spreading rumors
- **Scrounging:** A talent for tracking down used or discarded items

## Survival

**Base Attribute:** Intelligence

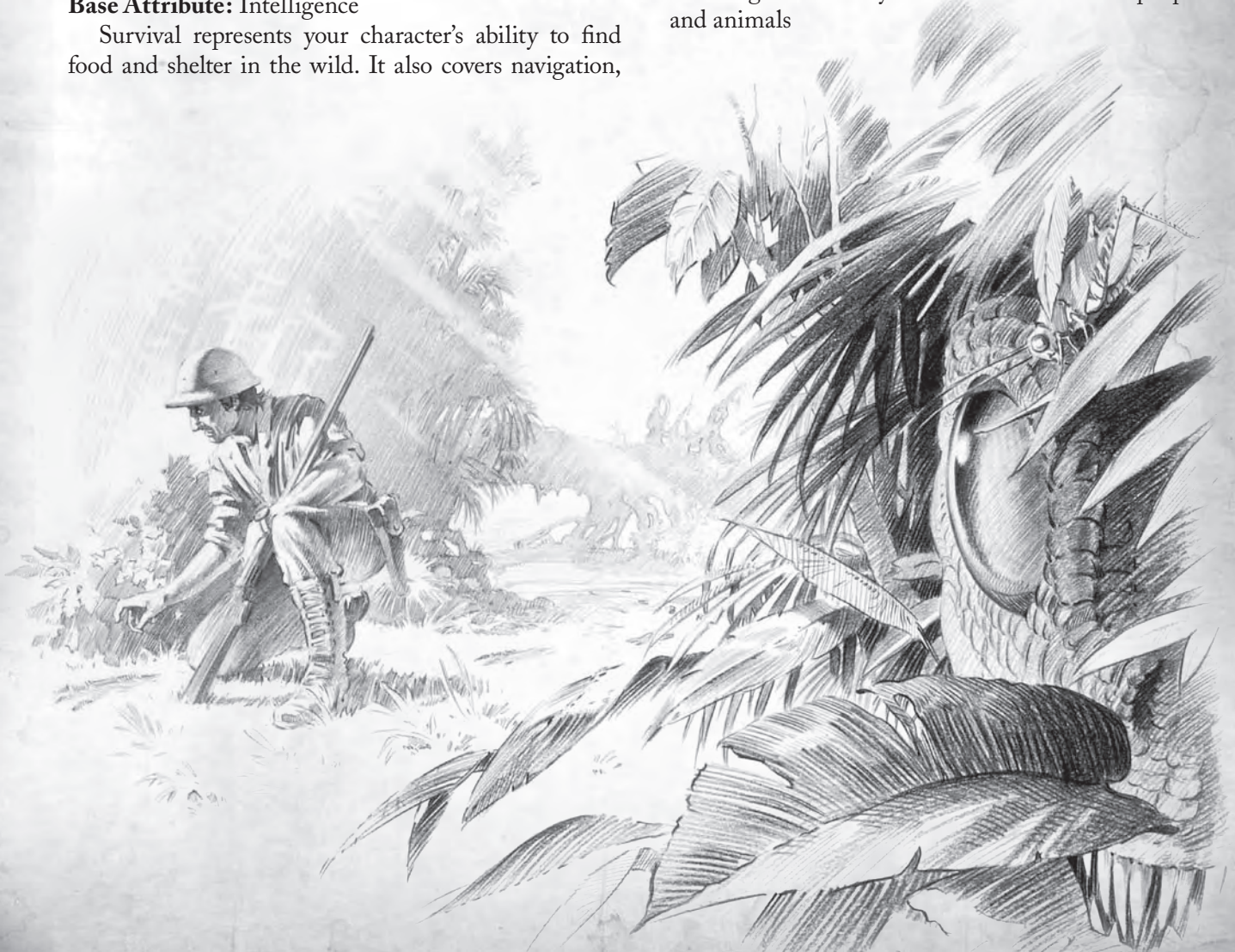
Survival represents your character's ability to find food and shelter in the wild. It also covers navigation,

and hunting and tracking game. Characters with this skill are at home in the wilderness and can not only take care of themselves, they can also feed and guide others.

Skill Rating	Description
0 – 1	A babe in the woods
2 – 3	Has gone hiking once or twice
4 – 5	Goes camping regularly
6 – 7	Skilled hunter or outdoorsman
8 – 9	Expert tracker or scout
10 – 11	Can live off the land indefinitely

Your character may specialize in the following activities:

- **Foraging:** The ability to gather edible plants and find sources of fresh water
- **Hunting:** The ability to find, trap, and kill animals for food or clothing
- **Navigation:** The ability to determine general location and direction of travel
- **Shelter:** The ability to build or locate suitable shelter from the elements
- **Tracking:** The ability to follow the tracks of people and animals





## TALENTS

Talents reflect your character's aptitudes and special abilities. They cover a wide range of activities and give your character a new ability or improve one he already has. Talents also let you "break the rules" by ignoring certain penalties, or by doing something normally not allowed.

There are two types of Talents: standard and unique. Unique Talents can only be taken once, while standard Talents may be taken multiple times. A Talent is available to any character that meets the prerequisites (if any). While most Talents can be purchased anytime, some are only available during character creation.

## ADVANCED TALENTS

Standard Talents may be purchased more than once—representing an even greater expertise or ability—to provide your character with an increased benefit. Advanced Talents may be purchased a specified number of times, limiting their maximum benefit. See the individual Talent descriptions for more information.

## TALENT DESCRIPTIONS

### Accuracy

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character can attack with pinpoint accuracy, picking her target out of a crowd, hitting him behind cover, and aiming for his vulnerable spots.

**Benefit:** Your character makes called shots at a reduced penalty. She may ignore up to a -2 penalty for targeting a specific location—such as when an opponent is wearing armor, or hiding behind cover. This Talent also reduces penalties for attacking opponents smaller than your character.

Talent	Prerequisite	Benefit
Accuracy	—	Reduced called shot penalties
<i>Agile*</i>	—	+1 Dexterity rating
Alertness	—	+2 Perception rating
Animal Affinity	—	+1 Charisma bonus dealing with animals
Attractive	—	+1 Charisma bonus dealing with people
Autofire	Firearms 4	Improved autofire attack
Blind Fight	—	Reduced penalty for poor visibility
Block	Brawl 4	Perform block as a reflexive action
Blunt Strike	Melee 4	Do nonlethal damage with lethal weapons
Bold Attack	Charisma 3	Use Charisma with a specific combat Skill
<i>Bold Defense</i>	Charisma 3	Use Charisma for Defense rating
Calculated Attack	Intelligence 3	Use Intelligence with a specific combat Skill
<i>Calculated Defense</i>	Intelligence 3	Use Intelligence for Defense rating
Captivate	Performance 4	Temporarily entrance targets
<i>Charismatic*</i>	—	+1 Charisma rating
Climb	—	Improved climbing speed
Combat Aptitude	Intelligence 3	Exchange attack and Defense dice
Combat Skill	Skill 4	+2 Defense with specific non-combat Skill
<i>Danger Sense</i>	—	Reduced surprise penalty
Diehard	—	Improved death threshold
<i>Direction Sense</i>	—	Always know direction
Dodge	Athletics 4	Perform dodge as reflexive action
Dual Wield	Dexterity 3	Reduced penalty for two-weapon attacks
Fearsome	Intimidate 4	Temporarily frighten opponents
Finesse Attack	Dexterity 3	Use Dexterity with a specific combat Skill
Flurry	Dexterity 3	Reduced penalty for multiple strikes
Focused Attack	Willpower 3	Use Willpower with a specific combat Skill
<i>Focused Defense</i>	Willpower 3	Use Willpower for Defense rating
<i>Giant*</i>	—	+1 Size rating
Guardian	Intelligence 3	Provide Defense bonus to allies
<i>Headstrong</i>	Willpower 3	Use Willpower for Stun rating
High Pain Tolerance	—	Reduced penalty for wounds
Inspire	Diplomacy 4	Provide Skill bonus to allies
<i>Instant Reload</i>	—	Reload weapon as reflexive action
<i>Intelligent*</i>	—	+1 Intelligence rating
Iron Jaw	—	+1 Stun rating
<i>Iron Will*</i>	—	+1 Willpower rating
Jump	—	Improved jumping distance
Keen Sense*	—	+4 Perception rating with a specific sense
<i>Kip Up</i>	—	Stand up as reflexive action
Knockout Blow	Brawl 4	Improved knockout ability
Lethal Blow	Brawl 4	Do lethal damage with Brawl attacks
<i>Lifesaver</i>	Medicine 4	Improved healing ability
<i>Long Shot</i>	—	Double weapon ranges
Lucky	—	+2 bonus to any one roll per game session
Mobile Attack	Dexterity 3	Move and attack simultaneously
Parry	Melee 4	Perform parry as reflexive action
Provoke	Con 4	Temporarily provoke opponents
<i>Psychic Sensitivity*</i>	—	Sensitive to psychic phenomena
<i>Quick Draw</i>	—	Draw weapon as reflexive action
<i>Quick Healer*</i>	Body 3	Double the normal healing rate
Quick Reflexes	—	+2 Initiative rating
Rapid Shot	Dexterity 3	Reduced penalty for multiple shots
Robust	—	+2 Health rating
<i>Run</i>	—	Improved running speed
Skill Aptitude	—	+2 Skill rating to a specific Skill
Skill Mastery	Intelligence 3	General expertise with one Specialized Skill
Staggering Blow	Brawl 4	Improved knockback ability
Strafe	Firearms 4	Improved strafing ability
<i>Strong*</i>	—	+1 Strength rating
Strong Attack	Strength 3	Use Strength with a specific combat Skill
<i>Strong Defense</i>	Strength 3	Use Strength for Defense rating
Swift	—	+2 Move rating
<i>Swim</i>	—	Improved swimming speed
<i>Time Sense</i>	—	Always know time
Total Defense	Dexterity 3	Improved Defense ability
Total Recall*	—	Never forget anything
<i>Tough*</i>	—	+1 Body rating
Tough Attack	Body 3	Use Body with a specific combat Skill
Vigorous Defense	Dexterity 3	Reduced penalty for multiple attackers

\* This Talent is only available during character creation  
Unique Talents are listed in italics



**Normal:** When making a called shot to hit a specific target, your character suffers a penalty between -1 and -8 depending on the size of the target area, how much armor an opponent is wearing, or the amount of cover he has.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent up to four times. Your character may ignore an additional -2 called shot penalty per level (i.e., the first purchase allows her to ignore up to a -2 penalty, the second allows up to a -4, and so on).

## Agile

*Unique; only available during character creation*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is exceptionally graceful, limber, and coordinated. Her speed and agility far exceed that of the average person.

**Benefit:** Your character gains a +1 Dexterity rating. This bonus affects her Dexterity rolls and all Dexterity-based Skills. It also factors into her Secondary Attributes and raises her maximum Dexterity rating by one point.

**Normal:** Your character's Dexterity rating is unmodified.

## Alertness

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is remarkably attentive to his surroundings. He is vigilant and rarely lets his guard down.

**Benefit:** Your character gains a +2 Perception rating.

**Normal:** Your character's Perception rating is unmodified.

**Advanced:** You may purchase this Talent twice, gaining your character an additional +2 Perception rating.

## Animal Affinity

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character has a way with animals and intuitively knows how handle them. As a result, animals like her and tend to react more positively when she is around.

**Benefit:** Your character gains a +1 Charisma rating when dealing with animals. This bonus affects her Charisma rolls and all Charisma-based Skills.

**Normal:** Your character's Charisma rating is unmodified when dealing with animals.

**Advanced:** You may purchase this Talent up to three times, gaining your character an additional +1 Charisma rating per level.

## Attractive

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is sexier and more attractive than the average person. People tend to like him, and are more easily influenced when he is around.

**Benefit:** Your character gains a +1 Charisma rating when dealing with people. This bonus affects his Charisma rolls and all Charisma-based Skills.

**Normal:** Your character's Charisma rating is unmodified when dealing with people.

**Advanced:** You may purchase this Talent up to three times, gaining your character an additional +1 Charisma rating per level.

## Autofire

**Prerequisites:** Firearms 4

Your character is highly proficient at shooting fully automatic weapons, and she knows how to use them to their full, deadly potential.

**Benefit:** Your character receives a +1 bonus on all autofire attacks. This bonus stacks with the normal autofire bonuses.

**Normal:** Your character's autofire attacks are unmodified (See Autofire p. 118).

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent twice, gaining your character an additional +1 autofire bonus (for a total of +2). This bonus stacks with the normal autofire bonuses.

## Blind Fight

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character can target opponents without having to see them. He might hear them breathing, catch their scent, or feel their presence, but he always seems to know where they are.

**Benefit:** Your character makes blind attacks at a reduced penalty. He may ignore up to a -2 penalty due to poor visibility (e.g., fighting in partial darkness or with blurred vision).

**Normal:** You suffer a -4 penalty when your character makes a blind attack against an opponent, if he knows her general location. Making a blind attack against an opponent whose location is unknown results in a -8 penalty.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent up to four



## Chapter Two

times. Your character may ignore an additional -2 visibility penalty per level.

### Block

**Prerequisites:** Brawl 4

Your character is adept at defending herself in hand-to-hand combat. She instinctively blocks blows and deflects strikes without having to go on the defensive.

**Benefit:** Your character performs the Block maneuver as a reflexive action (See Block, p. 118). Any Defense bonuses provide a bonus to the Block maneuver as well. If your character loses her Active Defense, she loses her Block ability as well.

**Normal:** Your character performs the Block maneuver as an attack action.

**Advanced:** You may purchase this Talent up to three times, gaining your character an additional +2 Defense bonus against Brawl attacks.

### Blunt Strike

**Prerequisites:** Melee 4

Your character knows how to use weapons to incapacitate opponents without killing them, pummeling them into submission with the flat of a blade or the haft of an axe.

**Benefit:** Your character may do nonlethal damage with lethal weapons at no penalty. If wielding a nonlethal weapon, such as a club or staff, your character gains a +2 Melee bonus to his attack.

**Normal:** You suffer a -2 penalty to your attack roll whenever your character tries to do nonlethal (instead of lethal) damage with a melee weapon.

**Advanced:** You may purchase this Talent twice, gaining your character an additional +2 Melee bonus.

### Bold Attack

**Prerequisites:** Charisma 3

Your character is daring and courageous, and knows how to use her grace as a weapon. She unnerves opponents with her unshakable confidence.

**Benefit:** Your character uses her Charisma rating as the Base Attribute for a specific combat Skill, such as Archery, Athletics, Brawl, Firearms, or Melee (designate one when you take this Talent).

**Normal:** Your character uses the standard Base Attributes for her combat Skills.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent multiple times, but the benefit is applied to a different Skill each time.

### Bold Defense

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** Charisma 3

Your character is fearless and confident, using the strength of his presence to defend himself. He scares his opponents into making feeble attacks.

**Benefit:** Your character uses his Charisma instead of Dexterity when calculating his Active Defense and Defense ratings.

**Normal:** Your character uses his Dexterity when calculating his Defense ratings.

**Special:** You may not buy this Talent if your character already has the Calculated Defense Talent.

### Calculated Attack

**Prerequisites:** Intelligence 3

Your character is wily and clever, able to use her intellect as a weapon. She knows how to take advantage of an opponent's mistakes and exploit weaknesses in defenses.

**Benefit:** Your character uses her Intelligence rating as the Base Attribute for a specific combat Skill, such as Archery, Athletics, Brawl, Firearms, or Melee (designate one when you take this Talent).

**Normal:** Your character uses the standard Base Attributes for her combat Skills.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent multiple times, but the benefit is applied to a different Skill each time.

### Calculated Defense

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** Intelligence 3

Your character is shrewd and smart, anticipating his opponent's attacks and expertly defending against them.

**Benefit:** Your character uses his Intelligence instead of Dexterity when calculating his Active Defense and Defense ratings.

**Normal:** Your character uses his Dexterity when calculating his Defense ratings.

**Special:** You may not buy this Talent if your character already has the Bold Defense Talent.

### Captivate

**Prerequisites:** Performance 4

Your character is a magnetic and attractive performer. She is able to capture attention with her performance abilities and the sheer force of her personality.



**Benefit:** As an attack action, your character can attempt to entrance her opponents during combat. Make a Performance roll against all opponents within 10 feet of your character. If you roll more successes than an opponent's Willpower rating, he is beguiled by your character and unable to attack for a number of turns equal to the number of extra successes you rolled. An entranced opponent may defend himself normally, but the spell is broken if he is attacked during this time. If you roll more than twice an opponent's Willpower rating, he is completely enthralled and loses his Active Defense rating for a number of turns equal to the total number of extra successes you rolled.

**Normal:** Your character may only attempt to entrance her audience outside of combat. They automatically lose interest in her if the situation turns violent.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent up to three times, gaining your character a +2 Performance bonus for each additional level purchased.

## Charismatic

*Unique; only available during character creation*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is exceptionally charming and persuasive. His ability to influence people far exceeds that of the average person.

**Benefit:** Your character gains a +1 Charisma rating. This bonus affects his Charisma rolls and all Charisma-based Skills. It also factors into his Secondary Attributes and raises his maximum Charisma rating by one point.

**Normal:** Your character's Charisma rating is unmodified.

## Climb

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is naturally skilled at climbing trees and scaling walls. She can climb with surprising speed and agility.

**Benefit:** Your character's climbing speed is doubled (see Move, p. 46).

**Normal:** Your character climbs at normal speed.

## Combat Aptitude

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** Intelligence 3

Your character has a gift for combat; he knows how to use his expertise for both offense and defense.

**Benefit:** As a reflexive action on your character's turn, you may take up to a -4 penalty on his Defense rating to add an equal amount of bonus dice to his attack rating, or vice versa. You may not reduce either rating to zero in this manner. These modifiers remain in effect until your character's next action, when you may reallocate dice once again.

**Normal:** You suffer a -4 penalty to your attack roll and gain a +2 bonus to your Defense when your character fights defensively.

## Combat Skill

**Prerequisites:** Non-combat Skill 4

Your character is adept at keeping himself out of harm's way when using a non-combat Skill (such as Medicine, Photography, or Diplomacy) during combat.

**Benefit:** Your character gains a +2 Defense bonus whenever he uses a specific non-combat Skill in combat (designate one when you take this Talent).

**Normal:** Your Defense rating is unmodified when using non-combat Skills in combat.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent twice for any one Skill, gaining your character an additional +2 Defense bonus when using that Skill in combat.

## Danger Sense

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character can sense unseen threats, such as sneak attacks and ambushes. Because she is constantly alert to danger, she's never caught with her guard down.

**Benefit:** Your character retains her full Defense rating when surprised or ambushed. This includes attacks she cannot see coming, such as backstabbing and sniper attacks. Sometimes the Gamemaster will make an Empathy roll on your behalf to see if your character gets an unbidden premonition or a bad feeling about a situation.

**Normal:** Your character loses her Active Defense rating when surprised or ambushed.

## Diehard

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is hard to kill! He can continue fighting even after taking enough damage to kill an ordinary person.

**Benefit:** Your character does not fall unconscious, and automatically stabilizes, when reduced to nega-



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tive Health. He may continue to act, but will suffer wound penalties on all actions equal to his current Health. In addition, his death threshold is increased to -7 Health.

**Normal:** Your character falls unconscious when reduced to negative Health, and will continue to lose Health unless he stabilizes.

**Advanced:** You may purchase this Talent up to three times. Each additional level increases your character's death threshold by two points (up to -11 Health).

### Direction Sense

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character does not need a compass. She has an innate sense of direction and rarely gets lost. She knows which way is north even when she can't see the sun.

**Benefit:** Even in adverse conditions, your character automatically knows which direction she is heading without having to make a roll. This Talent also gives you a +2 bonus to all navigation rolls.

**Normal:** You must make a navigation roll (difficulty 2) for your character to determine her direction of travel.

### Dodge

**Prerequisites:** Athletics 4

Your character has an innate ability to avoid ranged combat attacks. She expertly ducks and weaves, making herself harder to hit.

**Benefit:** Your character performs the Dodge maneuver as a reflexive action (see Dodge, p. 120). Any Defense bonuses provide a bonus to the Dodge maneuver as well. If your character loses her Active Defense, she loses her Dodge ability as well.

**Normal:** Your character performs the Dodge maneuver as an attack action.

**Advanced:** You may purchase this Talent up to three times, gaining your character an additional +2 Defense bonus against ranged combat attacks.

### Dual Wield

**Prerequisites:** Dexterity 3

Your character can wield a weapon in each hand, doubling the amount of damage he can inflict on his enemies.

**Benefit:** Your character may attack without penalty when using a weapon in his off-hand. Alternately, he may attack two times (using one weapon in each hand)

by making a Total Attack with a -4 penalty on each attack roll. These attacks may be made at different targets.

**Normal:** Attacking with a weapon in your character's off-hand results in a -2 penalty. Alternately, your character may attack twice by making a Total Attack with a -4 penalty to his primary attack and a -6 penalty to his off-hand attack (see Total Attack, p. 121).

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent up to three times. Each additional level reduces the Total Attack penalty by 2.

### Fearsome

**Prerequisites:** Intimidate 4

Your character knows how to use fear and intimidation as a weapon. He can unnerve his enemies and even cause them to turn tail and run.

**Benefit:** As an attack action, your character may attempt to scare his opponents. Make an Intimidation roll against all opponents within 10 feet of your character. If you roll more successes than an opponent's Willpower ratings, she suffers a -2 penalty to her attack and Skill rolls for a number of turns equal to the number of extra successes you rolled. If you roll more successes than twice your opponent's Willpower, she flees in terror for a number of turns equal to the total number of extra successes you rolled.

**Normal:** You may make an Intimidation roll against a single opponent in an attempt to scare him.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent up to three times, gaining your character a +2 Intimidation bonus per level.

### Finesse Attack

**Prerequisites:** Dexterity 3

Your character is quick and agile and knows how to use speed as a weapon, slipping her attacks past an opponent's defenses.

**Benefit:** Your character uses her Dexterity rating as the Base Attribute for a specific combat Skill, such as Athletics, Brawl, or Melee (designate one when you take this Talent).

**Normal:** Your character uses the standard Base Attributes for her combat Skills.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent multiple times, but the benefit is applied to a different Skill each time.



## Flurry

**Prerequisites:** Dexterity 3

Your character can attack the same opponent twice in quick succession, doubling the amount of damage he inflicts on enemies in close combat.

**Benefit:** Your character may attack the same opponent twice by making a Total Attack with a -2 penalty on each attack roll. Both attacks must be made with the same weapon or with a weapon and an unarmed attack.

**Normal:** Your character may attack the same opponent twice by making a Total Attack with a -4 penalty on each attack roll (see Total Attack, p. 121).

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent two times, allowing your character to attack the same opponent twice without penalty.

## Focused Attack

**Prerequisites:** Willpower 3

Your character is dogged and relentless, able to use his discipline as a weapon. She focuses his attacks to wear down an opponent's defenses.

**Benefit:** Your character uses his Willpower rating as the Base Attribute for a specific combat Skill, such as Archery, Athletics, Brawl, Firearms, or Melee (designate one when you take this Talent).

**Normal:** Your character uses the standard Base Attributes for his combat Skills.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent multiple times, but the benefit is applied to a different Skill each time.

## Focused Defense

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** Willpower 3

Your character is stubborn and unyielding. She focuses her will to defend herself, shrugging off blows and never letting her guard down.

**Benefit:** Your character uses her Willpower instead of Body when calculating her Passive Defense and Defense ratings.

**Normal:** Your character uses her Body when calculating Defense ratings.

**Special:** You may not buy this Talent if your character already has the Strong Defense Talent.

## Giant

*Unique; only available during character creation*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is over seven feet tall and weighs more than three hundred pounds. He towers over normal people and is bigger, stronger, and tougher than they are. He is so large, in fact, that he has to have his clothes specially tailored.

**Benefit:** Your character receives a +1 Size bonus.

**Normal:** Your character is Size 0.

**Special:** This bonus affects Health and maximum Body and Strength ratings. Your character's Size will also penalize attack and Defense ratings (see Size p. 46).

## Guardian

**Prerequisites:** Intelligence 3

Your character is gifted at looking out for others and protecting them from injury. She shouts warnings, deflects blows, and pulls people out of harm's way.

**Benefit:** As an attack action, your character may grant a +2 Defense bonus to all allies within 10 feet of her. She must be able to see and speak to her allies in order to grant this bonus.

**Normal:** Your character cannot grant Defense bonuses to allies.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent twice, allowing your character to provide an additional +2 Defense bonus to her allies.

## Headstrong

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** Willpower 3

Your character is steadfast and unshakable, and uses his indomitable will to shake off even the most powerful blows. He can literally will himself to keep fighting, even when his body aches to collapse.

**Benefit:** Your character uses his Willpower instead of his Body when calculating his Stun rating.

**Normal:** Your character uses his Body when calculating his Stun rating.

## High Pain Tolerance

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character can ignore grievous, nasty wounds. She still feels pain, but it doesn't slow her down the way it would other people.

**Benefit:** Your character doesn't automatically fall



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unconscious when reduced to negative Health. (You still have to make a stabilization roll or your character will continue to lose Health each turn.) She remains conscious and ignores wound penalties until reaching -3 Health, at which point she falls unconscious as normal.

**Normal:** Your character automatically falls unconscious when reduced to negative Health, and must make a stabilization roll or continue to lose Health each turn.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent twice, allowing your character to remain conscious and ignore wound penalties until she reaches -5 Health (at which point she falls over dead). If your character also has the Diehard Talent, you may take the High Pain Tolerance Talent one additional time for each level of Diehard that she possesses. Each level increase allows your character to ignore two additional wound penalties.

### Inspire

**Prerequisites:** Diplomacy 4

Your character is skilled at motivating others. He can infect people with his confidence and enthusiasm, and drive them to perform better than they thought possible.

**Benefit:** As an attack action, your character may grant a +2 Skill bonus to all allies within 10 feet of him. He must be able to see and speak to his allies in order to grant this bonus.

**Normal:** Your character does not grant any Skill bonuses to his allies.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent twice, allowing your character to provide an additional +2 Skill bonus to allies.

### Instant Reload

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character can reload weapons with amazing speed. She is so fast it seems as though she never runs out of ammo.

**Benefit:** Your character may reload a weapon as a reflexive action, allowing her to reload and fire in the same turn. Weapons that normally take longer than a combat turn to reload will only take your character an attack action to reload.

**Normal:** Reloading a weapon takes an attack action, but some weapons take longer to reload. Your character must wait until her next turn to fire a weapon after reloading it.

### Intelligent

*Unique; only available during character creation*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is exceptionally bright and clever. His intellect far exceeds that of the average person.

**Benefit:** Your character gains a +1 Intelligence rating. This bonus affects his Intelligence rolls and all Intelligence-based Skills. It also factors into his Secondary Attributes and raises his maximum Intelligence rating by one point.

**Normal:** Your character's Intelligence rating is unmodified.

### Iron Jaw

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is exceptionally sturdy and solid. He is extremely hard to daze and can take quite a beating before losing consciousness.

**Benefit:** Your character gains a +1 Stun rating.

**Normal:** Your character's Stun rating is unmodified.

**Advanced:** You may purchase this Talent up to four times. Each additional level grants your character an extra +1 Stun rating.

### Iron Will

*Unique; only available during character creation*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is exceptionally courageous and driven. Her resolve and determination far exceed that of the average person.

**Benefit:** Your character gains a +1 Willpower rating. This bonus affects her Willpower rolls and any Willpower-based Skills. It also factors into her Secondary Attributes and raises her maximum Willpower rating by one point.

**Normal:** Your character's Willpower rating is unmodified.

### Jump

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is naturally gifted at jumping and leaping. He is capable of jumping surprisingly large distances, both vertically and horizontally.

**Benefit:** Your character's jumping distance is doubled (see Move, p. 46).

**Normal:** Your character's jumping distance is unmodified.



## Keen Sense

*Only available during character creation*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character has a particularly acute sense, such as vision, hearing, or smell. She has amazing sensitivity and rarely misses anything.

**Benefit:** Your character gains a +4 Perception bonus when using a particular sense, such as vision, hearing, touch, taste, or smell (designate one when you take this Talent).

**Normal:** Your character's Perception rating is unmodified.

**Advanced:** You may purchase this Talent multiple times, but the benefit will be applied to a different sense each time.

## Kip Up

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character can get back on his feet with amazing speed and grace. When knocked to the ground, he immediately bounces up again.

**Benefit:** Your character stands up as a reflexive action, allowing him to get up and attack in the same turn.

**Normal:** Standing up takes an attack action.

## Knockout Blow

**Prerequisites:** Brawl 4

Your character is a master of nonlethal combat. She knows exactly where to hit an opponent to daze him without hurting him very much.

**Benefit:** Your character gains a +1 damage bonus to stun her opponent (see below). No additional damage is done, but this damage bonus makes it possible for your character to stun or knockout an opponent without doing much damage to him.

**Normal:** Your character's unmodified damage is compared to your opponent's Stun rating. If she inflicts more damage than her target's Stun rating, her opponent will be stunned for one turn per additional success. If she inflicts more damage than twice her opponent's Stun rating, her opponent will be knocked out for one minute per additional success.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent up to four times. Each level grants your character an additional +1 damage bonus to stun her opponent.

## Lethal Blow

**Prerequisites:** Brawl 4

Your character's hands are deadly weapons. He knows exactly how and where to hit an opponent to do the most damage. He's not trying to incapacitate his opponent—he's going for the kill.

**Benefit:** Your character's Brawl attacks do lethal damage. Every two points of nonlethal damage inflicted does one point of lethal damage instead. Leftover points do nonlethal damage, as normal.

**Normal:** Your Brawl attacks do nonlethal damage.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent up to three times. Each level grants your character an additional +2 Brawl bonus when making a lethal attack.

## Lifesaver

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** Medicine 4

Your character is a gifted healer. Her touch is soothing and she has an amazing ability to treat wounds. People under her care heal much quicker and cleaner than normal.

**Benefit:** Your character heals one lethal or two nonlethal wounds per one success rolled on your Medicine roll.

**Normal:** Your character heals one lethal or two nonlethal wounds per two successes rolled on your Medicine roll (see Healing p. 131)

## Long Shot

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is skilled at attacking distant targets. He intuitively adjusts for the range, and can hit his target accurately over very long distances.

**Benefit:** Your character's weapon ranges are doubled, allowing him to shoot or throw at distant targets with a reduced penalty.

**Normal:** Your character's weapon ranges are unmodified.

## Lucky

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is exceptionally lucky and somehow manages to get out of dangerous situations and pull off tricky maneuvers.

**Benefit:** Once per game session you receive a +2 luck bonus to any dice roll.



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**Normal:** Your dice rolls are unmodified.

**Advanced:** You may purchase this Talent up to five times. Each additional level grants your character an extra +2 luck bonus per game session. These bonuses may either be used separately or added to the same roll multiple times.

### Mobile Attack

**Prerequisites:** Dexterity 3

Your character excels at fancy footwork, and can make accurate and powerful attacks even while moving.

**Benefit:** Your character may attack without stopping his movement (up to his total Move rating).

**Normal:** Your character may move and attack, or attack and then move, but he may not attack while moving.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent twice, granting your character the ability to simultaneously run and attack.

### Parry

**Prerequisites:** Melee 4

Your character is adept at parrying armed combat attacks. She automatically deflects cuts and thrusts without having to go on the defensive.

**Benefit:** Your character performs the Parry maneuver as a reflexive action (see Parry, p. 121). Any Defense bonuses provide a bonus to the Parry maneuver as well. If your character loses her Active Defense, she loses Parry ability as well.

**Normal:** Your character performs the Parry maneuver as an attack action.

**Advanced:** You may purchase this Talent up to three times, gaining your character an additional +2 Defense bonus against melee attacks.

### Provoke

**Prerequisites:** Con 4

Your character is gifted at taunts and insults. He can draw attention to himself, and away from his friends and allies.

**Benefit:** As an attack action, your character may attempt to provoke his opponents into attacking him. Make a Con roll against all opponents within 10 feet of your character. If you roll more successes than an opponent's Willpower rating, she will attempt to attack your character for a number of turns equal to the number of excess suc-

cesses rolled, or until she is attacked by someone else. If you roll more successes than twice an opponent's Willpower, she will continue to attack your character even if someone else attacks her.

**Normal:** You may make a Con roll to taunt one enemy into attacking your character.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent up to three times, gaining your character an additional +2 Con bonus per level.

### Psychic Sensitivity

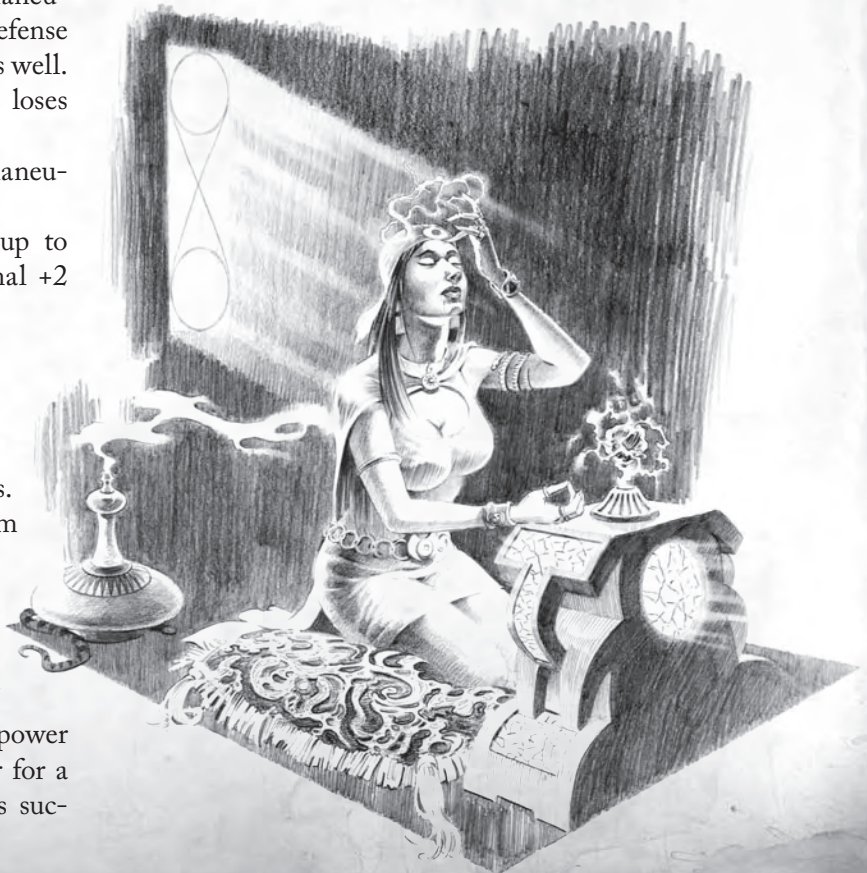
*Unique; only available during character creation*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is able to sense psychic energy in her surroundings. She does not display any specific powers, but occasionally gets flashes of insight, has prophetic dreams, or senses power in a person, object, or specific area.

**Benefit:** You make an Empathy roll whenever your character tries to sense psychic energy around her. The more successes you roll the more sensitive your character is to the strength and source of the psychic energy. Sometimes the Gamemaster will make this roll on your behalf to see if your character gets an unbidden flash of insight, or senses an unseen power at work.

**Normal:** You are unaware of any psychic phenomena.





## Quick Draw

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is able to draw weapons with amazing speed. He is so fast that his weapons seem to just suddenly appear in his hands.

**Benefit:** Your character draws weapons as a reflexive action, allowing him to ready a weapon and attack in the same turn. Weapons that normally take longer than a turn to ready only take an attack action to draw.

**Normal:** Drawing a weapon takes an attack action, but some weapons take longer to ready depending on how it is carried. Your character must wait until his next turn to fire a weapon after drawing it.

## Quick Healer

*Unique; only available during character creation*

**Prerequisites:** Body 3

Your character heals at a remarkable rate. Even life-threatening wounds don't keep her down for long. She's back on her feet again in no time!

**Benefit:** Your character heals at twice the normal rate. She heals two nonlethal wounds per day, or one lethal wound per three days of rest. Exerting herself during this time makes her heal twice as slowly.

**Normal:** Your character heals one nonlethal wound per day, or one lethal wound per seven days of rest. Exerting herself during this time makes her heal twice as slowly.

**Advanced:** Healing rates are automatically boosted inside the Hollow Earth (see Healing p. 131).

## Quick Reflexes

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character reacts to danger much faster than the average person, allowing him to take action well before they do.

**Benefit:** Your character gains a +2 Initiative rating.

**Normal:** Your character's Initiative rating is unmodified.

**Advanced:** You may purchase this Talent twice, gaining your character an additional +2 Initiative rating per level.

## Rapid Shot

**Prerequisites:** Dexterity 3

Your character can attack the same opponent two times in quick succession, doubling the amount of

damage she inflicts on enemies in ranged combat.

**Benefit:** Your character may attack the same opponent twice by making a Total Attack with a -2 penalty on each attack roll. Both attacks must be made with the same weapon, and it must be capable of attacking twice in the same turn.

**Normal:** You may attack the same opponent twice by making a Total Attack with a -4 penalty on each attack roll (see Total Attack, p. 121).

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent two times, allowing your character to attack the same opponent twice without penalty.

## Robust

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is exceptionally hale and hearty. His physical fitness is far superior to the average person. As a result, he is able to soak up a lot more damage before losing consciousness.

**Benefit:** Your character gains a +2 Health rating.

**Normal:** Your character's Health rating is unmodified.

**Advanced:** You may purchase this Talent twice, gaining your character an additional +2 Health rating per level.

## Run

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is swift and fleet of foot. She runs much faster than the average person and can even keep up her amazing speed over long distances.

**Benefit:** Your character's running speed is doubled. (see Move, p. 46).

**Normal:** Your character runs at normal speed.

## Skill Aptitude

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character has a natural affinity for a particular activity or subject matter and is considered a prodigy or expert in her field.

**Benefit:** Your character gains +2 Skill rating to a specific Skill (designate one when you take this Talent). This is a general bonus and does not give your character any free Skill Levels.

**Normal:** Your Skill ratings are unmodified.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent multiple times, but the benefit is applied to a different Skill each time.



### Skill Mastery

**Prerequisites:** Intelligence 3

Your character is a genius in a particular field with expertise in all its various disciplines. He may be a master craftsman, general scientific expert, or hotshot pilot.

**Benefit:** Your character may take one Specialized Skill—Academics, Art, Craft, Pilot, or Science (designate one when you take this Talent)—as a general Skill, granting him general expertise in all its disciplines.

**Normal:** Each discipline under a Specialized Skill must be taken as a separate Skill.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent multiple times, but the benefit is applied to a different Skill each time.

### Staggering Blow

**Prerequisites:** Brawl 4

Your character's unarmed blows are extremely powerful; she can stagger an opponent or even knock him off his feet.

**Benefit:** Your character gains a +1 damage bonus to knockback her opponent. No additional damage is done but the bonus makes it possible for your character to stagger or knockdown her opponent.

**Normal:** Your character's unmodified damage is compared to her opponent's Strength rating. If she inflicts more damage than her target's Strength rating, her opponent is knocked back five feet per additional success. If she inflicts more damage than twice her opponent's Strength rating, her opponent is knocked clean off his feet.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent up to four times. Each level grants your character an additional +1 damage bonus to knockback your opponent.

### Strafe

**Prerequisites:** Firearms 4

Your character is highly proficient with automatic weapons and knows how to attack multiple targets with maximum efficiency.

**Benefit:** When your character makes an autofire attack you may ignore up to a -2 penalty for strafing between targets, such as when two opponents are standing next to each other. If your character strafes over a greater distance, reduce the strafing penalty by 2.

**Normal:** When making an autofire attack you suffer a -2 penalty on your attack roll for each five-foot distance between targets.

**Special:** You may purchase this Talent up to four times. Each additional level allows your character to ignore a further -2 strafing penalty.

### Strong

**Prerequisites:** None

*Unique; only available during character creation*

Your character is exceptionally muscular and well built. Her might and vigor far exceed that of the average person.

**Benefit:** Your character gains a +1 Strength rating. This bonus affects her Strength rolls and all Strength-based Skills. It also factors into her Secondary Attributes and raises her maximum Strength rating by one point.

**Normal:** Your character's Strength rating is unmodified.

### Strong Attack

**Prerequisites:** Strength 3

Your character is strong and powerful and can use his energy and vigor to augment virtually any weapon, smashing through his opponent's defenses.

**Benefit:** Your character uses his Strength rating as the Base Attribute for a specific combat Skill, such as Archery or Firearms (designate one when you take this Talent).

**Normal:** Your character uses the standard Base Attributes for his combat Skills.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent multiple times, but the benefit is applied to a different Skill each time.

### Strong Defense

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** Strength 3

Your character is stalwart and vigorous. She uses her powerful build to defend herself and resist damage.

**Benefit:** Your character uses her Strength rating instead of Body when calculating her Passive Defense and Defense ratings.

**Normal:** Your character uses her Body rating when calculating her Defense ratings.

**Special:** You may not buy this Talent if your character already has the Focused Defense Talent.

### Swift

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is exceptionally fast. His speed far exceeds that of the average person.

**Benefit:** Your character gains a +2 Move rating.

**Normal:** Your character's Move rating is unmodified.

**Advanced:** You may purchase this Talent twice, gaining your character an additional +2 Move rating per level.



## Swim

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character swims with surprising speed. She is a natural in water and it hardly slows her down at all.

**Benefit:** Your character's swimming speed is doubled (see Move, p. 46).

**Normal:** Your character swims at normal speed.

## Time Sense

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character does not need a watch. He has a highly accurate internal clock and always knows what time it is or how much time has passed.

**Benefit:** Your character always knows what time it is without having to make a roll. He can even tell how much time has passed while sleeping, and wake up at a predetermined time.

**Normal:** You must make an Intelligence or Survival roll (difficulty 2) to determine the approximate time of day.

## Total Defense

*Unique*

**Prerequisites:** Dexterity 3

Your character is adept at defending herself and never lets her guard down. She can defend herself even while making an aggressive, reckless assault.

**Benefit:** Your character always retains her full Defense rating.

**Normal:** Under certain circumstances, your character may only use her Active or Passive Defense rating when defending herself.

**Advanced:** You may purchase this Talent up to three times, gaining your character an additional +2 Defense bonus per level. This bonus also stacks with all other Defense modifiers and increases the benefit of the Total Defense maneuver (see Total Defense, p. 122).

## Total Recall

*Unique; only available during character creation*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character never forgets anything. He has a photographic memory and remembers each detail of everything he's ever seen, heard, or read.

**Benefit:** Your character always remembers details without having to make an Intelligence roll. (Taking notes

during play is a good aid for roleplaying this ability.)

**Normal:** You must make a successful Intelligence roll (with a difficulty determined by the Gamemaster) to recall a particular piece of information.

## Tough

*Unique; only available during character creation*

**Prerequisites:** None

Your character is exceptionally hardy and robust. Her stamina and endurance far exceed that of the average person.

**Benefit:** Your character gains a +1 Body rating. This bonus affects her Body rolls and any Body-based Skills. It also factors into her Secondary Attributes and raises her maximum Body rating by one point.

**Normal:** Your character's Body rating is unmodified.

## Tough Attack

**Prerequisites:** Body 3

Your character is tough and resilient and can use his fortitude as a weapon, shrugging off lesser blows and plowing through his opponent's defenses.

**Benefit:** Your character uses his Body rating as the Base Attribute for a specific combat Skill, such as Archery, Athletics, Brawl, Firearms, or Melee (designate one when you take this Talent).

**Normal:** Your character uses the standard Base Attributes for his combat Skills.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent multiple times, but the benefit is applied to a different Skill each time.

## Vigorous Defense

**Prerequisites:** Dexterity 3

Your character keeps up an active defense—always moving and turning to keep his opponents at bay. Even multiple opponents have difficulty wearing him down!

**Benefit:** Your character may be attacked twice in the same combat turn without penalty. Additional attacks penalize his Defense rating as normal.

**Normal:** If your character is attacked more than once during the same combat turn, he suffers a -2 penalty to his Defense rating for each additional attack.

**Advanced:** You may buy this Talent up to four times. Your character can defend against an extra attack per combat turn without penalty for each additional level (i.e., the initial purchase lets your character defend against one additional attack without penalty, the second allows two additional attacks, and so on).



## RESOURCES

Resources represent the friends, influence, and wealth at your character's disposal. Characters without any Resources are neither destitute nor outcasts. They have enough to get by on but when the going gets tough, they have to fend for themselves. Characters with Resources get to call on contacts and allies for favors and information. They have followers to help them and enough personal clout to get things done. They may even be in possession of items with unusual properties.

Resources are not innate abilities, so they can be easily gained or lost during play. Therefore, your character should guard his Resources and use them wisely, so as not to lose them. That's not to say your character should be stingy with his Resource; using it at the right moment can make him everyone's best friend.

## ADVANCED RESOURCES

Just as with Talents, you may purchase the same Resource more than once and provide your character with an even greater benefit. Don't rely too heavily on an advanced Resource, however, as it can still be lost, killed, or stolen. Still, advanced Resources can be incredibly useful not only to your character, but to fellow adventurers as well. To that end, player characters may wish to pool their Resources together to create a more powerful, shared Resource. As always, the Gamemaster is the final authority on which Resources may be pooled together.

## RESOURCE DESCRIPTIONS

### Allies

Allies represent friends and family that your character can always count on. They have their own lives,

though, so their assistance only goes to a point. Still, they are more than happy to do favors for your character or back him up when he needs help. Allies often have a useful skill as well as Talents and Resources of their own. The more times you purchase this Resource, the more numerous and powerful your character's Allies become.

Allies start out loyal to your character, making them easier for you to influence and harder for your enemies to sway (see Influence, p. 45). While you get to define the nature of your character's relationship with his Allies, the Gamemaster ultimately controls these NPCs, and determines what they will or won't do. Abusing or taking advantage of your Allies will negatively affect their attitude toward your character.

Typical Allies have 12 Attribute points, 10 Skill points, and one Talent or Resource. Purchasing additional levels of this Resource gets your character a new Ally, or improves an existing Ally. Improved Allies gain +3 Attribute points, +5 Skill points, and one Talent or Resource for each additional level you invest in them.

**Allies 1:** A moderately skilled or influential ally

**Allies 2:** A gifted and influential ally or two less-powerful allies

**Allies 3:** A very talented and influential ally or up to three less-powerful allies

**Allies 4:** A very powerful and influential ally or up to four less-powerful allies

**Allies 5:** An extremely powerful and influential ally or up to five less-powerful allies

## Artifact

Artifacts represent unique, powerful items or vehicles in your character's possession. It may be something she invented, inherited, or had entrusted to her for safekeeping. It could also be something she found or ran off with! Your character might not even be aware of the full potential of the artifact. Even so, the more times you purchase this Resource, the bigger and more

Resource	Description
Allies	Close friends and relatives that can be counted on for help
Artifact	Unique and powerful items in your character's possession
Contacts	Network of associates that may be called on for items and information
Fame	Reputation, notoriety, and influence due to your character's popularity
Followers	Faithful friends and retainers that accompany your character
Mentor	A powerful patron, teacher, or protector who looks out for your character
Rank	Rank and membership in a secret or exclusive organization
Refuge	A safe and comfortable home, private retreat, or secret laboratory
Status	Social status and income due to your character's profession or birthright
Wealth	Income and assets, plus amount of money available to invest



powerful the Artifact becomes.

Artifacts come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and uses. A simple Artifact may be a lucky watch that provides a +2 Skill roll bonus (once per game session) to the person holding it. A more advanced Artifact might be a jet pack allowing the wearer limited flight, or a mind control ray with limited ammunition. Airships and drilling machines represent some of the largest and most powerful Artifacts of all.

**Artifact 1:** A useful artifact (e.g., a lucky watch)

**Artifact 2:** A rare and highly useful artifact (e.g., a jet pack)

**Artifact 3:** A one-of-a-kind and incredibly useful artifact (e.g., a mind control ray)

**Artifact 4:** A unique and very powerful artifact (e.g., a robot)

**Artifact 5:** A legendary and extremely powerful artifact (e.g., a drilling machine)

## Contacts

Contacts represent your character's network of acquaintances and associates. They are not particularly loyal to him and will only help if it's worth their while or clearly in their best interest. Nonetheless, having a network of contacts enables your character to call on them to find information or useful items.

Taking this Resource gives your character contacts in a particular sphere of influence such as academia, the criminal underworld, or the police. Any time your character seeks equipment or information from someone within his area of interest, you receive a +2 bonus to the appropriate Skill roll. Buying this Resource more than once gives your character a new sphere of influence or increases his pull with his current contacts, gaining a +2 contact bonus for each additional level.

**Contacts 1:** +2 contact bonus in one area of interest

**Contacts 2:** +4 contact bonus in one area or a lesser bonus in two areas of interest

**Contacts 3:** +6 contact bonus in one area or a lesser bonus in up to three areas of interest

**Contacts 4:** +8 contact bonus in one area or a lesser bonus in up to four areas of interest

**Contacts 5:** +10 contact bonus in one area or a lesser bonus in up to five areas interest



## Fame

Fame is a measure of your character's reputation and notoriety. It also represents how well known her name and face is. Being recognized as a celebrity has its benefits: people will often do special favors for your character just because she's famous. On the other hand, being famous can have its downside—it's hard to keep a low profile when your profile is easily recognizable.

Your character may be an actress, daredevil, or criminal. When someone recognizes your character, you receive a +2 bonus to all social rolls related to that person. Buying this Resource more than once increases your character's fame and reputation, and gains you a +2 social bonus for each level.

**Fame 1:** Your character is famous in one city

**Fame 2:** Your character is famous in one region

**Fame 3:** Your character is famous in one country

**Fame 4:** Your character is famous on one continent

**Fame 5:** Your character is famous throughout the world



### Followers

Followers represent your character's faithful friends, retainers, and animal companions. Followers are not always very skilled or influential, but they are fiercely loyal and will accompany your character wherever he goes. Followers are tremendously helpful and will take care of everyday tasks, but your character is responsible for paying their expenses while they are working for him.

Followers start out loyal to your character, making them easier for you to influence and harder for your enemies to sway (see Influence, p. 45). While you get to define the nature of your character's relationship with his Followers, the Gamemaster ultimately controls these NPCs, and determines what they will or won't do. Abusing or taking advantage of Followers will negatively affect their attitude toward your character.

Buying this Resource more than once either increases the number of Followers your character has, or improves their experience level. You may gain two inexperienced Followers, one skilled Follower, or improve two Followers each time you purchase this Resource. Typical Followers have 9 Attribute points, 5 Skill points, and no Talents or Resources. Improved Followers gain +3 Attribute points, +5 Skill points, and one Talent or Resource for each additional level you invest in them.

**Followers 1:** One skilled follower or two inexperienced followers

**Followers 2:** Two skilled followers or up to four inexperienced followers

**Followers 3:** Three skilled followers or up to six inexperienced followers

**Followers 4:** Four skilled followers or up to eight inexperienced Followers

**Followers 5:** Five Skilled followers or up to ten inexperienced followers

### Mentor

Mentor represents your character's patron, teacher, or protector. He is often a powerful and influential person who is connected to your character in some important way. He might be a blood relative, a senior member of the same organization, or a mysterious stranger who shows up to provide much-needed information. Although there is a lot a Mentor can do for your character, loyalty is not a given; your character will occasionally have to complete tasks stay in his good graces.

A Mentor will help your character but his reasons for doing so may be a complete mystery. While you

get to define the nature of your character's relationship with her Mentor, the Gamemaster ultimately controls this NPC and decides exactly what he wants and what he is willing to do for you. Harassing your Mentor or taking him for granted will negatively affect his attitude toward your character.

Mentors are typically more powerful than your character. They often stay in the background, doing favors for your character or wielding influence on her behalf. Typical Mentors have 15 Attribute points, 15 Skill points, and two Talents and/or Resources. Buying this Resource more than once increases the Mentor's power and influence. Improved Mentors gain +3 Attribute points, +5 Skill points, and one Talent or Resource for each additional level you invest in them.

**Mentor 1:** Your character's mentor is a like an older sibling to her

**Mentor 2:** Your character's mentor has a great deal of influence

**Mentor 3:** You character's mentor is powerful and connected

**Mentor 4:** Your character's mentor has national influence

**Mentor 5:** Your character's mentor is an international mover and shaker

### Rank

Rank represents your character's military rank or membership in an exclusive (or secret) organization. Your character has more authority when dealing with other members of his organization, and may be eligible to receive aid or resources. He might even be able to give orders to junior members of the same organization, just as he has to obey the orders of those above him.

Taking this Resource gives your character official membership in a particular organization (e.g., the U.S. Army, National Geographic Society, or Catholic Church). Holding a position of authority grants your character respect even from those outside his organization. You receive a +2 social bonus anytime your character wields his authority or acts in the name of his organization. Abusing his authority, squandering resources, or breaking rules could result in your character being demoted or discharged from his organization.

Official members of an organization can requisition other Resources. For each two levels of Rank your character has, he can either temporarily acquire another Resource or boost one he already has (subject to Gamemaster approval). Characters can also boost another



character's Resource in this manner. The boosted character may gain Allies, Followers, or an Artifact that belongs to his organization, for example. During this time, your character retains his Rank's social bonus, but cannot requisition anything else because he's already used up his authority within the organization. This temporary boost lasts until the requisitioned Resources are returned to the organization, at which point new Resources may be requisitioned.

Buying this Resource more than once gives your character more power, influence, and a higher rank in his organization. Each additional level gives you a +2 bonus, and grants your character the right to requisition additional Resources and give orders to members of lower Rank within his organization.

**Rank 1:** Your character has an initiate rank and a few privileges

**Rank 2:** Your character has full rank and privileges

**Rank 3:** Your character has advanced rank and privileges

**Rank 4:** Your character has high rank and privileges

**Rank 5:** Your character has executive rank and privileges

## Refuge

Refuge represents your character's home, private retreat, or secret laboratory. She either owns it free and clear or shares it with other members of her organization. Whatever the circumstances, this is a place where she feels safe and productive. You receive a +2 bonus to all Skill rolls whenever your character is inside her Refuge. Conversely, intruders suffer a -2 penalty to any Skill rolls related to locating or infiltrating your character's secret lair.

Taking this Resource more than once increases the size, security, and comfort of your character's Refuge. Each additional level grants you a +2 Skill bonus and increases the infiltration penalty by -2. With the Gamemaster's approval, characters can pool their Resources together into a larger and more impressive Refuge. In this case, each character has limited ownership and access to the location.

**Refuge 1:** Your character has a secluded home or secret laboratory

**Refuge 2:** Your character has a comfortable and secure base of operations

**Refuge 3:** Your character has a large and secure refuge with significant resources

**Refuge 4:** Your character has a very large and remote mansion or fortress

**Refuge 5:** Your character has a secret island base with everything she could ever need

## Status

Status represents your character's social status. This may result from success within a respected profession (e.g., doctors, lawyers, and professors), being a member of a wealthy aristocratic family, or working for infamous organizations like the mafia or underworld. In any case, your character's position grants him respect and a regular income.

Any time your character's social status or reputation applies to a situation, you receive a +2 bonus to any related social rolls. Your character also starts play with his monthly income in cash. Buying this Resource more than once grants your character additional income and respect. Each additional level increases your character's monthly income and grants you a +2 social bonus.

**Status 1:** Your character is moderately respected and has a \$150 monthly income

**Status 2:** Your character is respected and has a \$250 monthly income

**Status 3:** Your character is very respected and has a \$500 monthly income

**Status 4:** Your character is highly respected and has a \$1000 monthly income

**Status 5:** Your character is extremely respected and has a \$2500 monthly income

## Wealth

Wealth represents your character's income and assets. It covers the amount of cash she has on hand and money she has to invest. Wealth does not automatically accord a character with respect or authority but a rich character can buy almost anything she wants. Your character starts play with her monthly income in cash.

Wealthy characters can invest their money in other Resources. For each two levels of Wealth your character has, she can either temporarily acquire another Resource or boost one she already has (subject to Gamemaster approval). Wealthy characters can also boost another character's Resource in this manner. The boosted character becomes more influential or able to build a bigger and better Artifact. Your character does not get the benefit of her Wealth during this time because her income and savings are being diverted elsewhere. This temporary boost lasts until that wealth is invested in another area.

**Wealth 1:** Your character has a \$250 monthly income and a house and car



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**Wealth 2:** Your character has a \$500 monthly income and one large investment

**Wealth 3:** Your character has a \$1000 monthly income and many luxuries

**Wealth 4:** Your character has a \$2500 monthly income and several huge investments

**Wealth 5:** Your character has a \$5000 monthly income and can buy just about anything

## FLAWS

Flaws represent your character's physical, mental, or social shortcomings. Whenever your character is hurt or hindered by his Flaw during play, you earn Style points that may be spent for bonus dice when you need them. Therefore, the more you roleplay your character's Flaw, the stronger and more versatile your character will be. Don't constantly roleplay your Flaw, however, as it will lose potency if overused. For this reason, Gamemasters may limit the number of Style points earned through Flaws to one per game session.

You get one Style point if you take a Flaw during character creation. Characters may start play with only one Flaw but with the Gamemaster's permission, you may add, change, or remove one during play. Following are descriptions of some common Flaws. Feel free to create your own, but be sure to get the Gamemaster's approval first.

## FLAW DESCRIPTIONS

### Physical Flaws

**Blind:** Your character cannot see and is forced to rely upon her other senses to get around. She may have suffered an accident or been born that way, but she is completely blind. You automatically fail any roll that requires your character to see. You earn a Style point whenever a severe blunder or misunderstanding occurs because of your character's blindness.

**Deaf:** Your character cannot hear and may have to learn to read lips in order to communicate. He may have suffered an accident or been born that way, but he is completely deaf. You automatically fail any roll that requires your character to hear. You earn a Style point whenever a severe problem or misunderstanding occurs because of your character's deafness.

**Dwarf:** Your character is Size -1, causing her both physical and social problems. She is often looked down upon for not being as big or strong as others. You earn a Style point when your character's size causes her severe

Flaws	Description
<b>Physical Flaws</b>	
Blind	Automatically fails sight rolls
Deaf	Automatically fails hearing rolls
Dwarf	Not as big or strong as others
Dying	Has an incurable disease and may soon die
Hard of Hearing	Poor hearing and may misunderstand speech
Lame	Has a bad leg or foot and moves slower than others
Mute	Can't speak and must write or gesture instead
One Arm	Missing an arm and has trouble doing work
One Eye	Missing an eye and has poor depth perception
Poor Vision	Bad eyesight and has trouble identifying things
<b>Mental Flaws</b>	
Absent-Minded	Often forgets or overlooks important details
Addiction	Hooked on a specific substance or activity
Amnesia	Has lost his memory and may have flashbacks
Coward	Afraid of conflict and may run from a fight
Illiterate	Dyslexic or uneducated and cannot read or write
Impulsive	Impatient and reckless and often gets in trouble
Obsession	A compulsion to perform a particular activity
Overconfident	Foolhardy and sometimes gets in over his head
Paranoia	Anxious and distrusts everyone around him
Phobia	Scared of a particular thing and will avoid it
<b>Social Flaws</b>	
Callous	Selfish, uncaring, and insensitive to others
Condescending	He is better than everyone else
Criminal	Believed to have committed a serious crime
Disfigured	Ugly, unattractive, and repulsive to others
Intolerant	Biased and prejudiced against a certain thing
Pacifist	Opposed to violence and war for any reason
Secret	Has an embarrassing or shameful secret
Shy	Dislikes social situations and tries to avoid them
Speech Impediment	Trouble speaking and may be misunderstood
Superstitious	Goes out of her way to follow her unusual beliefs
<b>Misc. Flaws</b>	
Danger Magnet	Attracts trouble through no fault of her own
Primitive	Unfamiliar with modern technology
Unlucky	Cursed, jinxed, or otherwise unlucky

difficulty or when she is rejected because of it. *You cannot take this Flaw if you have the Giant Talent.*

**Dying:** Your character is terminally ill and will die soon. He may have cancer or some other kind of incurable disease, but he hasn't given up on finding a cure. You suffer a -2 penalty to all rolls whenever your character's disease acts up. You earn a Style point if your character is incapacitated by sickness or forced to confront his mortality.

**Hard of Hearing:** Your character has poor hearing. She may be deaf in one ear or just have trouble hearing normally. Either way, you suffer a -2 penalty on any roll when hearing is a factor. You earn a Style point whenever your character's poor hearing gets her into trouble or causes a critical misunderstanding.



**Lame:** Your character has a bad leg or foot that slows him down. He may have been in an accident or just been born that way. Either way, your character suffers a -2 penalty to his Move rating. You earn a Style point if your character is unable to outrun danger, or if his bad leg gets him into trouble.

**Mute:** Your character cannot speak and is only able to communicate through hand gestures or writing. She may have a problem with her vocal chords, or had her tongue cut out, but it makes speaking nearly impossible. You automatically fail any roll that requires your character to speak. You earn a Style point whenever a severe problem or misunderstanding occurs because of your character's inability to speak.

**One Arm:** Your character is missing an arm. He cannot wield two-handed weapons and his lifting capacity is halved. If your character attempts to perform an action that normally requires two hands, you suffer a -2 penalty on the roll. You earn a Style point when your character drops something or makes a critical blunder because of his missing arm. *You cannot take the Dual Wield Talent if you have this Flaw.*

**One Eye:** Your character is missing an eye, but may have a fake eye or wear an eye patch to cover it. As a result, your character has poor depth perception and you suffer a -2 penalty on any Drive, Pilot, or ranged attack rolls. You earn a Style point if your character critically misjudges distance or is blindsided by someone.

**Poor Vision:** Your character has bad eyesight. She may be nearsighted, farsighted, or just have dim vision. If your character is not wearing her glasses, you suffer a -2 penalty on any roll where sight is a factor. You earn a Style point when your character's poor vision gets her into trouble or causes her to make a critical mistake.

## Mental Flaws

**Absent-Minded:** Your character is forgetful and distracted. Whether he's a daydreamer or just preoccupied with more important things, he tends to be unaware of what is going on around him. As a result, you suffer a -2 penalty on all Perception rolls. You earn a Style point whenever your character overlooks a critical detail or forgets something important.

**Addiction:** Your character is physically or mentally addicted to a specific substance or activity and will do anything to satisfy her need. If she overindulges or goes too long without getting a fix, you suffer a -2 penalty on all rolls until she sobers up or overcomes her addiction. You earn a Style point whenever your character's addiction hurts her or someone she cares about.

**Amnesia:** Your character has suffered some sort of trauma that caused him to lose his memory. He may recover part of his memory over time, but it is exceptionally disorienting when it happens, so you suffer a -2 penalty on all rolls until the episode is over. You earn a Style point when your character suffers a traumatic flashback, or when something from his past comes back to haunt him.

**Coward:** Your character is afraid of conflict and won't stand up for herself. She will run from a fight, or surrender if unable to flee. You suffer a -2 penalty on all rolls when she is threatened with physical violence. You earn a Style point if your character gives up without a fight or abandons her friends to save her own skin.

**Illiterate:** Your character is dyslexic, or maybe he just never learned his letters. Either way, he cannot read or write. This includes any additional languages learned through the Linguistics Skill. You automatically fail any task that requires your character to read. You earn a Style point whenever your character's illiteracy causes him severe difficulty or embarrassment.

**Impulsive:** Your character is impatient and reckless. She detests waiting around and will take action without taking time to plan. As a result, she is often unprepared for trouble and forced to improvise. She will jump into dangerous situations without thinking twice. You earn a Style point whenever your character's impulsiveness gets her or her companions into serious trouble.

**Obsession:** Your character is fixated on a particular activity such as keeping himself clean, organizing his possessions, or wooing the woman of his dreams. If your character cannot indulge his obsession regularly, you suffer a -2 penalty on all rolls until he is able to satisfy his compulsion. You earn a Style point when your character's obsession causes him to do something dangerous or endanger someone else's life.

**Overconfident:** Your character has a very high opinion of herself—perhaps too high. She believes there is nothing she can't do better than anyone else. Her foolhardy attitude can get her into trouble from time to time. You earn a Style point when your character is forced to ask for help or when her bravado gets her in over her head.

**Paranoia:** Your character is excessively concerned with his well-being. He is wary and distrustful of everyone, including close family and friends. He may even have a persecution complex and believe there is a vast conspiracy against him. You earn a Style point whenever your character pushes a friend away or actually catches someone working against him.



## Chapter Two

**Phobia:** Your character is scared of a particular situation, object, or type of person. She will actively avoid the object of her phobia, and flee if confronted with it. If she cannot escape, you suffer a -2 penalty on all rolls until your character is able to get away. You earn a Style point whenever your character's fear gets the better of her.

### Social Flaws

**Callous:** Your character is selfish, uncaring, and insensitive to the suffering of others. He is hardhearted and will not go out of his way to help anyone. Pleas for mercy fall on deaf ears. You earn a Style point when your character does something particularly selfish or refuses to help someone in dire need.

**Condescending:** Your character thinks she is better than everyone else. It doesn't matter if she is actually superior or not—she knows she's always right; anyone that disagrees with her is clearly mistaken and must be put in their place. You earn a Style point whenever your character proves someone else wrong or establishes her own superiority.

**Criminal:** Your character is believed to have committed a serious crime, regardless of whether he actually did it. He may be a fugitive on the run or he could have done time for his misdeeds. Regardless, people distrust him and may turn him in to the authorities if given the chance. You earn a Style point whenever your character is hurt by his negative reputation.

**Disfigured:** Your character has a nasty scar, birthmark, or deformity that repulses other people. As a result, he is considered ugly and unattractive. You suffer a -2 penalty on all rolls where your character's appearance is a factor. You earn a Style point whenever your character is rejected because of his appearance.

**Intolerant:** Your character is prejudiced against certain situations, behaviors, or types of people (i.e., a particular race, sex, or religious group). She may react with disgust or even hostilities when confronted with the object of her dislike. You earn a Style point when your character's intolerance causes trouble, or she convinces someone else to detest the same thing she does.

**Pacifist:** Your character is opposed to violence and war under any circumstances. He believes that aggression and use of force are morally wrong and he always tries to find peaceful ways of settling disputes. You earn a Style point whenever your character is able to prevent



violence or resolve a dispute peaceably.

**Secret:** Your character has some sort of shameful secret that would be extremely embarrassing if it came to light. As a result, she will do everything possible to keep her secret hidden. You earn a Style point if your character is confronted with the truth or goes out of the way to protect her secret.

**Shy:** Your character is uncomfortable in social situations and tries to avoid them as much as possible. He dislikes being the center of attention and prefers to let others take center stage. You earn a Style point if your character misses out on getting recognition or a reward for his actions because he won't assert himself.

**Speech Impediment:** Your character has trouble speaking clearly. He may have a stutter, lisp, or some sort of disfigurement that makes understanding him difficult. This may cause important information to be misunderstood or delivered too slowly. You earn a Style point whenever a severe problem or misunderstanding occurs because of your character's speech impediment.

**Superstitious:** Your character is extremely superstitious and will go out of her way to follow her unusual beliefs. She will avoid performing any activity that is considered "bad luck" and will never miss an opportunity to do something that will give her good fortune. You earn a Style point when your character's eccentricities cause her trouble, or if one of her beliefs turns out to be true.



## Miscellaneous Flaws

**Danger Magnet:** Your character attracts trouble and often ends up in dangerous situations. For some reason, she's always the one picked to be the human sacrifice, the sole survivor of the shipwreck, or the one the giant ape falls in love with. You earn a Style point when your character ends up in danger through no fault of her own.

**Primitive:** Your character either comes from a primitive culture or was raised far from civilization. As a result, modern technology is foreign to him. You suffer a -2 penalty on any Skill roll related to modern technology, such as Drive, Firearms, and Science. You earn a Style point whenever your character's primitive nature hampers him or causes trouble.

**Unlucky:** Your character is cursed, jinxed, or just has chronic bad luck. Whenever anything is left to chance, circumstances will almost always conspire against her. Once per game session, you suffer a -2 penalty on any one dice roll. You earn a Style point if this causes your character's action to fail, or if you roll a Critical Failure.

## STARTING EXPERIENCE POINTS

Each Character starts with 15 experience points, representing all of the experience and training he or she has accumulated prior to the start of the game. The Gamemaster may vary the amount of starting experience points depending on the power level of the game he is running. If a player is creating a new character who is joining an existing party, she may be given additional starting experience points.

Starting experience points may be spent in the following manner:

Trait	Experience Point Cost
Primary Attribute	New Attribute Level x 5 points
Skill	New Skill Level x 2 points
Skill Specialization	3 points
Talent	15 points
Resource	15 points

Unspent points may be carried into play, subject to Gamemaster approval.

## FINISHING TOUCHES

Now that you've finished selecting your character's skills and abilities, it's time to fill in the rest of the details.

- What is your character's name? Your character's name can tell a lot about him and where he comes from. For example, we can tell just by their names that Mick Hardigan and Emerson Peachtree are very different characters.
- Where did your character come from? Your character's background doesn't have to be anything elaborate but there are a few general questions you should answer. What is his general history? Where did he develop his skills and abilities? How did he end up where he is at the beginning of the game? Be sure to use your character's Motivation as a guide when developing his background.
- What does your character look like? You don't have to do into elaborate detail, but you should note your character's defining characteristics. What color hair does she have? Is she tall or short, thin or stocky? Does she have piercing eyes or a winning smile? Use your character's Attribute ratings as a guide for determining her physical description.
- What gear is your character carrying? It doesn't have to be an exhaustive list, but you should pick out necessary tools and equipment for your character. You don't want him to run out of ammunition or medical supplies in the Hollow Earth, or lack the right tools for the job. Use your character's Skills, Talents, and Resources as a guide when picking out equipment.

**Note:** The Gamemaster may give your character weapons or items for free based on his background, or she may give you a certain amount of money to spend based on his Resources. In the latter case, characters without any Resources start play with \$100 in cash.

## STARTING STYLE POINTS

You may start play with up to five Style points. However, you have to do some extra work to earn them. Starting Style points may be earned in a variety of ways, always at the discretion of your Gamemaster.

- Taking a flaw at character generation: 1 pt.
- Writing a character background: 1-3 pts.
- Creating a plot hook (e.g., a rival or dependent) for your character: 1 pt. each
- Using props or costumes for your character: 1 pt.
- Miscellaneous (e.g., hosting the game): 1 pt.



# Big Game Hunter

**Archetype:** Hunter

**Motivation:** Fame

**Style:** 3

**Health:** 5

## Primary Attributes

Body: 2	Charisma: 2
Dexterity: 4	Intelligence: 2
Strength: 2	Willpower: 3

## Secondary Attributes

Size: 0	Initiative: 6
Move: 6	Defense: 6
Perception: 5	Stun: 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	Average
Athletics	2	2	4	(2)
Brawl	2	2	4	(2)
Firearms	4	3	9	(4+)
<i>Rifles</i>			10	(5)
Melee	2	2	4	(2)
Stealth	4	2	6	(3)
Survival	2	3	5	(2+)
<i>Tracking</i>			6	(3)

## Talents

Accuracy 1 (Reduced called shot penalties)  
Skill Aptitude (+2 Firearms rating)

## Resources

None

## Flaw

Overconfident (+1 Style point whenever your character gets in over his head)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	Average
.405 Winchester rifle	4 L	0	14 L	(7) L
.455 Webley revolver	3 L	0	12 L	(6) L
Hunting knife	1 L	0	5 L	(2+) L
Punch	0 N	0	4 N	(2) N





*"When I go forward, I go alone. If your name's not Winchester, you wait here."*

## Character Background

By the time I was of age, the War had been going on for some time. My father and I discussed it at length and I understood what I had to do. I would have preferred to join the fray earlier to get in a few licks at the Hun, but instead I had to wait it out in the rear. I don't mean to say I hoped the war would go on; it was a beastly affair and we're all glad the bloody Kaiser got what was coming to him. Still and all, I would have jumped at the chance to fight it out with the Germans.

As it was, I never got near the front. The British Army decided I'd be a cracking fit for a battalion in India so I went off to join a brigade dealing with the natives. No fuss to be made about it really. The Indians were a nice lot, and the food was jolly good.

I hadn't signed on just for a full belly, though. I could have stayed home for crumpets and tea if that was all I wanted. So I called in a few favors for a transfer to the 6th Battalion of the King's African Rifles, and that made all the difference. Not that I saw much action there, but part of the division's work was keeping a lookout for poachers. The hunting trade was something I'd never run across before.

I'm not talking about foxes and that codswallop. This was real hunting. I got some action in on the side but I soon found myself posted back at an administrative position, having risen in rank too quickly. Well, I don't have to tell you that peacetime soldiering is a tedious business, so that was that. With good wishes to my mates, I packed up my bag and left the service for the savannah.

Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Burma, Malaysia, and New Guinea—I've seen them all. This Winchester and I have taken down lions, boars, hyenas, and charging rhinos; you can be certain we came through it better than they did. I've hunted for ivory, trophies, pelts, and for my continued survival. Out on the savannah, you have to make friends with the natives if you fancy keeping your head through the night. My hunting prowess, and willingness to give away the lion's share of the meat, has saved my neck on more than one occasion.

I now have quite the reputation. It's well deserved, if I do say so myself. My trophy room back in England is near to bursting, even after I donated those specimens to the club. I've hunted with everyone from Kings to mercenaries, and I've discovered that titles don't mean a thing out here. That Burmese tiger isn't going to stop to ask your rank or what prep school you went to. Your coat of arms won't give him indigestion going down. Here in the bush you survive by your wits, your skill, and your nerve. Stand tall, face the enemy, and do what you have to. You're going to take his head or he's going to take yours. It's time to find out what you're made of, chap.

## Roleplaying

You've known hunting is the only life for you since the moment you faced down your first predator. Years in the bush and the jungle have honed your skills and instincts to a razor's edge, making you one of the finest hunters in the world. You've partnered with native tribesmen on four continents to learn their tricks, even living alongside them for a time. There's almost nothing you won't do to refine yourself as a hunter.

Being the best has its downside. The usual beasts succumb too easily now. You've become so adept that even lions don't offer the thrill they once did. You started hunting big game and have become a master at killing rhinos and elephants.

When you heard the story of the Hollow Earth, it reminded you of legends told by native tribes in different parts of the world: stories about a cave or opening into the earth that leads to another world where fantastic creatures still live. You always thought it was just a myth—another bit of folklore that superstitious primitives still believe—but maybe there's something to it.

If it's true, you might find the challenge you're looking for, and prove to the world that you're the greatest hunter alive.



## Dying Moneyman

Archetype: Moneyman

Motivation: Survival

Style: 3

Health: 5

### Primary Attributes

Body: 2	Charisma: 3
Dexterity: 2	Intelligence: 3
Strength: 2	Willpower: 3

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0	Initiative: 5
Move: 4	Defense: 4
Perception: 6	Stun: 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	Average
Brawl	2	2	4	(2)
Bureaucracy	3	4	7	(3+)
Business			8	(4)
Diplomacy	3	2	5	(2+)
Negotiation			6	(3)
Firearms	2	3	5	(2+)
Pistols			6	(3)
Gambling	3	2	5	(2+)
Poker			6	(3)

### Talents

None

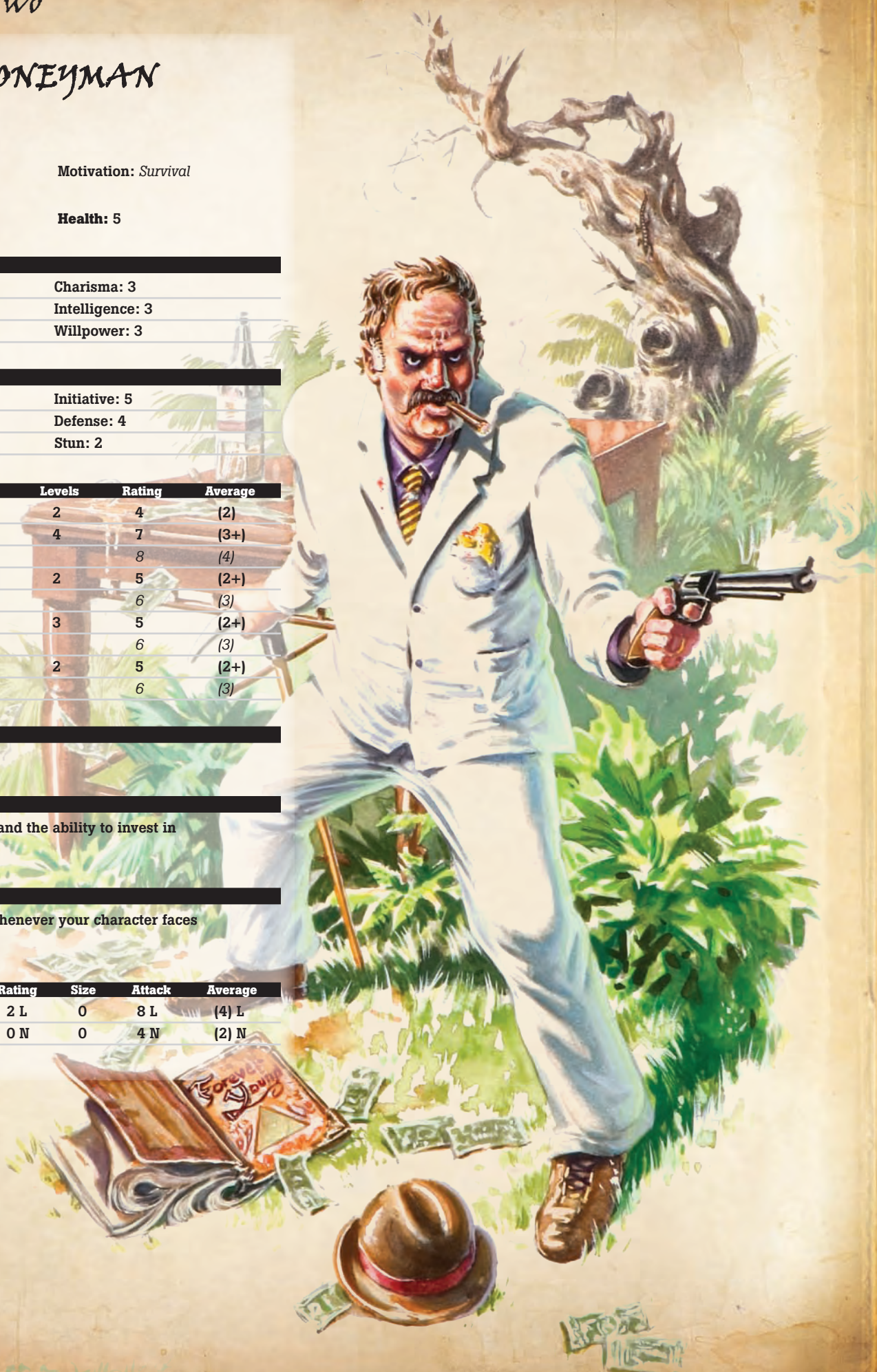
### Resources

Wealth 2 (\$500/month and the ability to invest in another Resource)

### Flaw

Dying (+1 Style point whenever your character faces his mortality)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	Average
.38 special	2 L	0	8 L	(4) L
Punch	0 N	0	4 N	(2) N





*“What do you mean the natives aren’t interested in cash? Would they prefer a check?”*

## Character Background

It seems like a waste of time, me telling you all of this. You could go read the financial pages and get most of it, or just wait for my obituary. If things don’t work out, it won’t be long in coming.

My story would be more compelling if I had been born to impoverished farmers or factory workers, but that’s not how it happened. Although my grandfather was a poor man (he stepped off the boat from the Old Country with barely a cent) and never achieved success, his tireless determination taught my father everything he needed to know.

My father—God rest his soul—founded our company and made it great. By the time I took the reins, our dominance of the industry was almost assured. Our products were better made, less expensive, and easier to find than the competitors’. It didn’t hurt that I managed to buy most of our suppliers: I was trying to insure a steady supply of raw goods. Our customers want us to meet their needs, and I intend for my company to rise to the challenge!

After all, where would America be today if companies didn’t have the freedom and determination to go out and secure materials to meet the demands of the market? Fortunately, I’m good friends with most of the Senators on the Commerce Committee; I was able to help them understand how a secure pipeline for goods helps keep the American economy healthy, and their constituents happy.

Just when my company was on top, just when things should have been at their best—God pulled the rug out from under me, the wily old bastard. I still felt like a million bucks when the doctors told me. I didn’t believe their prognosis, but the third, fourth, and fifth opinions made it tough to deny.

My wealth has gotten me out of more than one tight spot, so I tried to buy my way out of this mess. I founded a charitable research center and hired a bunch of scientists and doctors to put their heads together, but they’ve failed me. Not one of those world-renowned scientists has come up with a single thing to help.

Not too long ago, I started feeling it. I get tired easily. I picked up a cough that just won’t go away. And the pain: I’m taking all kinds of pills for it, but I still hurt. I’m at the end of my rope. Maybe that’s why I’m willing to take a chance on this. Or maybe I’m just going crazy. It could be that my brain is rotting too. But if this map is correct, then what’s at the other end may be the only thing in this world that can save me. If money will buy me a cure, I have my wallet in hand.

## Roleplaying

You’ve been at the helm of one of the biggest companies in America for years. Your father taught you to work hard, play hard, and never give a competitor a break. You’ve used your skill and determination to stay on top and crush anyone who got in your way, but your own body has turned out to be the one enemy that can take you down.

The disease has a name but it’s long and complicated, and it doesn’t matter anyway. The important part is that you die at the end, and that’s not far off. So you did what any dying wealthy industrialist would do: you started grasping at straws. You know this “Fountain of Youth” map is probably a fake, but you literally have nothing to lose. If you have to fund the expedition yourself, you will. If the rest of the crew thinks you’re a crackpot, they’re being well-paid to keep it to themselves.



## FIELD BIOLOGIST

Archetype: *Scientist*

Motivation: *Truth*

Style: 3

Health: 5

### Primary Attributes

Body: 3	Charisma: 2 (3)*
Dexterity: 2	Intelligence: 3
Strength: 3	Willpower: 2

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0	Initiative: 5
Move: 5	Defense: 5
Perception: 5	Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	Average
Animal Handling	3*	3	6	(3)
Athletics	3	3	6	(3)
Empathy	3	2	5	(2+)
Body Language			6	(3)
Medicine	3	2	5	(2+)
Veterinary			6	(3)
Biology	3	5	8	(4)
Survival	3	2	5	(2+)
Tracking			6	(3)

### Talents

\*Animal Affinity 1 (+1 Charisma rating when dealing with animals)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Shy (+1 Style point whenever your character refuses to assert himself)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	Average
Winchester rifle	3 L	0	3 L	(1+) L
Knife	1 L	0	2 L	(1) L
Punch	0 N	0	1 N	(0+) N





*“Well, sure, the Archelon is a turtle, but it’s a fifteen-foot carnivorous turtle, so I wouldn’t put my hand in there if I were you.”*

## Character Background

Taking care of me as a kid had to be hard on MaDear. You’d probably have to go a ways to find a woman better at treating stings, snakebites, animal scratches, and things like that. I really put her through it, I’ll tell you. I don’t remember a time when I didn’t chase critters out in the woods behind our old house.

My dad was a foreman on a farm, so we had a little place out in the back of one of the fields, and past that was just wilds and marsh. That land was no good for farming, but it was heaven on earth for a little boy who loves critters.

I used to keep specimens in jars or make collections of insects and figure out how to classify them. I had my own crazy taxonomy system. Some things I couldn’t catch, but I’d wait for hours, real still, just to get a good look at ‘em. Then I’d draw them in my journal. It was a sort of scorecard for me, and I did my best to hunt up names and information about all of the animals I collected there.

Of course, a lot of animals don’t take kindly to being snuck up on, and that’s why MaDear got so good at taking care of my scrapes. I got stung by insects, sprayed by skunks, stuck by porcupines, clawed by rodents, and pecked by birds. I even got into a tussle with a coyote once, which was no picnic, let me tell you. My father had given me a knife for my twelfth birthday just the week before, and it made that coyote think twice about whether I’d make good eats. I still have a scar from that one; it reminds me that nature asks us to respect her, and if we don’t—she’ll give us a reminder.

Reading books about animals and insects and fish was the next best thing to chasing after them; when I couldn’t be out getting my shoes muddy, reading’s what I did. By the time I got to high school, I knew more about animals than the teachers did!

There was never any doubt in my mind that I wanted to be a biologist, so I headed off to Howard University with that goal. I just kept plugging away at what I was good at and picked up a degree, then a masters, then a doctorate—all for chasing animals around the wilderness and trying to figure out what makes them tick. I would have done that anyway, so all in all it was a darn good deal for me.

I was extremely excited when I heard about the specimens that came back from the first expedition. Every biologist dreams about the chance to study something new, to find species nobody’s ever had the chance to observe before. You can imagine my disappointment when it came out that all the original samples had been destroyed and no evidence remained to prove the claims about the “Hollow Earth.”

Some people say that it’s a hoax but for what it’s worth, I think there’s a grain of truth in it. We may not find exactly what we’re looking for, but any trip into the sort of unexplored areas we’re heading for is bound to net some close-up encounters with the critters that live there. In my book, that’s enough to make the trip worthwhile. And if we find something more exotic or incredible, that’ll be icing on the cake.

## Roleplaying

You’ve never met an animal you didn’t want to study. Any sort of living creature is fascinating to you, and if you can really lay your eyes on creatures that have been extinct for millions of years, it will be the greatest thrill yet. You have a tremendous respect for nature and her critters.

You’ve made some groundbreaking discoveries about several species, and are respected for your knowledge, but you’re not interested in most of the jobs you get offered. Fieldwork has always been your passion, and although you have the books memorized, you’d never be happy working in a laboratory or classroom. Fortunately, you have been able to make your way on research grants from the Smithsonian, major zoos, and other respected institutions.



## FORTUNE HUNTER

Archetype: Adventurer

Motivation: Greed

Style: 3

Health: 5

### Primary Attributes

Body: 3	Charisma: 2
Dexterity: 3	Intelligence: 3
Strength: 2	Willpower: 2

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0	Initiative: 6
Move: 5	Defense: 6
Perception: 5	Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	Average
Athletics	2	4	6	(3)
Brawl	2	2	4	(2)
Firearms	3	4	7	(3+)
Shotguns			8	(4)
Larceny	3	2	5	(2+)
Security			6	(3)
Linguistics	3	2	5	(2+)
Deciphering			6	(3)
Melee	2	2	4	(2)
Streetwise	2	2	4	(2)

### Talents

Lucky 1 (+2 bonus to any one dice roll per game session)

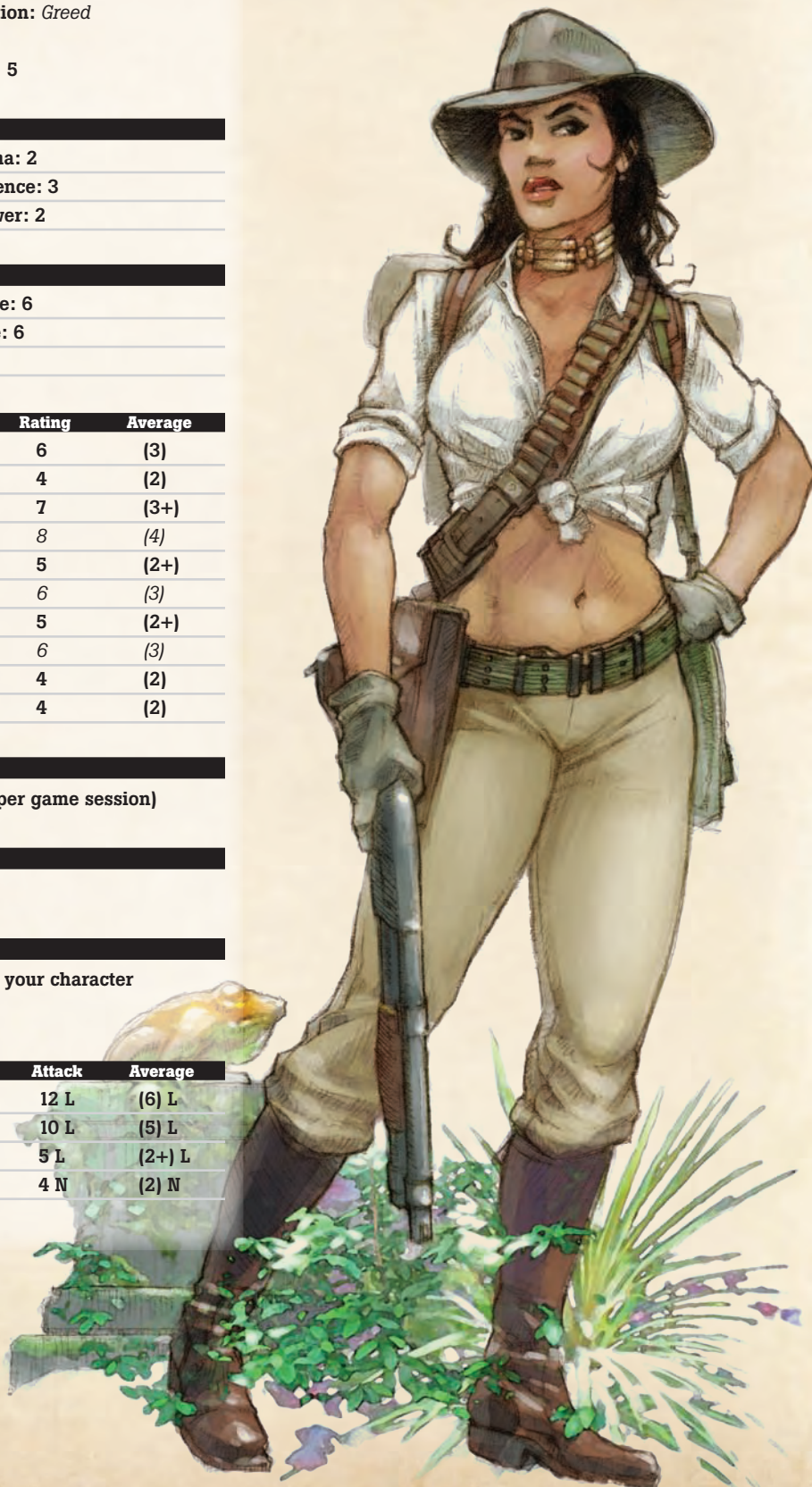
### Resources

None

### Flaw

Thrill-Seeker (+1 Style point whenever your character needlessly puts herself in danger)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	Average
Winchester shotgun	4 L	0	12 L	(6) L
Colt M1911 pistol	3 L	0	10 L	(5) L
Knife	1 L	0	5 L	(2+) L
Punch	0 N	0	4 N	(2) N





*"This looks like a Toltec dialect. Rich bastards, the Toltecs."*

## Character Background

I was raised on the Kiowa reservation in Oklahoma. They say it's our land, but the school was run by the government—pretty much just to make sure we learned English and not some "savage" tongue nobody else would understand. I guess it didn't bother me much since I had a real thing for languages from early on. English was just the beginning for me. I'd borrow books in whatever language I could get a hold of, and try to figure out how to read them.

I worked on the reservation 'til I was old enough to stick out my thumb on the highway and lie to the driver about meeting my mom in the next town up the road. From there I hit the rails, piggybacked on trucks, and stowed away on ships and planes: just about any way you can think of to get from place to place. People would ask me why I kept moving, kept pushing. What did I want? It's simple, really. All I want is... more.

More money. More fun. More adventure. More knowledge. It's kind of a curse I guess. I mean, when would I be satisfied? I didn't know. I still don't know. But I do know one thing: I ain't got enough more yet.

In Mexico I hooked up with a fellow who liked to "collect things." He said he was a Doctor of something, but he was always kind of slippery about what. Didn't matter to me. I just liked the tricks he could teach me. I learned about the Inca, the Maya, and the Aztecs, first hand. You'd be surprised how much you can learn about someone from going through their stuff, even if it's been laying around for a thousand years.

I found new challenges in Europe, and my first jobs as well. I learned pretty fast that the world of relics isn't driven by scholarship. The first coins were minted almost 3,000 years ago and they're worth a bundle today. Museums want the best stuff to draw crowds and donations, and private collectors will pay top dollar to stroke their egos with unique artifacts that none of their friends have.

I didn't have to work at staying in shape or keeping sharp. Life was never easy enough to get soft. But I did find a way to make a living, and I've never looked back. Some people look down on what I do, but without me, most of those relics would be sitting in the ground or bricked up in some tomb where nobody would ever get to appreciate or study them. I provide a valuable service, under dangerous circumstances, and I get paid well for it. I call that a fair deal.

## Roleplaying

You're a daredevil and a thrill seeker, always ready for action. You've got guts and a driving need to grab the biggest score, whether it's the Book of the Dead, Aztec Gold, or the Ark of the Covenant. You're no thief, but sometimes the laws about transporting artifacts can be downright difficult to deal with, and you didn't spend fifteen months in some stinking jungle just to fork over your spoils to a customs clerk.

Uptight archaeologists give you a hard time about your mercenary methods, but some of your steady customers are the world's biggest museums. Institutions that want the best artifacts can't be too choosy about how they get them, and you have a reputation for delivering the goods. But whether you're working for a reputable museum or a wealthy private collector, you always get paid a premium.

When you heard about this Hollow Earth business you thought it was crazy at first, but one look at the drawings changed your mind. If those sketches are what you think they are, there could be more treasure down there than the richest ruins you've ever seen. This time you won't be handing the millions to a client. This time you won't be dealing with export laws or accusations of stealing national treasures. All that loot is up for grabs, and you aim to grab plenty.



## IMPERILED ACTRESS

Archetype: *Celebrity*

Motivation: *Escape*

Style: 3

Health: 4

### Primary Attributes

Body: 2	Charisma: 4 (5)*
Dexterity: 3	Intelligence: 2
Strength: 2	Willpower: 2

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0	Initiative: 5
Move: 5	Defense: 5
Perception: 4	Stun: 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	Average
Acrobatics	3	2	5	(2+)
<i>Tumbling</i>			6	(3)
Con	5*	1	6	(3)
Diplomacy	5*	1	6	(3)
Empathy	2	4	6	(3)
Performance	5*	2	7	(3+)
<i>Acting</i>			8	(4)
Stealth	3	3	6	(3)
Streetwise	5*	1	6	(3)

### Talents

\*Attractive 1 (+1 Charisma rating when dealing with people)

### Resources

Fame 1 (+2 social bonus when recognized)

### Flaw

Danger Magnet (+1 Style point whenever your character attracts trouble)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	Average
Punch	0 N	0	0 N	(0) N





*"They don't look that dangerous. I think they just want my autograph."*

## Character Background

I've got nine brothers and sisters, so when I wanted to stand out, it wasn't exactly easy. I got pretty good at finding ways to get noticed. By the time I was old enough to start acting, I knew it was for me, but I never got the good parts in school. I was almost ready to quit acting, when one summer everything changed.

When I went back to school, I had a figure. Suddenly it wasn't so tough to get boys to notice me. Suddenly the good parts came a lot easier. It was like magic.

I got my confidence back and decided to go to New York after graduation. After moving in with a friend who had been there for a year, I started with small productions before getting my first big break. And I really mean it when I say break. I was the understudy for Lilly Desario in *The Big Fish*, and on the way into the theater for the first show, I got run over by a concession cart and broke my leg.

Well, as it happened, there was a Director in the lobby. He was about to start production on a film about patients at a hospital, and he needed a girl in a cast for the cast. So I was cast, for my cast! Right after that, Megaversal Studios put me under contract and I moved to Hollywood. At first I had a little hole of an apartment and I survived by charming gents into buying me meals at the commissary between shoots. It was awful, but I had a contract, and that was better than most girls.

I did two films right away: *A Lady Called Monday* with Hugh Castle, and *The Lightning of Kings* with Grant Losson. Grant was wonderful, but he hated that Pharaoh headpiece. It was heavy and it made his neck hurt terribly. He complained all the time. Monday I don't think anyone remembers, but Kings of course was huge, and really did well. Julie Mann got the Oscar for playing the queen, but everyone remembered me as the slave girl. My character didn't even have a name—and barely had any clothes—but it made Megaversal sit up and take notice.

Because I'd been memorable in Kings, the first few films I did were these history pieces, where I'd play a concubine, or a damsel in distress, or a slave girl. Finally I got my big chance when Howard Crane gave me a role in *The Savage Jungle*. It was going to be this great film about discovering a strange new land filled with monsters or something. We were going to shoot on location and I was going to get to wear this fetching outfit, with these wonderful boots and helmet! But we never got to Singapore. Our ship got blown of course or something and we ended up here. I'm all for getting into a part, but this is a little too real for me. I can't wait until we get rescued.

## Roleplaying

You're a rising star in Hollywood now, a blonde bombshell with a few popular movies to your credit, and you desperately want to make the jump to Leading Lady. The Studio keeps throwing slave girl parts at you, though, and it's getting frustrating. If your career is ever going to take off, you've got to take some chances and do something really different. That's why you took that crazy director's offer to head out to a remote jungle for a location shoot.

The one thing about your life that baffles you is the way bad things frequently happen when you're around. In films you may be charmed, but in other places disaster seems to follow you. Criminals seem much more likely to rob banks while you are making a deposit. Elephants escape when you visit the zoo.



## INTREPID REPORTER

Archetype: Reporter

Motivation: Truth

Style: 3

Health: 5

### Primary Attributes

Body: 2	Charisma: 2
Dexterity: 3	Intelligence: 3
Strength: 2	Willpower: 3

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0	Initiative: 6
Move: 5	Defense: 5
Perception: 6	Stun: 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	Average
Con	2	3	5	(2+)
Fast Talk			6	(3)
Firearms	3	1	4	(2)
Investigation	3	2	5	(3+)
Interview			6	(4)
Larceny	3	3	6	(3)
Streetwise	2	3	5	(2+)
Rumors			6	(3)
Writing	3	5	8	(4)

### Talents

None

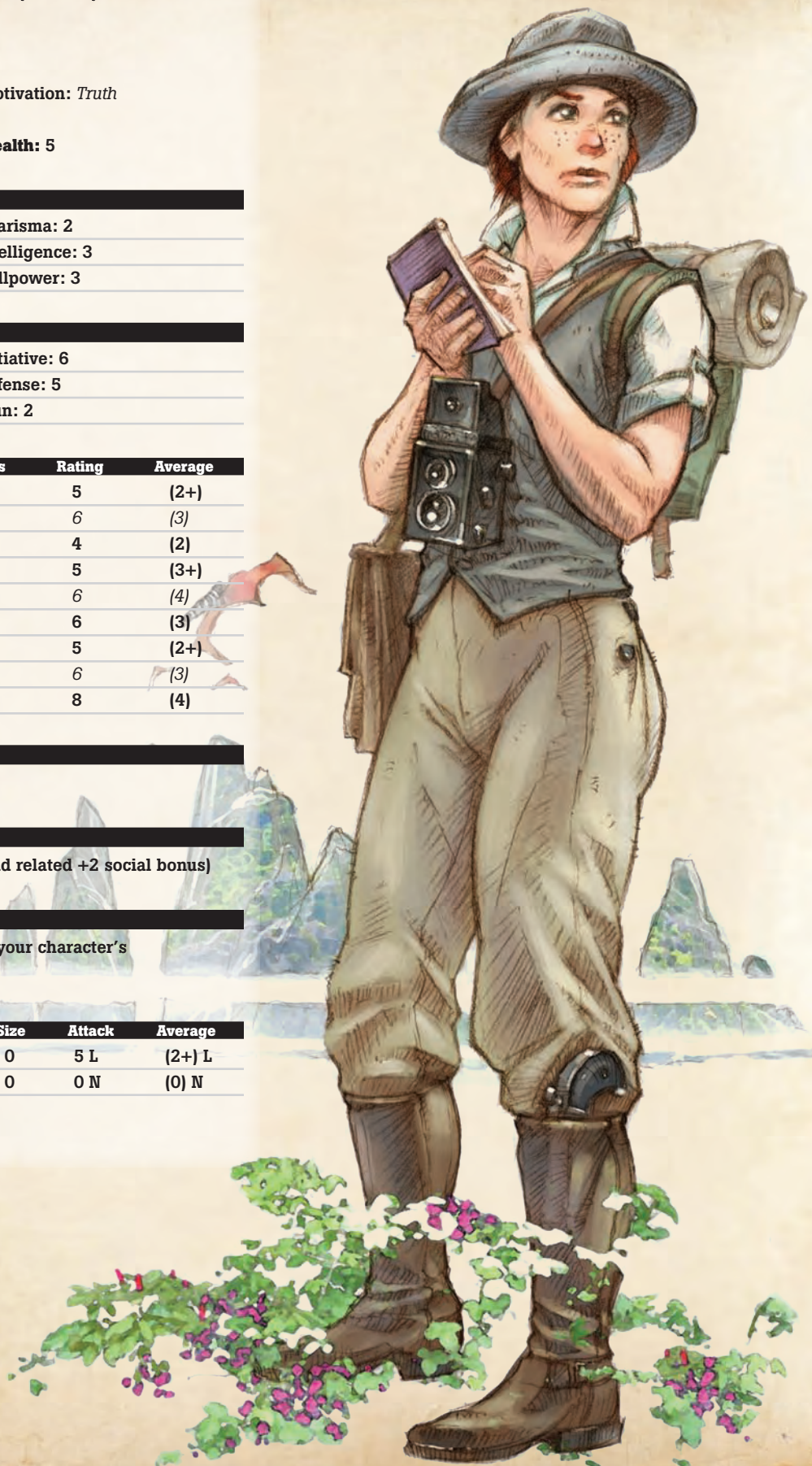
### Resources

Status 1 (Reporter: \$150/month and related +2 social bonus)

### Flaw

Curious (+1 Style point whenever your character's curiosity gets her into trouble)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	Average
Double derringer	1 L	0	5 L	(2+) L
Punch	0 N	0	0 N	(0) N





*“If this keeps up, I’m going to run out of synonyms for giant.”*

## Character Background

I’ve always had a lot to say, but I discovered at an early age that people just don’t pay attention when girls speak. So I started writing in school and won several awards for my work. I knew then that I wanted to devote myself to writing; I could say important things and be taken seriously. I was determined to become a journalist and publish everything that people should know about.

The University of Illinois accepted me and even gave me a journalism scholarship. My living expenses were covered by a trust fund from my father. It wasn’t a lot, but it let me concentrate on my studies instead of finding a husband. Even so, I did meet someone. We were engaged until he told me he expected me to be a housewife. I really did love him, but I couldn’t face myself in the mirror if I didn’t follow my dream. I don’t think either of us ever really got over it, but I know it was the right decision.

After graduation, I got a job working for the Tribune. I wasn’t a reporter, of course. I mainly typed copy for the men, but sometimes I’d correct errors or even punch up the style. Those boobs could knock back whiskey in the bar across the street from the Trib, but they couldn’t spell to save their lives. And style—they just didn’t have any. It got to the point where they’d come ask me to fix things up before submitting them. “Just make sure it reads right, toots,” they’d say.

I guess word got back to the Chief because he came around one day and told me to knock it off. A week later he came back and told me he never knew he had such lousy writers until I stopped doing their jobs for them; he promoted me on the spot. It’s a lucky break that I don’t aim to blow.

The juicy stories still go to the men, of course. But I’ve been on the lookout for something big and I think this crazy professor could be just the thing. He claims to know the way to the Hollow Earth and that there are wonders to behold there. If anything this guy says is the truth, then the public has the right to know what’s in there.

## Roleplaying

You’re a woman working in a man’s world. You know you’re good, but you also know that you’ve got to work ten times harder than anyone else if you’re ever going to get a story you can sink your teeth into. You’ve got a fire in your belly to find out what’s really going on so you can report it to the whole world. You’re willing to use charm or bluster or subterfuge to get at the heart of a story, and you won’t take no for an answer. When you’re not grilling someone intently, you’re doing research or trying to piece together some puzzle in your head. You’ve never heard that curiosity killed the cat; you’ll investigate every lead and never give up.

When you heard about the expedition, you would have done just about anything to go. Luckily, all those old fogeys at the Tribune were too jaded and skeptical to take the risk. You don’t understand everything the professor says, but you’re reading all the books he brought so you can get the facts straight and spell “Jurassic” correctly when you uncover the story of the year—or the decade!



# JUNGLE MISSIONARY

Archetype: Missionary

Motivation: Faith

Style: 3

Health: 5

## Primary Attributes

Body: 3

Charisma: 3

Dexterity: 2

Intelligence: 3

Strength: 2

Willpower: 2

## Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 5

Move: 4

Defense: 5

Perception: 5

Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	Average
Diplomacy	3	3	6	(3)
Empathy	3	2	5	(2+)
Emotions			6	(3)
Linguistics	3	3	6	(3)
Medicine	3	2	5	(2+)
First Aid			6	(3)
Religion	3	5	8	(4)
Survival	3	2	5	(2+)
Foraging			6	(3)

## Talents

None

## Resources

Rank 1 (Jesuit Priest)

## Flaw

Pacifist (+1 Style point whenever your character prevents bloodshed)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	Average
Punch	0 N	0	0 N	(0) N





*"If God had brought us here to cast those reptiles out of his Garden, he would have given us more bullets."*

### Character Background

I was seventeen when I first heard God call me. Prior to that, my father didn't understand why I was so much trouble. I had been educated, given nice clothes, and a roof over my head, but still I spent my time on the street in the company of boys he did not approve of. I was always in trouble with the police.

I was unhappy with my life, missing something I could not name. I sought meaning in violence, drink, and crime. I had no regard for others; I had no respect for myself. I lied to those who tried to help me. I stole from those who would have given to me if I had asked. I was a sinner, my friends.

One day some other boys and I decided to rob an old man's shop. We thought we'd steal a few things, and that it would be exciting and we'd get away. The old man didn't think it was as fun. He shot me, in my chest.

They called for my father when I got to the hospital, but I could tell from the doctors' faces that they were writing me off. I was a criminal, and not worth saving. I wept, and there I was, crying, when my father arrived. My father was a huge man. He was strong, and not someone you wanted angry with you. I had never seen him afraid, but when he saw me on that table, he was terrified.

The doctors told him I was not going to live, but he refused to accept it. He simply blazed with anger. He was wrath itself, brought down to Earth with the fury of God's own thunder, and he could not be denied. Those doctors got back to work on me.

My father's love for me, in spite of everything I had done, in spite of the pain I had caused him and the lies I had told him...it made me understand love. As I lay on the table, I felt infused with love, and I understood what it was for the first time: the love of God. My father had allowed me to open my heart to the love of our Heavenly Father, and through it I was redeemed.

It was truly a miracle that I survived, and I did not intend to take my life for granted. I enrolled in Seminary, learned about our Lord, and dedicated myself to spreading His Word. I have traveled to remote regions to build schools and churches, to help native people understand the salvation that God offers to them if they wish to learn about it. No matter how remote they may be, there is no person who is more closed to the word of God than I was before my eyes were opened.

Now it seems God may have a new task for me. These maps are more than they seem. If my hunch is correct, they are copies of even more ancient scrolls that were lost thousands of years ago. They may not point the way to the treasure trove you're seeking, but the reward at the end is far greater than you can imagine. This path may lead us back to the very Garden of Eden.

### Roleplaying

Your faith in God is strong, as is your faith in His people. You are always hoping to bring His word to someone who needs to hear it, even if they don't want to listen at first. You've helped native tribesmen come to understand His love for them, and converted Chieftains so savage that nobody expected you to come back alive.

Your misspent youth has given you the tools to understand sinners and to speak to them in a way they can understand. Your experience with God is something you want to share, and nothing gives you more pleasure than helping the lost find their way to the Lord.

While you joined the expedition hoping to convert the natives of an exotic land, your insight may also be needed to guide your companions toward the right decisions. The people in most dire need of salvation may not be as far away as you first thought.

With faith, you can go any distance.



## LOST TRAVELER

Archetype: Survivor

Motivation: Survival

Style: 3

Health: 5

### Primary Attributes

Body: 3

Charisma: 2

Dexterity: 3

Intelligence: 2

Strength: 3

Willpower: 2

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 5

Move: 6

Defense: 6

Perception: 6

Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	Average
Athletics	3	3	6	(3)
Throwing			7	(3+)
Brawl	3	3	6	(6)
Bureaucracy	2	2	4	(2)
Melee	3	3	6	(3)
Spears			7	(3+)
Stealth	3	2	5	(2+)
Sneaking			6	(3)
Survival	2	4	6	(3)

### Talents

Alertness (+2 Perception rating)

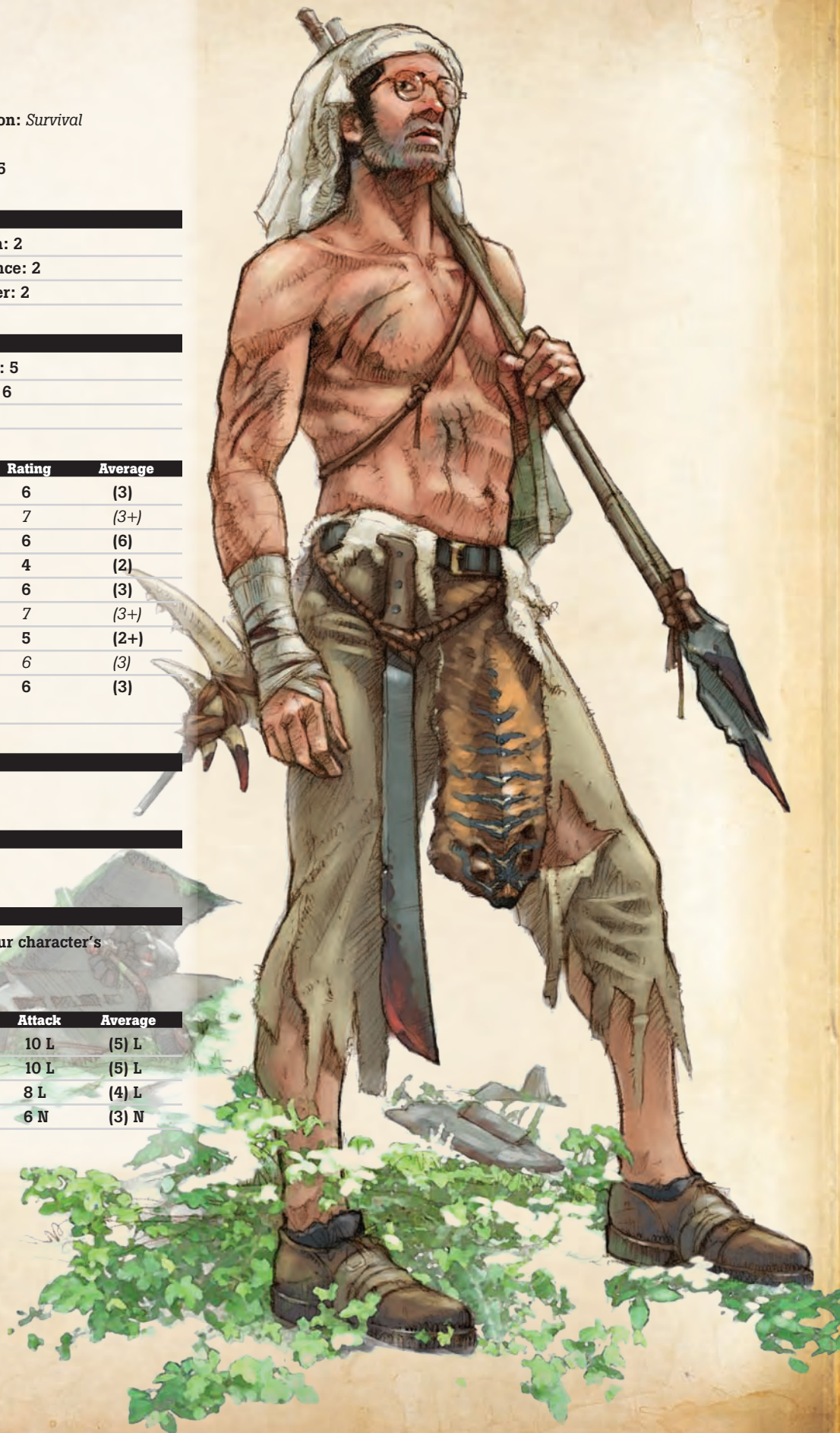
### Resources

None

### Flaw

Poor Vision (+1 Style point whenever your character's poor vision causes him trouble)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	Average
Spear	3 L	0	10 L	(5) L
Spear (thrown)	3 L	0	10 L	(5) L
Machete	2 L	0	8 L	(4) L
Punch	0 N	0	6 N	(3) N





*"The natives are not your friends. They ate the copilot."*

## Character Background

I don't know what caused the crash. The pilot said something about his compass acting strangely, and there were these odd lights outside the window. I was amazed to see the Aurora Borealis. I had read about them before, but whoever heard of a sighting this far south?

I don't remember the landing, but I do remember waking up. Something about a herd of stampeding dinosaurs really gives you a pick-me-up, if you know what I mean. I don't know how I got out of that. I just ran. Pretty soon I found some other survivors and we tried to figure out what happened, where we were, and how to get out. But it was no use.

We were able to salvage a few things from the plane, but the necessities of life soon became a major concern. I'd never killed an animal before, and I honestly think I was still in denial, figuring we'd just walk a while and find a highway where we could hitch a ride. Fat chance.

One of the men, a Brit, said he'd been hunting plenty of times, so he gave it a go, but I guess he didn't count on momma dino coming home quite so early. He was the first one we lost. We did manage to find some fruits and vegetables—damn huge ones around here, if you didn't notice—and we figured out a way to steal eggs from those big bird things.

The food didn't really matter, though. This place is one huge death trap. People in the group started dropping like flies. One of them stepped on a man-eating vine, another fell down one of those lava tubes, and Big Charlie ate one guy. That's what we took to calling the T-Rex. I don't remember why now. Others fell off a cliff, some got stung by one of those giant flying beetles, and a few tried to eat the blue things that look like pears... oh, don't eat those, by the way. They'll try to eat you back. And if the giant beetles sting you, find the plants with the triangular yellow flowers and rub the leaves all over the sting. It'll leave a scar like this one, but at least you won't die.

I made this spear from a piece of the fuselage and one of the struts, with wiring to wrap the tip in place. The plant-eaters have tough skin so they can ward off the clawed predators, but they're not as dangerous as hunting the carnivorous stuff, as long as you can punch a hole in their hide. With my spear, I've been lucky enough to take down a few of them.

I don't know what to say, really. It's been so long since I had anyone to talk to. I'm really glad to see you but it's sad because...I know you're all going to die.

## Roleplaying

If you had bet who would be the last to survive, you wouldn't have picked yourself. Whether through fate or guts, you're the last one left. Everyone else is dead, killed by this Godforsaken place. Watching them all perish has made you a little bit crazy, half with loneliness and half with guilt.

But by being clever and staying one step ahead, you've managed to make it. Watching the animals has taught you a great deal, and you've become very good at staying out of the way of the things that can eat you. Blood doesn't bother you any more. Plunging your hands into a steaming carcass to get the good cuts would have made you sick once upon a time, but this is no fairy tale.

You've forgotten the comforts of civilization, and the arrival of these people with flasks of brandy and aromatic cigars is a tremendous shock. You might be imagining the whole thing, actually. Especially the blonde.



## MAD SCIENTIST

Archetype: *Scientist*

Motivation: *Power*

Style: 3

Health: 5

### Primary Attributes

Body: 2	Charisma: 2
Dexterity: 2	Intelligence: 4
Strength: 2	Willpower: 3

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0	Initiative: 6
Move: 4	Defense: 4
Perception: 5	Stun: 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	Average
Demolitions	4	1	5	(2+)
<i>Improvised</i>			6	(3)
Drilling Machine	2	2	4	(2)
Engineering	4	4	8	(4)
Firearms	2	2	4	(2)
Gunnery	4	1	5	(2+)
<i>Rockets</i>			6	(3)
Mechanics	4	4	8	(4)

### Talents

None

### Resources

Artifact 1 (Stun rifle: +1 bonus to stun opponent)

Refuge 1 (Secret laboratory: +2 Skill bonus when inside)

### Flaw

Absent-minded (+1 Style point whenever your character forgets an important detail)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	Average
Stun rifle	4 N	0	8 N	(4) N
Punch	0 N	0	0 N	(0) N





*"I almost forgot—never cross the streams."*

## Character Background

Goodness me! Where to start, where to start? I suppose the beginning would be the proper place, wouldn't it? I started building things when I was a young boy. My first invention was an automatic cat-scratcher for my tabby, Felinus. He was such a lovely kitty. And a fast healer too. Losing that leg barely slowed him down! I made him a mechanical limb but he was very finicky and never wore it. I think the smell of kerosene fuel bothered him.

I've always had ideas. I just want to help improve things—make life easier—but it doesn't always work out. My mother refused to use the laundering machine I invented for her, but she always did have an irrational fear of fire. That might have had something to do with the freckle-remover ointment, but if the measurements hadn't been off by that one decimal place it would have worked perfectly. A shame, really.

When I look around, I see things other people miss. I ask the questions that other people don't. Would cows make viable artillery? What are the costs of breeding cows versus manufacturing shells? These are the sorts of inquiries that lead to great discoveries!

Admittedly, my inventions have been hit or miss; but on the whole I've done very well for myself. My industrial solvent patent made me a bundle after I repackaged it, and it was never very tasty anyway, so that was a win. With investing and residuals I'm quite comfortable.

My theories won me acclaim and a place at the Institute, but I have never been truly understood by my peers. Half of my work they don't understand, and the other half they disdain. It's very frustrating—almost as frustrating as the construction delays on my aethership project. I admit the initial calculations of aether density between here and Mars were in error; but I compensated those people for the loss of their hair and hopefully that will be the end of it. While that situation was being resolved I turned my attention to Earth.

The automated mining machinery I created inspired me to consider other ways to excavate and find rare elements for my research. No sooner had I begun to think about it than I was struck with the idea of combining the aethership with a drilling device to create a vessel that can travel through the earth as easily as a giant mechanical drilling machine!

The modifications to my design calculations have been simple enough. Once I secure a financial backer, I'll be ready to start building her. She'll be ready for her maiden voyage in no time!

## Roleplaying

There is no problem that cannot be handled by the application of science and technology. A new problem might be the result, but then that problem can be resolved by technology. You just have to be diligent and hope the problems run out before your funding does.

Your lab back home is a hodgepodge of half-completed inventions and blackboards covered with dense scientific calculations. Nobody can make heads or tails of them, and that's just the way you like it.

All of this occult poppycock has you a little concerned because a few people seem to believe in it. It's rubbish of course, but it might be interesting to study. What is that "magic" rock made of anyway? It might be a new element. It might be delicious. The possibilities are limitless.



## OCCULT INVESTIGATOR

Archetype: Occultist

Motivation: Faith

Style: 3

Health: 5

### Primary Attributes

Body: 2	Charisma: 3
Dexterity: 3	Intelligence: 3
Strength: 2	Willpower: 3

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0	Initiative: 6
Move: 5	Defense: 5
Perception: 6	Stun: 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	Average
Empathy	3	4	7	(3+)
Intuition			8	(4)
Investigation	3	4	7	(3+)
Enigmas			8	(4)
Linguistics	3	3	6	(3)
Philosophy	3	3	6	(3)

### Talents

Psychic Sensitivity (Your character can sense psychic phenomena)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Superstitious (+1 Style point whenever your character's superstitions cause her hardship)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	Average
Nunchucks	2 N	0	2 N	(1) N
Punch	0 N	0	0 N	(0) N





*“What part of ‘Don’t open the magic box’ was unclear to you?”*

### Character Background

I was born and raised in Hong Kong. That is where I learned to speak English. My father is a wise man who fled to Hong Kong before the revolution and the end of the Manchu dynasty. From him, I have learned about the mysteries of the world.

My father is a purveyor of traditional Chinese goods popular with both the Westerners and our people. I have been translating English for my father since I was 11, and have learned that Westerners buy our products mainly for souvenirs. I always tell them that they are fortunate they need not believe in a talisman to be protected from evil spirits; that a pretty piece of jade will bring good health and wealth to any who wear it; and that wearing our red silk will bring happiness and good luck.

My father tried to teach me not to be concerned about those that don’t believe. But I can not help worrying about all the American and British men with their moustaches. I try to convince them being fashionable is not worth the bad luck, and they simply don’t listen.

I am still just a young woman, but I was born in the year of the Snake and have been blessed with many gifts. I can often see a light around a person that tells if they have good intentions or bad. I can detect lies from truth. I feel a tingle up my spine when I’m near an object of power.

I have been brought here because I possess abilities that will help you find what you seek. The work I have done for my father has included travel to many remote locales to search for rare and valuable relics. I have plunged through the jungles of Peru, crossed the snow of Siberia, and trekked over the deserts of Arabia—anywhere that lost knowledge can be found.

The map you have in your possession will not take you to Atlantis, or the Garden of Eden, or Shangri-La, or whatever you choose to call it. Marks on a paper will take you only to a point; after that you will require more. You will need someone whose sensitivity to the forces in play is strong; someone who knows how to seek and find places of power.

I can not get close enough on my own. You can not finish the journey without me. Together, we can find the most wonderful place in the world.

### Roleplaying

You are a soft-spoken, intelligent woman who knows there is much in the world that we don’t understand. You have a passion for seeking out mysterious and powerful objects and places. You want to learn how to use them in a way that will benefit others, and you want to keep those that can be used for evil out of the hands of men would hurt others merely to obtain power.

The Westerners in the party do not have any idea what awaits them and they don’t believe what you tell them, but they do have the money, resources, and equipment to make this journey. You have always felt a force coming from deep under the earth, but you never dreamed you would get to go in search of it. You’ll travel with just about anyone if it will take you there.

Once in the Hollow Earth, you have a list of ancient secrets to search for, all of which you intend to bring back to your father. The others may search for their gold and their diamonds; you have other treasures to find.



## RUGGED EXPLORER

Archetype: *Explorer*

Motivation: *Duty*

Style: 3

Health: 6

### Primary Attributes

Body: 3	Charisma: 3
Dexterity: 2	Intelligence: 2
Strength: 3	Willpower: 3

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0	Initiative: 4
Move: 5	Defense: 5
Perception: 5	Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	Average
Athletics	3	3	6	(3)
Brawl	3	3	6	(3)
Firearms	2	4	6	(3)
Intimidation	3	2	5	(2+)
<i>Orders</i>			6	(3)
Melee	3	2	5	(2+)
<i>Machete</i>			6	(3)
Survival	2	3	5	(2+)
<i>Navigation</i>			6	(3)

### Talents

Tough (+1 Body rating/maximum rating)

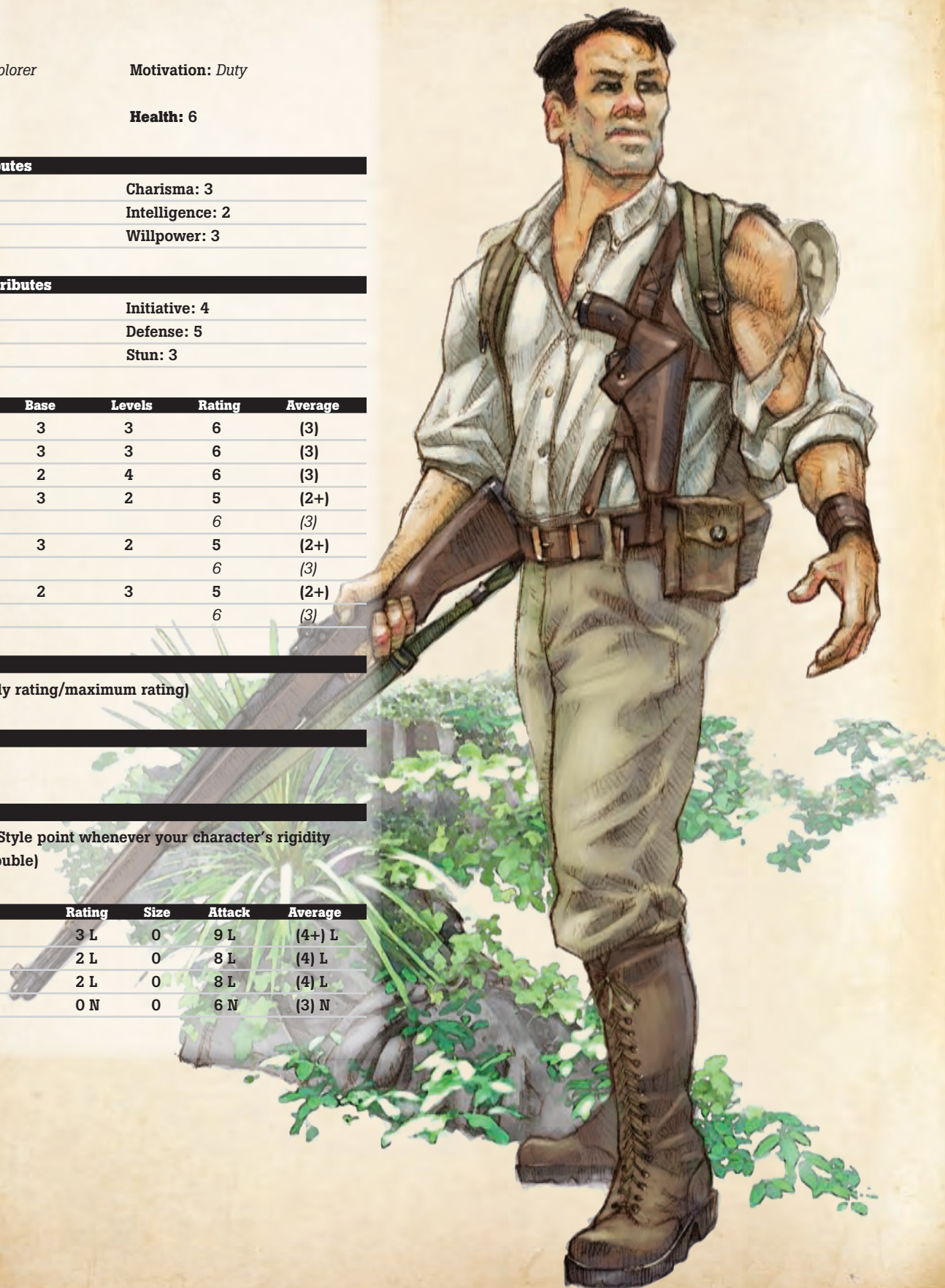
### Resources

None

### Flaw

Stubborn (+1 Style point whenever your character's rigidity causes him trouble)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	Average
.30-06 rifle	3 L	0	9 L	(4+) L
S&W revolver	2 L	0	8 L	(4) L
Machete	2 L	0	8 L	(4) L
Punch	0 N	0	6 N	(3) N





*“Looks like we have to defeat a squad of Germans, climb that sheer cliff, cross the chasm, get past the creature, free our companions, and put the gem back in the statue’s eye. I’ll be right back.”*

## Character Background

Nebraska might not be the most exciting place to grow up, but it gave me the grounding to know when I had it good. I joined up with the Army when I was sixteen. I wasn’t old enough, but I said I was and the Sergeant didn’t pry too hard. I’d been working on a farm my whole life and at sixteen I was a match for any eighteen-year-old city slicker.

I’ve never been a violent man but when I saw the newsreels, I just couldn’t sit back in America and let the Germans have their way. It’d be wrong. So I slung a rifle over my shoulder and marched onto the boat. I figured I was in for a tough time—the Great War was the most terrible time the world has ever known—but I hadn’t figured on experiencing more camaraderie, loyalty, and sacrifice than I’d ever dreamed of.

My unit saw more than our share of the action. When the war was over, I knew I’d changed. We all had. I couldn’t go home to the farm.

So, I signed on with a container ship headed for God knows where, and found myself halfway ‘round the world before I got bored. I jumped ship in South America. I didn’t know where I going, but I knew I wasn’t there yet.

One day at a café, I met a man from a British company who told me one of the biggest problems he had was a lack of good maps of the local area. Well, I’d studied cartography in the Army because if there was one thing you didn’t want to be in battle, it was lost. I asked if he’d be willing to pay for some maps and he said he certainly would—quite well, as it turned out.

That’s how I got my start in exploration. Once I took that first step into the jungle, I realized that I’d arrived where I was meant to be: the unknown frontier. Striking through uncharted wilderness, I began to understand the thrill that Lewis and Clark must have felt, and I realized that the true spirit of America is doing what nobody has done before.

Since then, I’ve explored on every continent; I even spent some time in Antarctica. I’ve made maps, helped find lost expeditions, tracked down shipwrecks, searched for treasure, and even helped scientists locate ancient cities. Finding new things is in my blood, and if I say I’ll bring you back, then by God you can count on that.

I suppose that’s why I’m here. I’ve never been one to buy into outlandish stories, but some of the men involved are ones I trust. I’m willing to take them at their word and go out there for a look.

## Roleplaying

You’re a natural explorer and you’re not happy if you’re not moving forward. You love a challenge and you’ve found so many amazing things in your travels, it’s hard to say if something is true or not until you go check it out for yourself. Your time in the war taught you how to deal with life: always do what you say you’ll do, know your limits but don’t limit yourself, and never leave anyone behind.

With a strong jaw and fists to match, you’re not afraid of mixing it up if necessary, but you’re a natural leader and you usually don’t have to resort to such blunt measures to get folks to go along. Bullies are another story, but you know how to deal with them. Even if you’ve been disappointed in the past, you always try to see the good side of people and give them a chance. Some have called you naive, but you’ve been pleasantly surprised more than disappointed.



## SNOOTY PROFESSOR

Archetype: *Academic*

Motivation: *Truth*

Style: 3

Health: 4

### Primary Attributes

Body: 2	Charisma: 3
Dexterity: 2	Intelligence: 4
Strength: 2	Willpower: 2

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0	Initiative: 6
Move: 4	Defense: 4
Perception: 6	Stun: 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	Average
Academics	4	4	8	(4)
Anthropology	4	4	8	(4)
Bureaucracy	4	1	5	(2+)
<i>Academia</i>			6	(3)
Diplomacy	3	2	5	(2+)
<i>Etiquette</i>			6	(3)
Investigation	4	1	5	(2+)
<i>Research</i>			6	(3)
Linguistics	4	1	5	(2+)
<i>Deciphering</i>			6	(3)

### Talents

Skill Mastery (Academics)

### Resources

Status 1 (College Professor: \$150/month and related +2 social bonus)

### Flaw

Condescending (+1 Style point whenever your character proves his superiority)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	Average
Punch	0 N	0	0 N	(0) N





*"These plants may resemble fossils of *Psaronius brasiliensis*, but obviously they are not. That would be like stumbling upon a herd of dinosaurs. Preposterous."*

## Character Background

I generally try not to behave in a superior manner, but some people can't help but take my actions that way, simply because I am always correct. It is difficult to be a man of reason and science in an age that is so devoted to elevating sham artists and ludicrous claims of pseudoscience, but I consider it my duty to remain a shining beacon of insight in a dark and ignorant world.

When I first came to Harvard in 1906, the world was still buzzing with the wonders of the new century. There were so many things to invent, so many wonders still to discover, that it seemed as though each day brought a new principle or device. Of course, today we have nearly exhausted the depths of these mysteries, and I would be very surprised if there were very many important phenomena left unrevealed. Perhaps some refinements to our current theories, but all in all there is nothing of consequence left to discover.

Since coming into my deserved position as a respected member of the academic community, my primary interest has been the education of a new generation of scholars, whose sensibilities might be sharpened to some resemblance of my own. This is frustrating work given the caliber of students entering the system today, but with our society in the state of decline that it is, my burden takes on an even more critical role.

Common people are so easily taken in by the tomfoolery of dubious claims, such as this Hollow Earth nonsense. I could scarcely believe that such a preposterous notion was being reported in the press, but I suppose I should not be surprised. The aim of reporters is to sell newspapers to the uneducated masses, and if sensational tripe will accomplish their goal, far be it from me to confer any sense of moral or ethical responsibility upon them.

The academic press has said nothing of these claims, as is only proper, but if my involvement in this expedition will assist in debunking this absurd notion, then I shall eagerly step forward. I can only hope that I will be able to prevent any more energy from being wasted on these absurd theories, so that funding and attention can be directed to a more worthy cause.

## Roleplaying

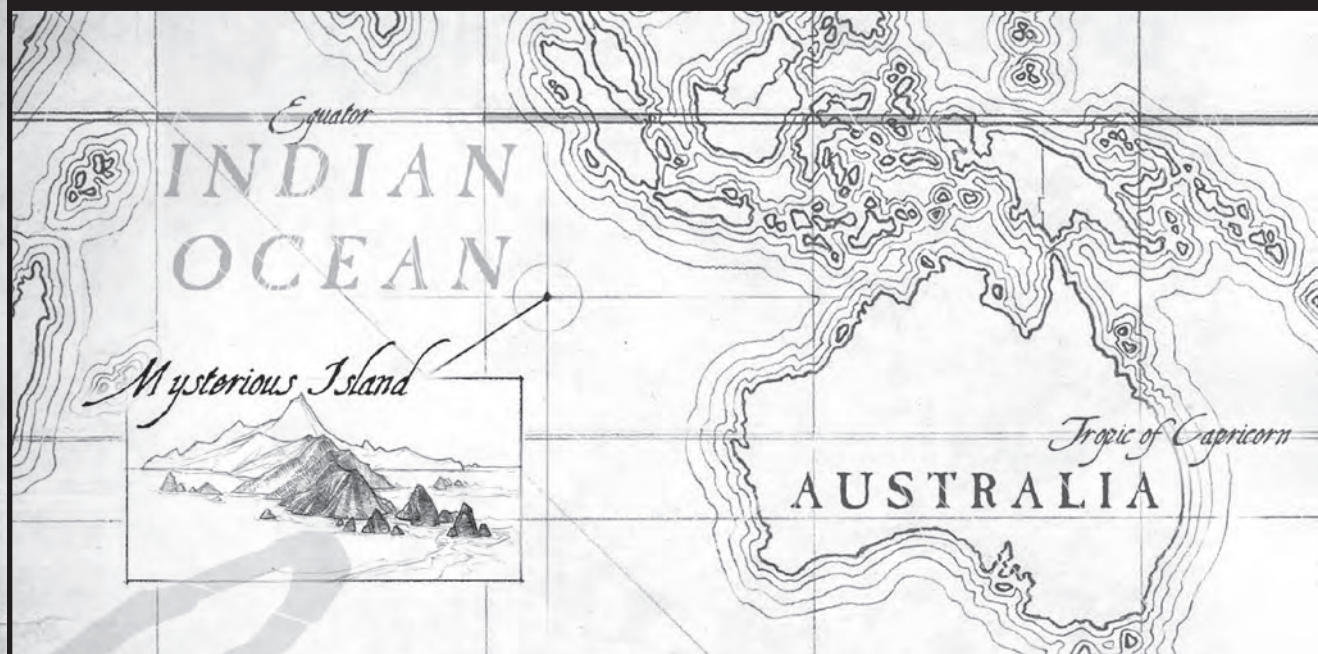
Though some may call you arrogant, you see nothing wrong with stating the truth and being right—a state you always enjoy. A graduate of a prestigious university with several advanced degrees and many influential publications to your credit, there are very few people with the credentials to argue with you.

You're a widely read and broadly educated academic with a command of many disciplines, from history, to biology, to chemistry. However, you've traditionally left the dirty work to your graduate students, and rarely step outside the confines of the University campus. Publishing papers, giving lectures, and refuting arguments in academic journals take up the majority of your time.

With texts in hand, you are determined to document the failure of this expedition to find anything resembling a "Hollow Earth." You are very much looking forward to returning from this wild goose chase and proving to the world that you are, as usual, absolutely correct.



## ⊕ CHAPTER 3: RULES



Roleplaying, in essence, is about people getting together and telling stories. Each person takes on a different persona and interacts with the game world through it. Character goals and motivations are what drive a story, engage us in what is going on, and compel us to see how it all turns out. But what happens when two characters try to accomplish different things? What happens when their goals and motivations conflict? Who decides who wins and who loses?

This is where the rules come in. Rules are the foundation of all games, and they ensure that everyone is playing fairly. If something is true for one character, then it's true for another. If two characters perform the same action, the only difference between them is how skilled and lucky they are. The difficulty rating of the action, and the rules for resolving it, remain the same.

With that being said, rules can be as rigid or as flexible as you like. Some players prefer to roleplay the resolution of actions, letting the story dictate the outcome without game mechanics getting in the way. Other players prefer to resolve actions by rolling dice and letting chance and the game mechanics influence the story. Both approaches to roleplaying are equally valid. It's all a matter of personal taste.

Ultimately, most players fall somewhere between these two extremes. The story flows nicely when things happen fast and loose. But when events take a dangerous turn, such as when an angry Tyrannosaurus is bearing down upon your character, it's time to pull out the rules and see what your options are.

The Ubiquity roleplaying game system is streamlined for fast, cinematic game play. While speed and simplicity are emphasized over gritty realism, players can still make tactical decisions that will directly impact their character's chance of success. The goal is to spend less time rolling dice and more time telling a story. This does not mean, however, that rolling dice is not an important part of the game. On the contrary, dice play is a critical part of resolving character actions, but unnecessary dice rolls are eliminated—such as when a character is performing a routine task.

The Ubiquity rules are designed to be accessible to all kinds of players. Even someone who has never played a roleplaying game before, or who isn't good at math, will be able to learn the rules quickly. Most of the number crunching has been done for you and all you have to worry about is rolling dice. And if you like rolling dice, you can always ignore the shortcuts without upsetting the power balance of the game. The Ubiquity rules are flexible and powerful tools that let you tell the kind of story you want to tell without getting in the way.

### Dice

The Ubiquity system uses dice to resolve challenges and determine the success or failure of an action. This is done by rolling a number of dice and counting how many of them roll an even number. Each die that rolls an even number is considered a success. The more successes rolled, the better the outcome of the action.



**Example:** Laura rolls five 6-sided dice and gets a 1, 3, 4, 4, and 6. Counting only the dice that rolled even numbers, she rolled three successes.

The Ubiquity system does not require special dice to play. You can use dice that you already own. Each player should have about ten dice on hand to play the game. Standard 6-sided dice work well and are easy to come by, but you can use any dice as long as they have an equal number of even and odd-numbered sides—you can even mix and match polyhedral dice!

**Example:** Alex rolls six dice: a 4-sided, a 6-sided, an 8-sided, a 10-sided, a 12-sided, and a 20-sided die. He rolls a 1, 3, 5, 9, 12, and 18. Counting only the dice that rolled even numbers, he rolled two successes.

**Note:** For simplicity, Ubiquity assumes that players are counting even-numbered dice as successes. Players could just as easily count odd-numbered dice as successes and the probability would be the same. At the Gamemaster's discretion, players may be allowed to call "even" or "odd" before rolling and count only those dice as successes.

## Rules Overview

### Step One: Declare Action (p. 106)

Describe your character's action and determine its type: standard, extended, opposed, or reflexive action. Also determine the Skill or Attribute roll required to resolve the action and its type: standard roll, extended roll, opposed roll, or reflexive roll.

### Step Two: Determine Difficulty (p. 107)

The Gamemaster determines the difficulty rating of your character's action based on the task being attempted and the Skill or Attribute involved.

### Step Three: Calculate Dice Pool (p. 108)

Calculate your dice pool based on the appropriate Skill or Attribute ratings and add or subtract any modifiers.

### Step Four: Take the Average (p. 110)

Take the average of your dice pool to see if you need to roll any dice. If your average successes equal or exceed the difficulty rating of the task, your character succeeds without rolling any dice. Skip to Step Six, below.

### Step Five: Roll Dice (p. 111)

Roll your dice pool and count the number of successes rolled.

### Step Six: Resolve Action (p. 110)

Compare the number of successes versus the difficulty rating of the task. If the number of successes equals or exceeds the difficulty, then the action is successful. If the number of successes is less than the difficulty, the action fails.

### Step Seven: Try Again (p. 112)

If your character's action failed, he may try again with Gamemaster approval. Trying again imposes a -2 penalty on your dice pool. Return to Step Five.

## Time

Time is fluid in a roleplaying game, much like in a book or movie. During the course of a game, time will fly, crawl, or even jump around. One thing is certain: game time will rarely—if ever—pass by in real time.

How the Gamemaster controls time affects the pace of the story. He can gloss over unimportant details or slow time down at critical moments. During combat, for example, it may take several minutes to resolve events that occur during just a few seconds of game time. Several weeks of game time, on the other hand, may be covered in just a few real minutes, assuming that nothing noteworthy occurs during that time.

There are six basic units of game time. They represent everything from a few seconds to an entire lifetime (or longer). When put together, they allow the Gamemaster to tell stories in a way that makes sense to everyone involved.

**Combat Turn:** The shortest increment of time, a combat turn is approximately six seconds long. It represents the amount of time it takes a character to move and perform a single action, called a standard action

### Ubiquity Dice

While the Ubiquity system does not require special dice to play, Ubiquity dice are recommended to get the most out of the game. These specially designed 8-sided dice dramatically simplify play, allowing you to roll up to one-third fewer dice and simply add up the total.

Each Ubiquity die has a different value and is color-coded for easy identification. Instead of rolling six regular dice, you could roll two d3s, three d2s, or six d1s. You can mix and match Ubiquity dice any way you want as long as the total value remains the same. The probability of rolling a success remains the same as with regular dice.

Using Ubiquity dice with the Ubiquity system is a powerful combination. Rolling fewer dice, less often, lets you focus on roleplaying without missing out on the gaming aspect. It's the best of both worlds!



## Chapter Three

(See *Actions*, below). Combat turns are often packed with action, with all characters involved trying to do something in a short timeframe.

**Scene:** The standard increment of time, a scene generally encompass a single event in one specific location. A scene may include several combat turns, run in real time, or even jump back and forth between the two. The Gamemaster may even fast-forward through parts of a scene, but moving locations or starting a new event generally signals a new scene. When in doubt, the Gamemaster determines where one scene ends and another begins.

**Game Session:** A game session runs from the moment players sit down until they pack up to leave. Game sessions are essentially blocks of real-time set aside to tell a story. The Gamemaster should have a plan for each game session, including how to move the story forward and how to provide challenges and rewards for the players. At the end of an ideal game session, players will leave with a sense of accomplishment but still want more.

**Story:** A story is one complete tale, told from beginning to end. It may take several game sessions to tell or just one, but when it is over, the plot is concluded and the conflict is resolved. The characters' adventures may not be over, however, and more stories may be told about them.

**Downtime:** Unimportant events may be skimmed over during play. When this is done in between game sessions, it is called downtime. Normally this occurs between stories, giving characters a chance to grow and develop over a period of time. Since nothing important occurs, there is no need to roleplay it, but characters may gain and spend experience points during downtime. The next game session resumes the story with the next interesting event.

**Campaign:** A campaign is a series of stories tied together by a common thread, such as common characters, theme, or overarching plotline. As the game continues, the Gamemaster and players work together, weaving the storylines together into an epic saga.

## Actions

There are four basic types of actions. Some of the things characters try to accomplish can be done fairly quickly, while other tasks may take time to accomplish correctly. Other times, an action can happen in the blink of an eye and take no time at all. However, time is not the only thing that distinguishes different kinds of actions. A character may or may not have someone actively trying to stop her from completing her task.

Each type of action is resolved in a slightly different way, and the rules for each are explained below.

### Standard Actions

Standard actions are straightforward and can be resolved relatively quickly without any opposition. Shooting a gun, jumping across a chasm, and picking a lock are all examples of standard actions. Basically anything that can be resolved with a single dice roll during a combat turn is considered a standard action.

Standard actions are resolved with a standard Skill or Attribute roll. If the number of successes rolled meets or exceeds the difficulty, then the action is successful. If the player rolled fewer successes, then the action fails. It's as simple as that.

*Example:* Stephen's character is trying to pinpoint his location on an ancient map. The Gamemaster determines that because the map is old and incomplete, trying to pinpoint his location on the map requires a Survival roll with a difficulty rating of 4. Stephen makes a Survival roll and only gets two successes. Stephen's character can't make heads or tails out of the map.

### Extended Actions

Not every action can be accomplished immediately. Some tasks take time to complete, such as deciphering an ancient tome, repairing a vehicle, or climbing a mountain. These are called extended actions. In general, anything that requires more than one dice roll to accomplish or takes more than one combat turn is considered an extended action.

Extended actions are resolved with extended Skill or Attribute rolls. The Gamemaster determines the total number of successes required to complete an extended action—typically between five and ten—depending on the amount of effort required to complete the task. He also determines how much time passes with each dice roll. Just like a standard action, an extended action has a difficulty rating. Successes in excess of the difficulty count toward the total needed to complete the task. If fewer successes are rolled than the difficulty, they are subtracted from the total number of accumulated successes. This illustrates that some tasks are harder and more complex than others, and thus take more time and expertise to complete.

If a player's average number of successes exceed the difficulty rating of the task (see *Taking the Average*, below), his character will automatically complete the task after a certain amount of time.

Once the player has accumulated the necessary number of successes, the task is complete. Until that time, the player must keep rolling dice until the extended



action is complete, or her character abandons the task. Depending on the nature of the task, the Gamemaster may allow the player to keep the number of accumulated successes until her character returns to the task.

**Example:** Clay's character is trying to decipher an ancient text. It is a fairly long book, so it is going to take him a long time to translate it. The Gamemaster determines that deciphering the text requires an extended Linguistics roll with a difficulty rating of 3 because it's written in a dead language. Each roll represents one hour of work and Clay will need to accumulate ten successes in order for his character to complete the translation.

Clay makes an extended Linguistics roll and gets four successes. Subtracting the difficulty rating of 3, he accumulates one success. On his next roll, Clay only gets three successes, which means that his character hasn't made any progress during that hour of work, but he still has the one success banked from his first roll. On his third roll, Clay gets five successes, which accumulates two more successes, for a grand total of three successes. After three hours of work, Clay's character has deciphered approximately one-third of the text.

### Opposed Actions

Occasionally, two characters will compete with each other to accomplish a task, or one may actively try to prevent the other from completing the task at all. For example, two characters may be trying to grab the same weapon, or one may be trying to punch the other. In these cases, opposed rolls are made to determine who prevails. Both standard and extended actions may be opposed by another character.

Opposed actions are resolved with opposed Skill or Attribute rolls. The player who rolls the most successes wins. If two players roll the same number of successes, neither character is considered the victor. If they were both trying to grab the same weapon, for example, they both end up with a hand on it and must attempt to wrest it away from the other character.

In situations where one character is clearly the defender (e.g., when one character is trying not to get hit), a tied roll means the blow landed, but without enough force to do any damage. These are like the classic near misses from television and film where the bullet or knife passes through a piece of clothing or only nicks the character.

In instances where two or more characters are racing each other to a goal, such as climbing to the top of a mountain, the first player to roll the required number of successes wins. If both players exceed the required number of successes, then the one with the most successes wins. If both players roll the required number of successes simultaneously, their characters reach the goal

at the same time.

**Example:** Alex's character is trying to wrest a gun away from the German soldier holding it. Both players make opposed Strength rolls to see who prevails and they each roll three successes. As the defender, the soldier barely manages to hang on to the weapon, but the Gamemaster determines that he cannot fire it this round.

### Reflexive Actions

Some actions take no time at all to resolve. They happen instantaneously and don't require any thought on behalf of the character. Reflexive actions often happen instinctively, such as trying to grab a handhold before falling, or resisting the effects of a poison. Since reflexive actions don't take any time or attention, they normally do not incur multiple action penalties or count toward a character's actions for the turn.

By their very nature, reflexive actions are variants of opposed actions. Resisting a character who is trying to make your character do something unpleasant is a reflexive action. Reflexive actions are resolved with a reflexive Skill or Attribute roll. If the number of successes rolled meets or exceeds the difficulty, the action succeeds. If the reflexive roll is opposed, the player with the most successes wins; ties go to the defending character.

**Example:** An Amazon princess is trying to seduce Stephen's character. She rolls her Con rating and gets three successes. Stephen makes a reflexive Willpower roll and gets four successes. His character is not swayed by the Amazon's advances; he tells her she'll have to find someone else to be her fall guy.

## Difficulty

The difficulty rating of an action represents how hard it is to accomplish. The Gamemaster determines the difficulty rating of an action based on how hard the task is to perform. The difficulty rating is the number of successes required to complete the task. Any successes over this number represent a greater degree of success. Difficulty ratings for tasks normally range from one to five, but exceptionally difficult tasks may have higher ratings.

Difficulty	Rating
Easy	1
Average	2
Tough	3
Hard	4
Very Hard	5
High Impossible	6+



## Chapter Three

**Example:** Molly's character is trying to fix the airship's engine. Since it is badly damaged, the Gamemaster determines that fixing the engine requires a *Mechanics* roll with a difficulty rating of 3. Molly will have to roll more than three successes to make any progress repairing the engine.

### Dice Pool

Dice pool represent the number of dice you roll to determine the outcome of your character's action. Dice pool are calculated based on the character's appropriate Skill or Attribute rating for the task being attempted. As a result, the size of the dice pool will vary from character to character and action to action.

### Skill and Attribute Ratings

Virtually every dice roll you make in the game will be based on a specific Skill or Attribute rating. The first step in calculating a dice pool is to determine your character's appropriate Skill or Attribute rating.

Skills cover most actions that your character will attempt. If your character possesses the appropriate Skill for the task he is attempting, your dice pool is equal to his Skill rating. If your character does not pos-

sess the appropriate Skill for the task, his dice pool is equal to the Skill's Base Attribute -2 (see *Untrained Skill Rolls*, p. 48).

**Example:** Alex's and Clay's characters are being threatened by German soldiers. Alex decides to fight his way out. His character has a *Brawl* rating of 4, so his dice pool to attack the soldier is four.

Clay's character does not have the *Brawl* Skill, so his dice pool is equal to his *Strength* rating -2, giving him a dice pool of zero. He's not going to be much help in the fight.

Skill Specializations that apply to a particular action increase the Skill rating used to calculate the dice pool.

**Example:** Laura's character is being menaced by a velociraptor and she decides to take the creature out using her shotgun. Her character has *Firearms* 7 with a Skill Specialization in *Shotguns*, so her *Firearms* rating when using a shotgun is 8.

Attribute rolls are made for any action not explicitly covered by a Skill (such as when a character tries to remember a detail she once heard or tries to resist a poison in her system). In these cases, the dice pool is equal to the appropriate Secondary Attribute rating or double the Primary Attribute rating. See the specific Attribute descriptions for examples of Attribute rolls.

**Example:** Alex's character and the German soldier he's been fighting are both trying to grab the same gun. Since this action is based on sheer speed, the Gamemaster has both characters make opposed *Dexterity* rolls. Alex's character has *Dexterity* 4, so his dice pool to grab the gun is eight.





*Clay's character is being attacked by a different soldier. His Defense rating is 4, so his dice pool to defend himself is four.*

Once you've calculated the base dice pool for an action, the next step is to add or subtract dice for equipment and any good or bad situational modifiers.

## Modifiers

Characters rarely perform tasks in a vacuum. There are countless situational modifiers that will either help or hinder them. These modifiers translate into bonus and penalty dice on the task being attempted. Bonus dice are added to a dice pool while penalty dice are subtracted from it. A maximum of ten dice may be added or subtracted from a dice pool, not counting equipment bonuses. The task fails automatically if the modified dice pool is reduced to zero or less.

Modifier	Example	Dice Pool
A superior bonus	A team of highly trained assistants	+8
A major bonus	Taking extra time	+4
A moderate bonus	A good set of tools	+2
A minor bonus	Had some practice	+1
No modifier	Normal conditions	0
A minor penalty	Slightly obscured vision	-1
A moderate penalty	Improvised tools	-2
A major penalty	Crippling wounds	-4
A severe penalty	Total darkness	-8

## Equipment

Using the proper tools and equipment for a task gains you bonus dice to your character's dice pool. Using the wrong piece of equipment or having to improvise a tool imposes a penalty to your character's dice pool. In addition, using higher quality tools and equipment will provide additional bonuses, just as lower quality items will have additional penalties.

**Example:** Stephen's character is using a grappling hook to scale a wall. His Athletics rating is 6, and the grappling hook provides a +2 bonus to climbing rolls, so his dice pool to climb the wall is eight.

The most common type of equipment bonus is a weapon bonus. Each weapon has a damage rating that is added to the Skill rating when determining the dice pool to attack with that weapon.

**Example:** Laura is firing her shotgun at a charging velociraptor. She has Firearms 8 with shotguns and her weapon's damage rating is 4, so her dice pool to attack the velociraptor is 12.

**Note:** Weapons and equipment bonuses do not count toward the maximum number of bonus dice that may be added to a dice pool.

## Circumstances

There are myriad factors that can affect your character's actions. Your character may be severely wounded, unable to see very well, or have some other sort of disadvantage. Some of these factors will help your character and add to your dice pool; many will not, and will subtract dice from your dice pool. The Gamemaster decides what circumstances affect your characters actions and how severe the benefit or penalty is.

**Example:** Laura's character is badly wounded and trying to pick the lock on a medicine cabinet. Her Larceny rating is 5 and the lockpicks provide a +2 lockpicking bonus, giving her a dice pool of seven. Unfortunately, her current Health is -3, giving her three penalty dice on all her actions and reducing her dice pool to four.

## Time

Different actions take different amounts of time to perform. For example, translating an obscure text might take a day, fixing a car might take an hour, and shooting a gun might take a few seconds. Sometimes getting the job done right is more important than how long it takes. On the other hand, sometimes time is of the essence and a job has to be done quickly. In general, taking extra time provides bonus dice while rushing penalizes the dice pool for an action.

Time	Dice Pool
Ten times slower	+8
Five times slower	+4
Two times slower	+2
Normal speed	0
Two times as fast	-4
Three times as fast	-8

**Example:** Clay's character is trapped in a room with the walls slowly closing in. He must decipher the inscription on the door in order to figure out how to escape before he is crushed. The Gamemaster tells Clay that deciphering the inscription will take five combat turns (30 seconds), but the walls will close in on him in three combat turns (18 seconds). Clay's character will have to work twice as fast if he wants to survive.

Clay's character has Linguistics 6, but suffers a -4 penalty for working twice as fast, giving him a dice pool of two to decipher the inscription. It's not much of a chance, but if he succeeds, he'll escape from the trap just in the nick of time.

## Skill Synergy

If your character has more than one skill applicable to the task being attempted, she receives bonus dice to her dice pool (see Skill Synergy, p. 49).



## Chapter Three

### Teamwork

If your character has a skilled assistant helping him accomplish a task, he receives bonus dice to his dice pool (see Teamwork, p. 50).

### Taking the Average

It is important to keep the story moving and not get bogged down rolling dice unnecessarily. Nothing can slow a game down, or take drama out of a story faster than rolling a handful of dice to determine if a relatively straightforward task is accomplished.

The Ubiquity rules address this problem in a special way: Taking the Average. The probability that a die will come up a success is 50/50, just like flipping a coin. Because of this, it is possible to calculate the average number of successes you will roll for any given task by simply dividing the number of dice in the dice pool by two. The result is the number of successes you will roll on average. While it is possible to roll more or fewer successes than this number, it represents the degree of skill your character exhibits without really putting any effort into performing the task. For example, a dice pool of six will net you three successes on average, meaning your character can handle relatively tough situations without breaking a sweat.

If the average number of successes for a given dice pool is greater than or equal to the difficulty of a task, your character is assumed to have succeeded with minimal effort—all without rolling the dice. This allows the Gamemaster to move the story along without slowing down to see if your character succeeds at relatively simple tasks. As a result, you only roll dice in dramatic situations or when the chance of success is uncertain.

*Example: Alex's character has a Stealth rating of 6. Taking the Average of his dice pool nets him three successes. He won't need to make a Stealth roll for any Stealth task with a difficulty rating of 3 or less.*

### Taking the Average of Odd Numbers

If the number of dice in the dice pool is an odd number, Taking the Average is done a little differently. The dice pool is divided in half, rounded down, and with a "+" sign added to the total to denote the odd die. For example, if your dice pool is seven, Taking the Average nets you "3+" successes. You should roll more than three successes on average, but not always four. In fact, you have about an equal chance of rolling three or four successes on the average. Therefore, each time you Take the Average of the dice pool, roll one die. If it comes up a success, use the higher number. If not, use the lower number. In the example above, if the die rolled is a suc-

cess, Taking the Average yields four successes, or three successes if the die comes up a failure.

Just like with whole numbers, if the average successes equal or exceed the difficulty rating of the task being attempted, your character is assumed to have accomplished the task without rolling the dice.

*Example: Alex's character has a Survival rating of 5. Taking the Average of his dice pool nets him "2+" successes. Each time he Takes the Average of his Survival dice pool, he rolls one die. If it is a success, he nets three successes for the task. If he does not roll a success, he only nets two successes for the current task.*

### Modifiers and Taking the Average

Since Taking the Average is intended to speed up the game, it makes sense to pre-calculate the number of successes for a Skill roll. However, good and bad conditions will add bonus and penalty dice to the roll. In these cases, each bonus die moves the Average up one step. So, if Taking the Average of a dice pool normally gives you "3+" successes and the Gamemaster grants you a bonus die on the task, you net four successes without having to roll any dice. Conversely, if you received a penalty die on the task, you net a flat three successes. By the same logic, if a bonus or penalty die leaves you with a "+", you may roll a die to see if you gain the additional success or not.

For example, if Taking the Average of a dice pool nets you "2+" successes and the Gamemaster grants you two bonus dice to the roll, the first die brings the total to "3" successes and the second bumps it up to "3+" successes. Assuming that there were no more modifiers, you would roll one die to determine if your character scores three or four successes.

*Example: Alex's character has a Survival rating of 5, which gives him an average of "2+" successes. If he were to gain a bonus die on his action, his average would increase to three successes. On the other hand, if he were to get a penalty die to his roll, he would only net two successes. Additional bonus and penalty dice continue to increase or decrease average successes in this manner.*

### Resolving Actions

With a few rare exceptions, characters' actions do not automatically succeed or fail. You do not normally have to worry about whether your character accomplishes ordinary, day-to-day actions like walking across a room, but when there is danger or a chance that the action will fail, there needs to be a method to determine the outcome. Also, the player may need to know the degree of success or failure of his character's action. Did he succeed spectacularly or just squeak by?



## Rolling Dice

The success or failure of an action is determined by rolling dice. The number of dice you roll is equal to the dice pool appropriate for the action, plus or minus any applicable modifiers. The modified dice pool is rolled and each die that rolls an even number is counted as a success. The total number of successes rolled determines the outcome of the character's action. In general, the more successes rolled, the better the outcome of the action.

### Optional: Rolling Large Dice Pools

Anything over ten dice is considered a large dice pool. Rolling more than ten dice can be problematic, as you may not have enough dice or can't roll them all at once. For simplicity, Take the Average of the first ten dice (five successes) and roll the remainder. The average successes are added to the rolled successes to determine the outcome of the action.

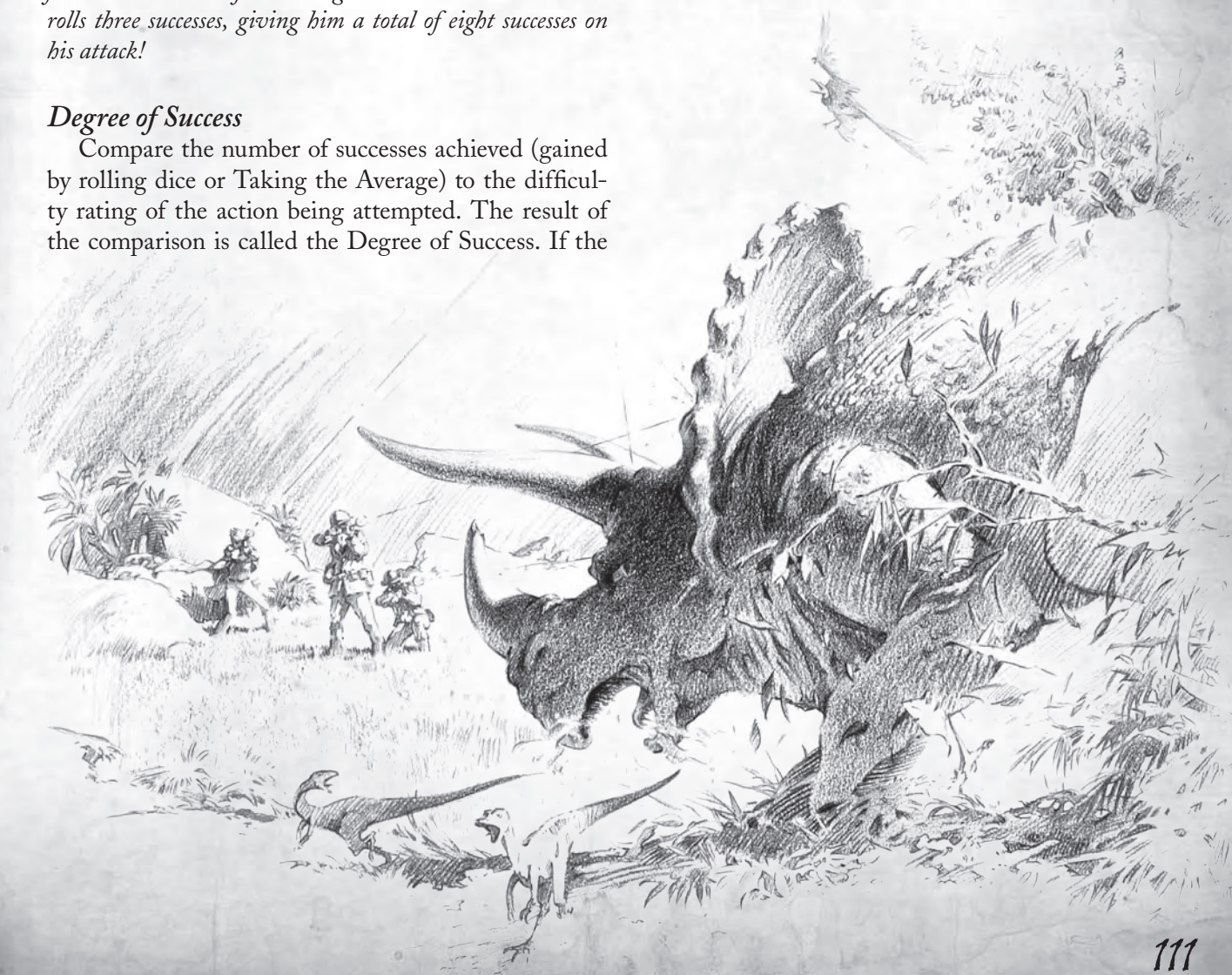
**Example:** Alex's character is shooting his rifle at a *Tyrannosaurus Rex*. His modified dice pool to attack the giant carnivore is fourteen. Instead of rolling all the dice, he only rolls four dice and adds five averaged successes to the total. He rolls three successes, giving him a total of eight successes on his attack!

### Degree of Success

Compare the number of successes achieved (gained by rolling dice or Taking the Average) to the difficulty rating of the action being attempted. The result of the comparison is called the Degree of Success. If the

number of successes equals or exceeds the difficulty, the action is successful and the number of additional successes determine how masterfully the action is accomplished. On the other hand, if the number of successes achieved is less than the difficulty, then the action fails and the difference between the two determines how dismally the action fails.

Successes vs. Difficulty	Degree of Success or Failure
+5 or more	Amazing Success
+4	Exceptional Success
+3	Major Success
+2	Complete Success
+1	Simple Success
0	Minor Success
-1	Simple Failure
-2	Complete Failure
-3	Pitiful Failure
-4	Dreadful Failure
-5 or more	Abysmal Failure





## Chapter Three

The degree of success is usually roleplayed. The character receives more information than she normally would, for example, or her task is completed in less time than usual. Alternately, her failure is even more spectacular, resulting in false information or possibly enough of an error to prevent retrying the action.

In combat, the result is even clearer. Extra successes result in additional damage to the target and insufficient successes result in a clean miss. The difficulty in hitting a target takes into account an opponent's reflexes and toughness. Therefore, not all misses are clean misses. Some attacks hit the target only to slide off armor, catch in clothing, or just not land hard enough to do much damage. This is the case when an attacker rolls exactly the number of successes as his opponent's Defense roll. The blow lands but is only a scratch or a near miss. An attacker must exceed the target's Defense to do actual damage.

See the Combat chapter for details on attacks and damage.

**Example:** Molly's character is trying to fix the airship's engine. The difficulty to fix it is 3. She rolls her modified dice pool and gets two successes—not enough to fix the engine. Since she only rolled one success less than she needed, it is a Simple Failure. The Game Master decides that Molly's character has not been able to figure out what is wrong with the engine yet, and may try again to fix it.

### Critical Failure

If your character fails to roll even one success on any of his dice, he suffers a critical failure. Whenever this occurs, something bad happens to the character: he falls down, jams his weapon, or leaves himself open to attack. In general, the higher the difficulty rating of the task being attempted, the worse it is for the blundering character. Therefore, a critical failure on an easy task is not as bad as one made while attempting a very hard task, which often has a greater degree of risk associated with it.

**Example:** Laura's character is trying to pick the lock on the medicine cabinet. She makes a Larceny roll and gets no successes—a critical failure. Since picking the lock is difficulty 3, Laura's character has made a fairly major blunder. The Gamemaster decides that her character's lock pick gets stuck in the lock and she breaks it trying to get it out. The lock on the medicine cabinet is now jammed. Laura's character cannot try to pick the lock again.

### Trying Again

If your character fails a task, he may be able to try again depending on the circumstances surrounding the

task, and whether the Gamemaster allows it. Whenever your character attempts an action that he initially failed, you suffer -2 penalty dice to your dice pool.

Tasks that can be tried again are normally those where failure doesn't have immediate consequences. For example, throwing a punch, missing, and trying to hit your opponent again does not count as trying again. Each attack is considered a new action. Additionally, extended actions do not count as trying again, as each dice roll is still part of the same action. On the other hand, actions such as climbing a tree or building a shelter will count as trying again if your character fails the first time.

**Example:** Stephen's character failed to find the lost temple using an ancient map. After an hour of fruitless wandering, he tries to read the map again. Finding the temple is difficulty 3, but he suffers two penalty dice on his Survival roll for trying again. Stephen rolls his modified dice pool and gets three successes. At the end of the second hour of wandering, Stephen's character figures out what he did wrong and locates the lost temple.

## Style Points

Arguably the most important resource in the game, Style points may be spent to give your character a boost and allow him to perform extraordinary feats. You can buy bonus dice, reduce damage, and even boost your character's Talents with Style points. They may also be spent to help your character's friends and allies.

Style points are used to reward players for the kind of behavior that makes the game more fun for everyone involved. The more things you do to benefit the game, the more effective your character will be, and the more fun it is for everyone involved.

### Earning Style Points

The Gamemaster may award Style points as he sees fit; however, Style points are normally earned through roleplaying and other activities that generally benefit the game. Style points are usually awarded throughout the game, but may be given out at the end of a game session just like experience points.

You may earn Style points during play for a variety of different reasons:

- Pursuing your character's Motivation: 1 pt.
- Succumbing to your character's Flaw: 1 pt.
- In Character (Roleplaying, humor, etc.): 1 pt.
- Out of Character (Game report, diary, etc.): 1-3 pts.
- Miscellaneous (Hosting the game, bringing treats, etc.): 1 pt.



There is no limit to the number of Style points you can earn during play; however, to keep it from getting out of hand, the Gamemasters may limit you to earning five Style points per game session.

**Note:** Style points may be tracked on paper, just like a character's Health and experience points. Because style tends to come and go much more frequently than any other trait, some players will prefer to track Style points with poker chips or some other physical object.

### Spending Style Points

Style points may be spent for a variety of benefits.

**Bonus dice:** The most common use of Style points is purchasing bonus dice for a particular action. You receive one bonus die for every Style point spent. These bonus dice are only good for a single dice roll, after which they are gone. Additional Style points have to be spent to get bonus dice on another roll. Bonus dice may also be purchased to improve the average of a dice pool (see *Taking the Average*, above). You may not buy more than ten bonus dice on any one action.

**Example:** Clay's character is trapped in a room and the walls are closing in. He must quickly decipher an inscription on the door in order to get out alive. His modified Linguistics dice pool is two. That doesn't give him much of a chance, so he decides to buy some bonus dice. Clay spends four Style points to get four bonus dice, bringing his dice pool to decipher the inscription to six.

*Taking the Average of his dice pool nets Clay three successes, which is equal to the difficulty rating of the task. Clay's character succeeds in deciphering the inscription without rolling any dice. He escapes from the trap just in the nick of time!*

**Boosting Talents:** Talents may be temporarily boosted with Style points. Your character's Talent is improved by one level for every two Style points spent. The improvement lasts for duration of an entire combat or an entire scene if it is a non-combat Talent. After this time, the Talent reverts back to its normal level.

Your character must have a Talent in order to boost it. You cannot boost a unique Talent or improve a standard Talent beyond its maximum level.

**Example:** Alex's character is in deep trouble. He wandered off alone and now there's a hungry Tyrannosaurus Rex bearing down on him. If he is going to survive, he has to make every shot count by hitting the beast where it hurts. Called shots to hit vital areas penalize the attacker's dice pool, but Alex's character has the Accuracy Talent, which reduces this penalty. Alex wants to reduce this penalty as much as possible, so he decides to boost his Talent. He spends a whopping six Style points to boost his Accuracy to its maximum level, which allows him to ignore up to -8 called shot

*penalties for the duration of the combat. If he can do enough damage to the Tyrannosaurus before it gets to him, he just might have a chance.*

**Damage Reduction:** Damage inflicted on your character may be reduced with Style points. Your character takes one less point of damage for every two Style points spent. This represents your character's special status as a player character. Even an absent-minded professor can blunder through combat with nary a scratch. Major villains may also have Style points, making them just as hard to kill as player characters.

Style points may only be spent to reduce damage when it is inflicted. If the Gamemaster allows it, however, you may spend Style points to reduce damage later, representing a less severe wound or faster healing ability.

**Example:** Laura's character shot and killed the velociraptor that was attacking her. Unfortunately, its hunting partner attacked her from behind while she was preoccupied. It landed a lucky blow and did seven points of lethal damage to her. This is more than enough to incapacitate her, so she decides to spend some Style points to reduce the damage. Laura spends all four of her Style points to reduce the damage by two points. She takes five points of lethal damage, which is enough to stun her but not knock her out. It also reduces her Health to 0. She's not dying yet, but if she takes any more damage she's going to be in trouble.

**Other:** The Gamemaster may also allow you to spend Style points for other benefits, such as altering a plot point or making a seemingly random event turn out in your character's favor.

**Note:** Spending Style points is considered a reflexive action.

### Sharing Style Points

Style points always belong to the player character that earned them. They may never be given away or traded to another character. However, you may spend Style points on behalf of another character, such as an Ally or Follower.

### Style Point Options

Gamemasters may alter the value of Style points to suit the style of game they wish to run:

- **Legendary**—Two bonus dice per Style point
- **High Adventure**—No spending cap
- **Pulp Adventure**—One bonus die per Style point
- **Low Adventure**—One bonus die per two Style points
- **Gritty Realism**—No Style points

In addition, Gamemasters may also wish to limit the sharing of Style points with other characters:

- **Shared**—One bonus die per Style point
- **Limited**—One bonus die per two Style points
- **Individual**—Characters cannot share Style points



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Your character must do something to explain the expenditure, such as say a few words of encouragement or give the recipient helping hand. A shove or shouted warning are often enough to give another character some bonus dice on her Defense roll, for example.

**Example:** Stephen's character is trying to protect a hapless scientist from the German soldiers attempting to kidnap him. The scientist has Defense 4 and is being attacked by a German soldier with a club. He doesn't think the scientist stands much of a chance, so he decides to help him out. Stephen declares that his character is shoving the scientist out of the way and spends two Style points to give him two bonus dice on his Defense roll. As a result, the soldier's attack misses. Stephen's character steps in front of the scientist and tells him to stay out of the way.

### Chance Dice

What do you do if you need more dice but you've run out of Style points? Desperate times call for desperate measures. This is where chance dice come into play.

When the odds are against you, you have to take a bigger risk in order to succeed. If you want some extra dice to roll, you can always ask the Gamemaster for chance dice. You may do this at any time, not just when you're out of Style points. In fact, you can spend Style points and get chance dice on the same roll.

Here is how it works: For each two bonus dice you receive, the difficulty rating of your character's task is increased by one point. You may gain up to ten bonus dice in this manner, which also increases the difficulty rating of the task by up to five points.

Chance dice are added to your dice pool just like normal bonus dice. While you get to roll more dice, you also need to roll more successes in order to succeed. Essentially, you're gambling that you'll roll more successes than you added to the difficulty rating. Increasing the difficulty rating also increases the severity of the blunder your character makes if you fail to roll enough successes. It's a risky business, but you wouldn't do it unless you were desperate, right?

**Note:** Make sure you have enough dice in your dice pool to cover the number of successes you'll need in order for your character to succeed in his task. In general, you will want more dice in your dice pool than the difficulty rating of the action. You may not Take the Average when using chance dice.

**Example:** Molly's character is trying to crash land the airship she is flying. She is a trained pilot,

but the airship has taken serious damage. She has Pilot 4, but suffers a -4 penalty to her dice pool because of the damage to the airship. This gives her a modified dice pool of zero to crash land the airship. To make matters worse, Molly's character is out of Style points. The airship is going to crash and burn unless she does something drastic!

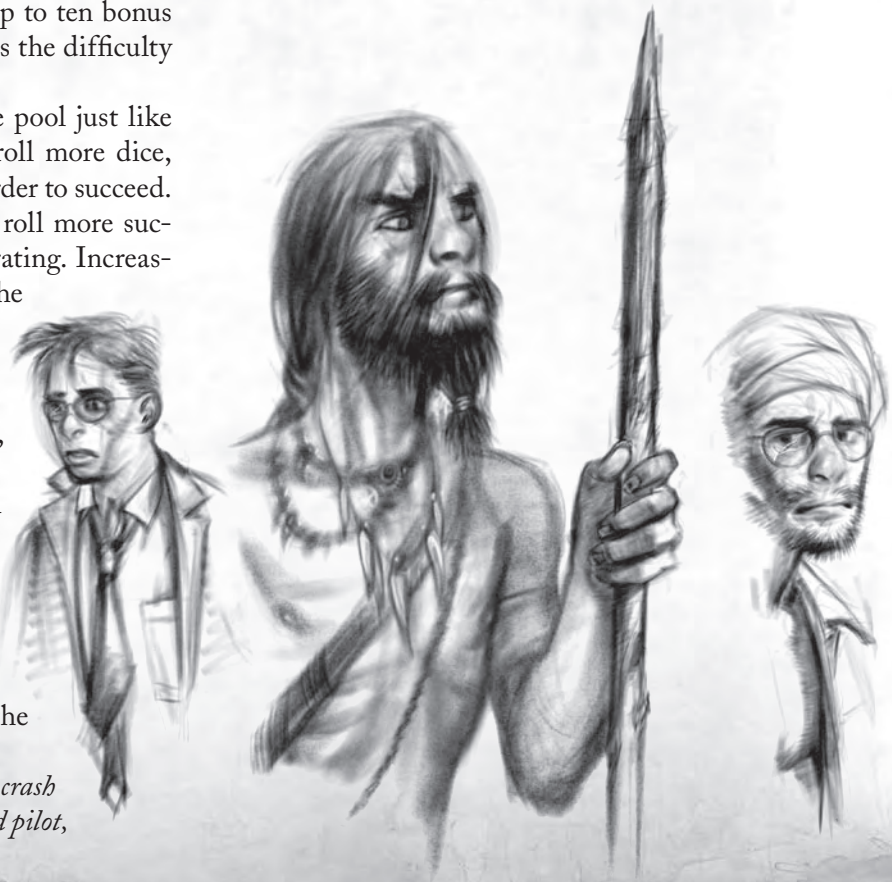
Molly asks the Gamemaster for six chance dice, which increases the difficulty rating of landing the airship. Normally, landing an airship is difficulty 2, but it becomes difficulty 5 because of the chance dice. This gives her a slim margin of success, but at least she has a chance!

Molly rolls and gets four successes, which is not enough, but is not as bad as it could be. Molly's character ends up with a simple failure instead of something much worse. The Gamemaster decides that the airship crashes, but it is still intact and may be repaired. The crew are battered and bruised, but no one is dead, thanks to Molly's valiant attempt to land the ship.

### Experience Points

Just like real people, characters learn and grown over time: honing their skills, developing their talents, and improving their natural abilities.

Most of what characters learn, however, is beyond the scope of the game. People learn from their mistakes, but learning not to make mistakes in the first place requires common sense, which is not a skill that





can be bought. Growing older and wiser should be roleplayed, not purchased.

In game terms, characters change in more tangible ways. During play, characters earn experience points that represent all the things they learn over time. Players spend experience points to improve their character's Attributes, Skills, and Talents—making their character more powerful.

## Gaining Experience Points

The Gamemaster awards experience points to each character at the end of a game session. Players write down how many experience points their character has earned and may spend them between game sessions to improve their character's skills and abilities.

The Gamemaster may award characters between one and five experience points per game session. On average, characters should earn about three experience points per game session. Characters may earn more experience points for highly dramatic or eventful games sessions. No matter what, characters should always earn at least one experience point. Even the most dismal failure can be a learning experience.

Characters earn experience points in a variety of ways:

- **Automatic:** Characters gain one experience point just for being a part of a game session.
- **Danger:** Characters gain one experience point whenever they face grave danger and manage to survive.
- **Roleplaying:** Characters gain one experience point whenever the players portray them exceptionally well.
- **Success:** Characters gain one experience point whenever they further the plot or make progress toward their goal.
- **Wisdom:** Characters gain one experience point whenever they learn something critically important.

The Gamemaster may decide to award extra experience points to the characters at the end of a story. Only a couple of extra points should be awarded this way, usually as a bonus for a job well done.

## Spending Experience Points

Experience points may be spent to improve your character's Attributes, Skills, and Talents. Resources are normally gained or lost through roleplaying, but may be purchased with experience points, subject to Gamemaster approval.

Players should endeavor to spend experience points on traits that reflect what their character has learned during the campaign. As always, the Gamemaster is the final authority on how and where experience points are spent, and may ask for justification for any experience point expenditure.

Experience points may be spent in the following manner:

Trait	Experience Point Cost
Primary Attribute	New Attribute Level x 5 points
Skill	New Skill Level x 2 points
Skill Specialization	3 points
Talent	15 points
Resource	15 points

**Note:** No trait may be raised by more than one point at a time. Significant changes in skills and abilities take time and effort to accomplish, and this rule reflects that limitation.

*Example:* Molly's character has been saving experience points for many game sessions. Her character has been taking a lot of damage, so she raises her Body score from 2 to 3, costing her 15 experience (the new level is 3, multiplied by 5 to make the total cost).

## Awarding Experience Points

The Gamemaster should be careful when awarding experience points. It can be difficult to strike the right balance between giving out too much experience and not enough. The Gamemaster can unbalance the game by giving away too many and, conversely, can cause just as many problems by giving away too few. In practice, awarding three experience points (give or take a point) per game session sets a good pace for character advancement.

In addition, the Gamemaster is encouraged to give the same amount of experience points to each character. Giving more experience to only some of the characters may look like playing favorites, and runs the risk of unbalancing the game.

Characters who put forth extra effort and get involved with the story do not go unrewarded, however. Style points are there to compensate individual player characters without upsetting game balance or the speed of character advancement.



## ⊕ CHAPTER 4: COMBAT



*Hollow Earth Expedition* is a game about exploration in a savage world, where characters will come face to face with fierce predators and dangerous foes alike. As such, combat is virtually guaranteed to occur, and the rules below are designed to be quick and easy while still being fun and cinematic.

### Combat Overview

#### *Step One: Roll Initiative (p. 117)*

Roll Initiative to determine when your character's actions are resolved during the combat turn. The character with the most successes takes the first action and the character with the fewest successes goes last.

#### *Step Two: Combat Actions (p. 117)*

Your character may attack, defend, and move each turn. Declare your character's Attack action and determine the Skill or Attribute roll required to resolve it. Defense actions are reflexive and do not need to be declared. Move actions must be declared but do not require a dice roll to resolve.

#### *Step Three: Attack (p. 122)*

The first attacker calculates his attack rating, including appropriate modifiers, then rolls his modified dice pool.

#### *Step Four: Defense (p. 125)*

The defender calculates his Defense rating, including any appropriate modifiers. She rolls her modified dice pool and compares the number of successes rolled to her opponent's attack roll.

#### *Step Five: Damage (p. 128)*

If the attacker rolls more successes than his opponent, his attack is successful. Each extra success inflicts one point of damage. If the attacker rolls fewer successes than the defender, his attack missed. If both characters roll the same number of successes, the attacker narrowly misses or strikes the defender without enough force to do any damage.

#### *Step Six: Health (p. 130)*

If the attack inflicts damage, mark off the appropriate number of Health levels and resolve any additional damage effects, such as stun or knockback. If your character is reduced to negative Health, he falls unconscious. If he is reduced to -5 Health, he dies. After damage is resolved, return to step three and go on to the next character in the Initiative order.

### Combat Turns

Combat can be very confusing. There is often a lot going on and keeping everything straight can be difficult, especially when there are many different characters involved. To simplify things, combat is divided



into six-second combat turns, making it easier for the Gamemaster to keep track of all the characters and resolve all their actions in order.

Each combat starts with an Initiative phase that determines when each character acts during the turn. This ensures that each character has a chance to attempt to accomplish his or her chosen task during the combat turn.

## Initiative

At the beginning of combat, every character involved rolls their Initiative rating to determine when they get to act in each combat turn. The number of successes rolled determines the order of Initiative, with the character who scored the most successes taking the first action and the character with the fewest successes going last. In the case of a tie, the character with the highest Initiative rating goes first. If two characters have the same Initiative rating, the character with the highest Dexterity rating goes first. If there is still a tie, then both characters actions are resolved at the same time. Once a character's Initiative has been determined, it remains the same for the duration of the entire combat, but there are ways to alter it.

### Holding Actions

Sometimes a character will want to hold her action until another character does something in particular. For example, she may want to hold her attack until her opponent goes for his gun or shows his head from around a corner. In this case, the held action is resolved before the action that triggered it. Usually, only a character with a higher Initiative can hold an action, but even a character with a low Initiative can hold her action. In this case, she gives up her action in the current turn in order to trigger an action in a later turn. This is one of the few ways a slower character can improve her Initiative, even if only temporarily.

### Surprise

Occasionally, a character may be caught unawares by an attack. Usually this is due to an ambush or an unforeseen accident. When a character is caught by surprise he does not get to act in the first turn of combat. He still rolls Initiative, however, and may take reflexive actions and defend himself normally.

## Combat Actions

There are three different types of actions your character can take in combat: attack, defense, and move

## Continuous Combat

Instead of running combat in a round-robin style, the Gamemaster may opt to run combat in the more fluid, continuous combat fashion. In this option, combat is broken into phases, with ten phases equaling one combat turn. A character's actions occur at a frequency called the Initiative Rate, which is determined by adding action speed factors and subtracting the number of successes on the character's initiative roll.

**Initiative Rate = 10 - (Initiative pool successes) + (Action Speed Factor)**

Speed Factor	Speed Modifier
Weapon speed is "F" (fast)	-1
Weapon speed is "A" (average)	0
Weapon speed is "S" (slow)	+1
Weapon rate of fire = 1/2	+10
Weapon rate of fire = 1/3	+20
Non-attack maneuver	+0
Brawl Attack	-1

The final result represents the phase during which the character's action is resolved. Subsequent actions are calculated in the same way, and then added to the previous total for an ongoing count.

For example, if you roll two successes on Initiative and your character is attacking with a dagger (-1 weapon speed), she attacks on phase 7. She would attack again on phase 14, 21, and so on. If, after a third attack, she wants to switch to a pistol, she would need to spend one round drawing the weapon (at Initiative rate = 10 + 0), and would thus complete her draw on round 31. Thereafter, she might use the pistol every 8 phases (Initiative rate = 10 - 2)

The Gamemaster would count up from one, with each character responsible for chiming in when the count reaches one of her actions. Using the continuous combat option makes using weaker, faster weapons more attractive because a character with a high initiative and a fast weapon may get to strike more frequently than an opponent using something slower.

Effects which take one combat turn (such as suffering from continuous poison damage or needing to roll to stabilize while dying) occur every ten phases. For example, a character that was stunned on phase 56 will get to attack again on phase 66.

actions. Your character may perform one of each type of action every combat turn without penalty. For example, your character can move, attack, and defend all in the same combat turn.

Your character doesn't have to perform all three types of combat actions if he doesn't want to; however, giving up one action doesn't allow him to perform



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two of another type. If he wants to give up his defense action in order to make two attack actions in the same combat turn, he would have to perform the total attack maneuver (see Total Attack, p. 121).

Each type of combat action is described below.

### *Attack Action*

Attack actions are used to attempt to hurt an opponent. Depending on the type of weapon being used, the most common attack actions are Melee, Brawl, and Ranged attack. Each Attack action uses a different combat Skill roll to resolve the action (see Attack, p. 122).

In addition to attacking an opponent, your character may also use his Attack action to perform a particular combat maneuver (see below).

### *Defense Action*

Defense actions are a special type of reflexive action that are used to prevent damage from an attack. Your character's Defense rating represents her ability to both evade attacks and resist damage. Your character does not have to bother thinking about defending herself. She does it instinctively. As a result, you do not have to worry about taking a Defense action. You simply make a Defense roll in response to an opponent's attack action every time your character is attacked.

### *Move Action*

A Move action allows a character to move a certain distance based on his Move rating. Your character may perform a Move action in addition to attacking and defending himself. You do not have to roll any dice to resolve a Move action; your character simply moves the appropriate distance based on his Move rating.

## *Combat Maneuvers*

In lieu of taking a standard Attack action, your character can perform a variety of different combat maneuvers. Combat maneuvers may provide bonuses and penalties to attack opponents or allow your character to do other useful things.

### *Aim*

Aiming improves your character's accuracy and damage with a ranged weapon. Automatic weapons, however, cannot be aimed effectively because of their recoil.

For each full turn that your character spends aiming at her target, you gain a +2 aim bonus on your attack

roll, up to a maximum +4 aim bonus.

**Special:** Aiming takes your character's full attention and she cannot move or actively defend herself. If she is attacked, you only get to roll your character's Passive Defense rating (plus any applicable defense modifiers) for her Defense roll. Your character may continue aiming as long as she doesn't take any damage. Alternately, your character may choose to stop aiming when attacked (and forfeit her accumulated aim bonus) to defend herself using her full Defense rating.

### *Autofire*

Most firearms can only be fired accurately once or twice per combat turn. Automatic weapons, on the other hand, are capable of firing a steady stream of bullets at an opponent, and what they lack in accuracy, they more than make up for in firepower.

When firing an automatic weapon, your character may make either a burst fire, full autofire, or strafing attack.

**Burst Fire:** Your character fires three bullets at a single target and gains a +1 autofire bonus to his attack roll.

**Full Autofire:** Your character fires twenty or more bullets at a single target and gains a +3 autofire bonus to his attack roll.

**Strafing:** Your character may strafe his fire across multiple targets when making a full autofire attack, but suffers a -2 penalty for each five-foot distance between targets. For example, if your character makes a full autofire attack at two targets standing ten feet apart, he receives a +3 bonus for the full autofire attack and a -4 penalty for the distance between the targets. The end result is a single autofire attack against both opponents with a -1 penalty on the attack roll.

**Special:** When making a full autofire or strafing attack, your character cannot actively defend himself. If he is attacked, you only get to roll your character's Passive Defense rating (plus any applicable defense modifiers) for his Defense roll.

### *Block*

Instead of making an attack, your character attempts to block all Brawl attacks made against her during the turn. If she is attacked, make an opposed Brawl roll against her opponent, including any appropriate Defense modifiers. If you roll more successes than her opponent, the blow is blocked and does no damage. If he rolls more successes than you, your character takes damage equal to the number of extra successes he rolled.

Normally, only Brawl attacks may be blocked. If



your character wants to block a Melee attack she suffers a -2 penalty on the attempt.

**Special:** Because your character is actively trying to block Brawl attacks, her normal Defense rating does not apply. She retains her normal Defense rating against other types of attacks, however.

## Called Shot

Sometimes your character will want to strike a specific target location, such as an object held in an opponent's hand, or a weak spot. Conversely, your character may want to avoid hitting something—such as a friend grappling with her opponent. Both scenarios require a called shot, and the attack roll suffers a number of penalty dice equal to the opponent's Defense rating or the Size rating of the object being attacked.

**Vital Area:** If your character really wants to hurt his opponent, he can make a called shot to hit a vital area. He suffers a penalty on his attack roll equal to his opponent's full Defense rating (including armor and other Defense modifiers) but successes rolled automatically inflict damage on the target. If your modified dice pool is 0 or less, your character's attack automatically misses.

**Held Object:** If your character wants to hit a hand-held object, you suffer a penalty equal to the object's Size rating (see Attacking Objects, p. 137). If the person holding the item is trying to prevent it from being struck, you use the base Defense rating of the person holding it or the object's Defense rating (whichever is greater). Any successes in excess of the Defense roll do damage as normal.

**Shooting into Combat:** If your character attempts to shoot around a friend to hit an opponent, he makes a called shot with a penalty equal to the amount of cover his target has (see Cover, p. 125). Obviously, a critical failure on this roll would be disastrous for your character's friend.

**Specific Location:** If your character wants to hit a specific target location on an opponent, refer to the following chart:

Target Area	Attack Modifier
Torso	-1
Limb	-2
Hand	-4
Head	-4
Eye	-8

The result of hitting a specific location is up to the Gamemaster to interpret based on the specific circumstances, but it can be anything from forcing someone to drop a weapon to blinding your opponent.

## Cautious Attack

Your character may elect to make a cautious attack, focusing more on his defense than on harming his opponent. Your character suffers a -4 penalty on his attack roll but gains a +2 bonus on his Defense roll for the remainder of the round.

## Charge

When charging an opponent, your character makes a reckless, headlong assault using either a Brawl or Melee attack. Charging grants a +2 charge bonus to your attack roll. Your character may move up to her normal move before making the attack, but cannot move again afterward.

**Shove:** Instead of making a standard charge attack, your character may attempt to shove her opponent rather than damage him. In this case, she makes a touch attack (see Touch Attacks, p. 126) against her opponent. If successful, she does no damage. Instead, compare her opponent's Strength rating with the amount of damage your character would have done. If you rolled more damage than his Strength rating, she moves him back five feet for each success in excess of his Strength rating.

If the damage you rolled is less than or equal to your opponent's Strength rating, your character's shove attempt failed and she ends her movement standing directly in front of him.

**Special:** When making a charge attack, your character cannot actively defend herself. If she is attacked, you only get to roll your character's Passive Defense rating (plus any applicable defense modifiers) for her Defense roll.

## Disarm

Your character may attempt to disarm his opponent by knocking his weapon from his hand with a melee weapon, or by stealing his weapon using a hand-to-hand attack.

Make an opposed Melee (or Brawl) roll against the opponent, but you suffer a -2 penalty for striking at his weapon. In addition, your opponent receives a +2 bonus if he is holding his weapon with both hands. If you roll less than or equal to the number of successes rolled by the opponent, your character fails to disarm him. If you roll more successes than the opponent, your character knocks the weapon from his grasp, flinging it five feet away per extra success rolled. Or, if your character was attempting to steal the weapon with a Brawl attack, he now has the weapon.



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### Dodge

Instead of making an attack, your character attempts to dodge all ranged attacks made against her during the turn. If she is attacked, make an opposed Athletics roll versus her opponent's ranged attack roll, including any appropriate Defense modifiers. If you roll more successes than him, the shot is dodged and does no damage. If he rolls more successes than you, your character takes damage equal to the number of extra successes he rolled.

**Special:** Because your character is actively trying to evade ranged attacks, her normal Defense rating does not apply. She retains her normal Defense rating against other types of attacks, however.

**Note:** if your character has the Acrobatics Skill, she may use that Skill in place of Athletics when dodging ranged attacks.

### Grapple

Your character attempts to immobilize his opponent without harming her. Make a Brawl touch attack (see Touch Attacks, p. 126) with a penalty equal to the Size rating of his opponent. If successful, you do no damage. Instead, compare the opponent's Strength rating with the amount of damage your character would have done. If the damage you rolled is less than or equal to your opponent's Strength rating, your character's grapple attempt fails.

If you roll more damage than her Strength rating, your character grabs her. On her next turn, the grappled character cannot attack and must succeed in an opposed Strength roll in order to free herself.





If you roll more damage than twice the opponent's Strength rating, your character pins her, and she only gets to use her Passive Defense rating for Defense rolls.

## Parry

Instead of making an attack, your character attempts to parry all Melee attacks made against him. He must have a shield or be holding an appropriate weapon in order to perform this maneuver. If he is attacked, make an opposed Melee roll against his opponent, including any shield or weapon bonuses, and any appropriate Defense modifiers. If you roll more successes than she does, the strike is parried and does no damage. If she rolls more successes than you, your character takes damage equal to the number of extra successes she rolled.

Normally, only Melee attacks may be parried. If your character wishes to parry a Brawl attack, he may do so, and will inflict damage on his attacker if you roll more successes on your Defense roll.

**Special:** Because your character is actively trying to parry Melee attacks, his normal Defense rating does not apply. Your character retains his normal Defense rating against other types of attacks, however.

## Ready Weapon

Your character draws a weapon and readies it for combat. Most weapons only take a single action to ready, but some weapons may take longer to ready based on how complicated they are and how they are being carried.

## Reload Weapon

Your character reloads a firearm or similar ranged weapon by replacing the clip or magazine with a fresh one. Primitive and archaic weapons (e.g., bows and crossbows) already have their reload time factored into their rate of fire and do not have to be reloaded. If reloading a weapon that has a cylinder or internal magazine, your character may insert a number of rounds equal to his Dexterity rating each time he performs this maneuver.

## Run

Instead of making an attack, your character doubles her Move rating to determine the distance she runs during the combat turn. She may defend herself normally, but is unable to perform any other actions while running.

## Sprint

Instead of making an attack, your character quadruples his Move rating to determine the distance he sprints during the combat turn. He may keep up this speed for a number of turns equal to his Body rating. After this time, he may exert himself—and suffer a nonlethal wound—to continue to sprint for another turn. If he wishes, he may continue sprinting until he collapses from exhaustion. After your character stops sprinting, he must rest for a number of turns equal to his Body rating before he can sprint again.

## Stand Up

Falling down is easy; it's getting up that is hard. Your character may fall prone as a reflexive action, but standing up requires him to give up an attack action. Your character may move and defend normally after getting to his feet.

## Throw

Your character attempts to throw her opponent to the ground with a Brawl attack. Make a Brawl touch attack against the opponent (see Touch Attacks, p. 126). Your character suffers a penalty equal to the Size rating of her opponent. If successful, your character does no damage. Instead, compare the opponent's Strength rating with the amount of damage your character would have done. If the damage you rolled is less than or equal to the opponent's Strength rating, your character fails to throw her opponent.

If you rolled more damage than his Strength rating, your character throws him five feet per success in excess of his Strength rating. If this causes the opponent to strike an object and he cannot move further, he suffers a point of nonlethal damage for each five feet he still needs to move. Additional damage may be done depending on where the opponent lands.

## Total Attack

When all that matters is taking an opponent down, your character may go entirely on the offensive—disregarding her own safety—and gain a +2 bonus to her attack roll.

Instead of making a standard total attack, your character may make two attacks in the same combat turn.

**Dual Wield:** Your character may make two attacks, using one weapon in each hand. She may make two Melee attacks, two Ranged attacks, or one of each. She doesn't even have to attack the same target. However, attacking with two weapons is difficult: you give up the normal total attack bonus and suffer a -4 penalty to attack with the weapon in her primary hand and a -6 penalty to attack with the weapon in her off-hand.



## Total Defense

In dire circumstances, your character may focus entirely on her defense: blocking blows, parrying strikes, and dodging ranged attacks all at the same time. By giving up her attack action, your character gains a +4 bonus to her Defense rating until his next turn.

## Trip

Your character attempts to trip her opponent and knock him down.

Make a Brawl touch attack against the opponent (see Touch Attacks, p. 126). Your character suffers a -2 penalty to her trip attack if her opponent has four or more legs. If successful, your character does no damage. Instead, compare the opponent's Strength rating with the

amount of damage your character would have done. If you rolled more damage than his Strength rating, your character knocks him down. If the damage you rolled is less than or equal to your opponent's Strength rating, your character fails to knock her opponent down.

## Use Item

Instead of making an attack, your character may use an item or operate a simple piece of machinery. He may press buttons, pull levers, or other similar tasks as long as it doesn't require a Skill roll to accomplish.

## Use Skill

Instead of making an attack, your character performs a Skill in combat, such as Diplomacy, Medicine, or Photography.

## Attack

An attack represents a character's ability to strike and damage her opponent. It not only determines if your character hits her opponent, but more importantly, how much damage she does to him. Because an attack covers both the power and accuracy of a blow, it is resolved with a single dice roll.

## Attack Rating

A character's attack rating represents how powerful and damaging the attack is. Very powerful but inaccurate attacks and weaker but highly accurate attacks may end up with the same attack ratings. One attack uses power to blow through an opponent's defenses, while

**Flurry:** Your character attacks the same target twice, in quick succession, using either a melee weapon or her bare hands. You give up the normal total attack bonus and suffer a -4 penalty to both attacks when making a flurry attack.

**Rapid Fire:** Your character attacks the same target twice, in quick succession, with a ranged weapon capable of attacking more than once in the same round. You give up the normal total attack bonus and suffer a -4 penalty to both attacks when making a rapid fire attack.

**Special:** When making a total attack, your character cannot actively defend herself. If she is attacked, you only get to roll your character's Passive Defense rating (plus any applicable defense modifiers) for her Defense roll.



the other targets his weak spots—both are equally damaging to the opponent.

## Combat Skills

Your character's base attack rating is equal to his appropriate combat Skill rating:

**Ranged Attack:** Archery, Athletics, Firearms, or Gunnery rating

**Brawl Attack:** Brawl rating

**Melee Attack:** Melee rating

## Attack Modifiers

There are numerous factors that can modify your character's attack rating. The weapon being used, the size and range to the target, visibility conditions, and any wound penalties your character has may all affect the outcome of an attack.

### Weapon

Each weapon has a damage rating depending on how powerful and accurate it is. Typically, the larger the weapon, the more bonus dice it adds to the attack rating. Because this is an abstract concept, however, powerful but awkward weapons may do just as much

damage as lighter, more accurate weapons. Weapons also determine the type of damage being inflicted, either lethal or nonlethal.

### Size

Even though the Hollow Earth is filled with giant, rampaging beasts, human-sized characters are the norm. Therefore, everything in *HEX* is scaled for attacking and defending against Size 0 creatures. Average-sized humans receive no Size modifier to their attack rating, but larger and smaller creatures do. Larger creatures receive a penalty to their attack rating, representing how hard it is for them to hit humans. Smaller creatures receive a bonus to their attack rating, representing how easy it is for them to hit a relatively larger target.

Size	Attack Modifier
8	-8
4	-4
2	-2
1	-1
0	0
-1	+1
-2	+2
-4	+4
-8	+8

**Note:** Human-sized characters do not have any modifiers to attack larger or smaller creatures, as the difficulty of being hit by a Size 0 attacker is already factored into their Defense rating (see Defense, p. 125)

### Range

When attacking with a ranged weapon, your character's distance from her target modifies her attack rating. However, different weapons have different ranges where they are most effective. You can hit a distant target more accurately with a rifle than with a thrown spear, for example. The distance that a weapon may be used to attack a target is its effective range. Attacking a target farther than this suffers a penalty to the attack rating.

Range	Distance	Modifier
Point Blank	Less than 5 feet	*
Short	Weapon Range	0
Medium	Weapon Range x2	-2
Long	Weapon Range x4	-4
Extreme	More than Weapon Range x4	-8

\* Pistols provide an additional bonus die when used at point blank range. Rifles are designed for long distance and suffer a penalty die to use them up close. Shotguns have no modifier at point blank range as their damage rating already takes their effective range into account.

## Large and Small Character Combat

Everything in *HEX* is scaled around human-sized characters to speed up play. But what happens when larger or smaller creatures attack each other?

When a larger and a smaller creature come to blows, there is no change to their attack ratings or Defense ratings—both creatures have already been scaled to Size 0 which puts them on a level playing field. When both creatures are larger or smaller, however, it's time for a few modifiers.

When two large creatures attack each other, they both receive bonus dice to their attack and Defense ratings equal to the Size of the smaller creature. For example, if a T. Rex (Size 4) is attacking a Triceratops (Size 2), both creatures receive two bonus dice to their attack and Defense ratings. If both creatures were the same size, they'd both receive bonus dice equal to their Size rating.

When two small creatures attack each other, they both receive penalty dice to their attack and Defense ratings equal to the Size of the larger creature. For example, a sled dog (Size -1) is attacking the monkey (Size -2) trying to steal his food. Both creatures suffer a penalty die to their attack and Defense ratings. If both creatures were the same size, they'd both suffer penalty dice equal to their Size rating.



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### Visibility

It's hard to attack effectively when unable to see clearly. Very dim light, or very bright light shining directly in your character's eyes, can modify his attack rating.

Visibility	Example	Modifier
Blinding light	Direct sunlight	-8
Bright light	Spotlight	-4
Glare	Reflected sunlight	-2
Well-lit	Diffused light	0
Dim light	Candle or torchlight	-2
Near darkness	Moonless night	-4
Complete darkness	Underground cave	-8

### Wound Penalties

When your character is seriously wounded, he suffers wound penalties to his attack rating equal to his negative Health rating. In addition, his ability to act is limited (see Health, p. 130).

### Attack Roll

The dice pool for your attack roll is equal to your character's attack rating plus or minus any circumstantial modifiers. If your modified dice pool is 0 or less, your character's attack automatically misses.

Roll your modified dice pool and compare the number of successes to the opponent's Defense roll. If you roll more successes than the opponent, your character has damaged him. Each extra success inflicts one point





of damage and may have additional effects (see Damage, p. 128).

If you roll fewer successes than the opponent, your character's attack is a clean miss. If you both roll the same number of successes, your character's attack narrowly misses or strikes his target without enough force to do any damage. This is similar to the close calls in television and movies where bullets and knives get caught in clothing, are barely deflected by armor, or only graze a character.

## Defense

While an attack roll represents a character's ability to strike her opponent, her Defense rating represents her ability to both evade an attack and soak up any damage. Because Defense covers both a character's agility and toughness, it is resolved with a single dice roll.

## Defense Rating

A character's Defense rating represents how hard he is to hit and how resistant he is to damage. Therefore, frail but agile characters and slow but tough characters may have the same Defense rating. One defender relies on his natural toughness to shrug off blows while the other relies on not getting hit in the first place. Both characters are equally resistant to damage; however, there are situations that require a character to use only one aspect of his Defense rating.

Your character's Defense rating is calculated as follows:

**Defense** = Passive Defense + Active Defense – Size

**Passive Defense** = Body rating

**Active Defense** = Dexterity rating

Your character may be limited to using only his Active or Passive Defense ratings against certain attacks, such as Touch Attacks and Area of Effect attacks (see below).

## Defense Modifiers

Several factors can modify your character's Defense rating. Your character's Size and armor (if any) are the most common modifiers. Cover, wound penalties, and even the number of attackers your character faces also affect how effective his defense is.

### Size

In *HEX*, combat is scaled around human-sized characters. Average-sized characters receive no modifier to

their Defense, but larger and smaller ones do. Larger opponents (like most dinosaurs) are easier to hit, while smaller creatures are harder to strike. Consequently, larger creatures suffer a penalty to their Defense rating while smaller creatures receive a bonus. To make up for this, larger and smaller creatures also receive a modifier to their Health rating. Although larger creatures may be easier to hit, they are also harder to kill. Conversely, smaller creatures may be harder to hit, but they are also easier to kill because they can't take as much damage.

Size	Defense Modifier
8	-8
4	-4
2	-2
1	-1
0	0
-1	+1
-2	+2
-4	+4
-8	+8

### Armor

Armor, whether natural or worn as clothing, deflects incoming attacks and prevents blows from doing as much damage as they would without the protection. To represent this, bonus dice from shields and armor are applied to a character's Defense rating. Armor is heavy and restrictive, though, and may also impose penalties on the character wearing it. See the Equipment chapter for specific stats on shields and armor.

### Cover

Taking cover is an excellent way to defend against attacks, especially against ranged attacks. The more cover your character has, the harder it is for attacks to harm her. In game terms, cover provides a bonus to your Defense rating. The more cover your character has, the greater the bonus you receive. Be aware that missed attacks are likely to hit the object being used as cover, so think twice before hiding behind that fuel truck.

Cover	Modifier
Full cover	+8
Major cover	+4
Half cover	+2
Partial cover	+1
No cover	0

**Partial cover:** Most of your character is visible to the opponent, such as when hiding behind a small box.

**Half-cover:** Half of your character is visible to the opponent, such as when firing from behind a tree.

**Major cover:** Very little of your character is visible to the opponent, such as when peering around a corner.



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**Full cover:** No part of your character is visible to the opponent, such as when hiding behind a huge boulder.

### *Multiple Attackers*

As in real life, it's hard to defend against multiple attackers. Groups of opponents can easily outmaneuver and overpower your character; defending against one attacker leaves him open to another. Likewise, multiple attacks from a single defender are similarly challenging to defend against.

Your character may only use his full Defense rating against one attack per combat turn. He suffers a -2 penalty to his Defense rating for each additional attack made against him during the same combat turn.

For example, if your character is attacked three times during the same turn, you roll your full Defense against the first attack, suffer a -2 penalty against the second attack, and a -4 penalty against the third attack. This represents how hard it is to defend oneself when beset on all sides. Even very tough characters may be brought down by groups of weaker assailants.

**Size Bonus:** Large creatures are able to handle multiple attackers more easily than smaller ones. For every two levels in Size, a creature may use its full Defense rating against one additional attack per turn. Therefore, a Size 2 creature does not suffer any penalties for being attacked twice during the same combat turn and a Size 4 creature does not suffer any penalties for being attacked three times. A Size 8 creature may defend itself up to five times per turn using its full Defense rating!

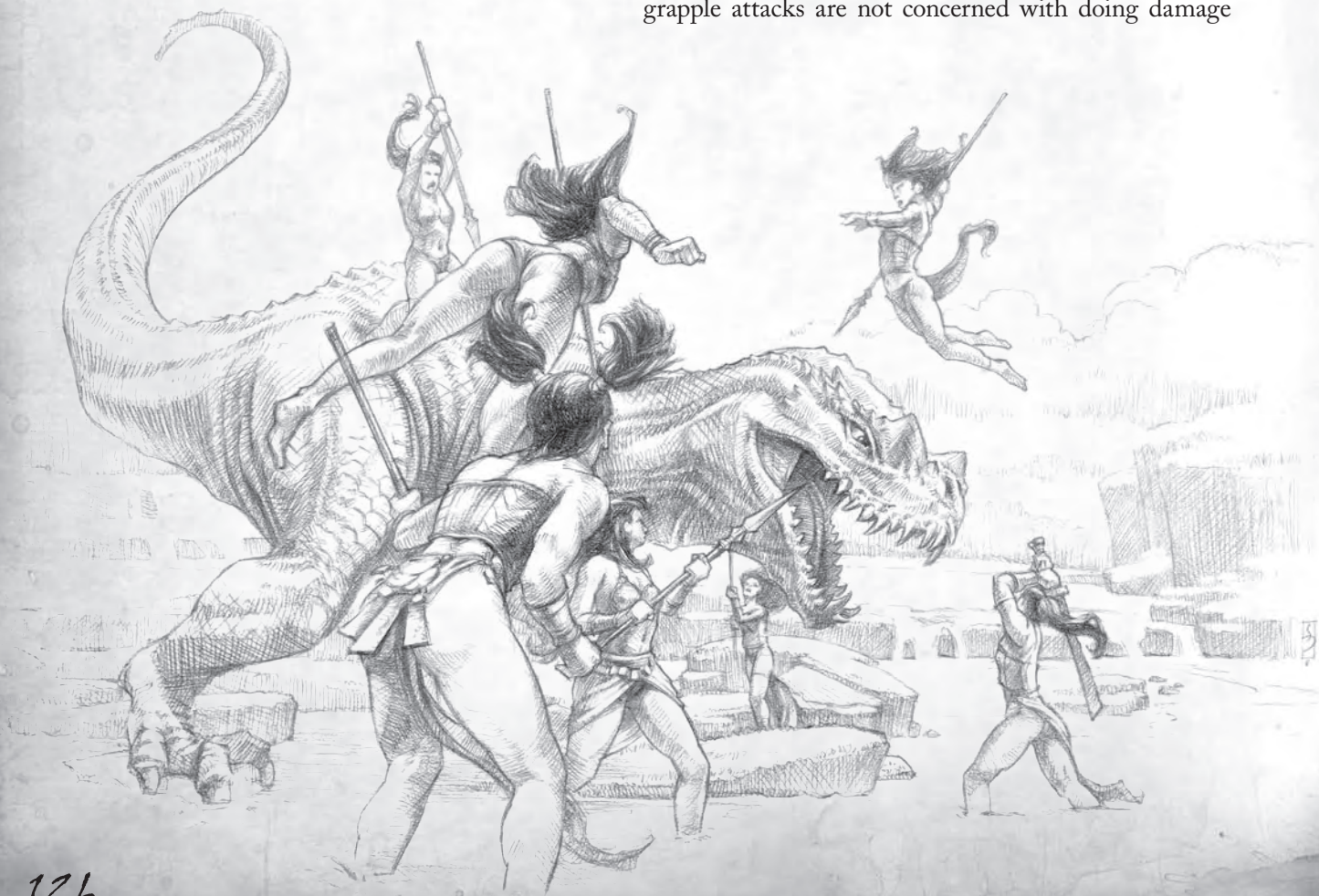
This bonus only applies when attacked by human-sized (or smaller) creatures. A larger creature will suffer normal penalties for multiple attacks by creatures of its own size.

### *Wound Penalties*

When your character is seriously wounded but remains conscious, he suffers wound penalties to his Defense rating equal to his negative Health rating. In addition, his ability to act is limited (see Health, p. 130).

### *Touch Attacks*

Sometimes you only need to determine if an opponent touches your character, such as when she is trying to grapple him or burn him with a torch. Because grapple attacks are not concerned with doing damage





to your character, you do not get to use your character's Passive Defense rating for your Defense roll. Likewise, when facing an opponent wielding a torch or some other highly damaging weapon, you only get to use your character's Active Defense rating for your Defense roll.

With touch attacks, your character's size, cover, and wound penalties still factor into your Defense roll. Armor does not normally factor in unless your character is being attacked with a dangerous weapon (or when skin to skin contact is important).

**Note:** Touch attacks rarely do damage in and of themselves. Often the amount of damage that would have been done is compared to one of your character's Attributes to determine another effect, such as with a grapple attack. Touch attacks that result in damage (e.g., being attacked with a burning torch) do a specified amount of damage if successful. Extra successes on the touch attack do not increase the amount of damage inflicted.

### *Area of Effect Attacks*

Some attacks, such as explosions, damage everything within a given radius. Because they do widespread damage, there isn't an effective way to dodge such an attack. Characters caught in the radius of an area effect attack only get to use their Passive Defense rating for their Defense roll. Creature size and wound penalties (if any) are not factors when defending against area effect attacks, but any cover your character has or armor he is wearing will grant him some protection.

Area effect attacks made with fire, acid, or some other caustic material (see sidebar, p. 134) ignore your character's Active Defense and Passive Defense. The only modifiers that factor into your Defense roll are armor and cover.

**Note:** While area of effect attacks are very powerful, only the weapon's damage rating is used for the attack roll. An opponent's Skill rating is not a factor, except when it comes to placing or throwing the weapon into a particular location. This does not normally require a roll on his part, except when accuracy is important—such as when tossing a grenade into a T. Rex's open mouth.

## *Defense Roll*

The dice pool for your Defense roll is equal to your character's Defense rating plus or minus any conditional modifiers. If your modified dice pool is 0 or less, then your character is defenseless and any successful attacks will inflict full damage.

## **Defense and Taking the Average**

To speed up combat, the Gamemaster may opt to have each character **Take the Average** of his Defense rating. The result becomes the threshold number of successes that must be exceeded in order to damage that character. Basically, it turns the opposed attack vs. Defense roll into a simple attack roll with a difficulty equal to the average Defense of the target. It sounds complicated, but it's really very simple. If you roll more successes than the opponent's average Defense, your character does that much damage to him.

While **Taking the Average** of Defense ratings greatly reduces the number of dice rolls in combat, most players like rolling dice to defend themselves—even if it means fewer successes than when they **Take the Average**. Therefore, the Gamemaster may want to use this method only for NPCs and less important characters in order to speed up combat and keep the focus on the player characters.

Roll your modified dice pool and compare the number of successes to the opponent's attack roll. If you roll more successes than your opponent, his attack is a clean miss. If you both roll the same number of successes, however, then his attack narrowly misses or strikes your character without enough force to do any damage. The blow may have been just a graze or was deflected by armor, for example.

If you roll fewer successes than your opponent, your character has been hit and suffers damage. Each extra success your opponent rolled inflicts one point of damage and may also have additional effects (see Damage, p. 128).

## *MOVE*

Movement does not require a dice roll to resolve. Your character simply moves the distance allowed by his Move rating for the type of movement he is making.

## *Move Rating*

Your character's Move rating is a combination of his speed and vigor. Strong and agile characters are fast, while weak and clumsy characters are slow. Your character's Move rating is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Move} = \text{Strength} + \text{Dexterity}^*$$

*\* Characters with the Athletics Skill may substitute that Skill rating for their Move rating.*



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Move	Combat(turn)	Swimming (turn)	Climbing (turn)	Horizontal Jump*	Vertical Jump*
1	5 ft.	2.5 ft.	2.5 ft.	2.5 ft.	1 ft.
2	10 ft.	5 ft.	5 ft.	5 ft.	2 ft.
3	15 ft.	5 ft.	5 ft.	5 ft.	3 ft.
4	20 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.	4 ft.
5	25 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.	10 ft.	5 ft.
6	30 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft.	6 ft.
7	35 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft.	7 ft.
8	40 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.	8 ft.
9	45 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.	9 ft.
10	50 ft.	25 ft.	25 ft.	25 ft.	10 ft.

\*If your character does not have a running start, his jumping distance is halved.

How far your character moves per combat turn is based upon your character's Move rating and the type of movement he is making.

### Wounds

Wound penalties reduce your character's effective Strength rating for the purposes of determining her movement and the amount of weight she can carry (see Encumbrance, below). For example, a character with Move 5 and Strength 3 is currently at -2 Health, reducing his Move rating to 3 and his effective Strength rating to 1 for determining how much weight he can carry.

### Encumbrance

Carrying too much weight can severely impede your character's movement. While it may be tempting—especially in the Hollow Earth—to lug around all your character's gear and ammunition, there are limits. Carrying around more weight will either slow your character down or tire him out fairly quickly. Both cases can be potentially fatal in the Hollow Earth, where dangerous predators lurk around every corner and one never knows when it will be necessary to make an expeditious retreat.

The amount of weight your character can carry without penalty is based upon his Strength rating.

Strength	Light Load	Medium Load	Heavy Load
1	0-10 lbs.	10-25 lbs.	25-50 lbs.
2	0-25 lbs.	25-50 lbs.	50-100 lbs.
3	0-50 lbs.	50-100 lbs.	100-250 lbs.
4	0-100 lbs.	100-250 lbs.	250-500 lbs.
5	0-250 lbs.	250-500 lbs.	500-750 lbs.

The total weight your character is carrying determines his encumbrance category and the associated penalty (if any).

**Light Load:** Your character moves and performs actions without penalty.

**Medium Load:** Your character is encumbered and suffers a -1 penalty to his Dexterity and Move ratings.

**Heavy Load:** Your character is heavily encumbered and suffers a -2 penalty to his Dexterity and Move ratings.

**Maximum Load:** Your character can attempt to carry up to double his Heavy Load weight, but he suffers a -4 penalty to his Dexterity and Move ratings. If this reduces his Move rating to 0 or less, he can pick up the load but not carry it. Each turn your character carries a maximum load he must exert himself.

**Exerting:** If your character is encumbered, he may exert himself—and suffer a nonlethal wound—to move and act normally for a single combat turn, or one hour of game time if outside of combat.

## Damage

There are two types of damage: lethal and non-lethal. Most damage is lethal, which means that you will die if you take enough of this type of damage. Nonlethal damage, on the other hand, will only make you fall unconscious if you take enough of it. Massive amounts of nonlethal damage can become lethal, however, so it is possible to die if you take enough damage.

**Lethal:** Cutting, slashing, stabbing, burning and other major trauma that is highly damaging and will quickly kill someone. Most weapons do lethal damage.

**Nonlethal:** Bruising, fatigue, illness, shock, and other such minor traumas that are not immediately life-threatening. Only a few weapons do non-lethal damage—it is often caused by environmental conditions.

### Effects of Damage

**Stunned:** If your character takes more damage in one blow than his Stun rating, he is stunned and loses his next action. However, he may still perform reflexive actions and defend himself normally.

**Knocked Out:** If your character takes more damage in one blow than double his Stun rating, he is knocked



out for one minute per point of damage in excess of his doubled Stun rating. He is defenseless and helpless during this time.

**Knockback:** If your character takes more damage in one blow than his Strength rating, he is knocked backward five feet per point of damage in excess of his Strength rating. He may take additional damage depending on what is behind him.

**Knockdown:** If your character takes more damage in one blow than double his Strength rating, he is knocked down in addition to being knocked back, and must stand up on his next action.

**Continuous Damage:** Some attacks will continue to inflict damage over time. Both fire and poison damage, for example, often inflict damage each combat turn until the fire is put out or the poison wears off. Starvation or exposure to the elements will inflict damage over a longer period of time.

**Killing Blow:** Helpless, unconscious, or dying characters could potentially be dispatched with a single

### Small Creatures

Small creatures can't take as much damage as larger ones. They are harder to hit, but have a lower Health rating. Because of their size, in fact, small creatures could even have a negative starting Health rating. This does not mean that small characters are automatically dying or suffer from wound penalties. The negative Health rating is ignored until the small character suffers a wound, and then the new Health rating takes full effect. This represents how devastating even a single wound is to a small creature.

killing blow. The attacker ignores the victim's Defense, inflicting damage with every success rolled on his attack roll.

### Health

Your character's Health rating represents how much damage she can take before falling unconscious, suffer-





ing wound penalties, and dying. When your character's Health falls below 0, she suffers penalty dice equal to her negative Health rating to all actions—if she remains conscious at all.

There are two types of damage: lethal and nonlethal. As their names imply, they represent different kinds of wounds and have very different effects on characters.

Lethal damage represents wounds that are immediately life threatening, such as broken bones, lacerations, punctures, etc. If your character's Health reaches 0 due to lethal wounds, she is disabled and is only capable of taking limited action. If her Health falls below 0, she falls unconscious and begins to die. If her Health reaches -5 due to lethal wounds, she dies.

Nonlethal damage represents non life-threatening wounds, such as bruises, fatigue, shock, etc. If your character's Health reaches 0 due to nonlethal wounds, she is exhausted, and is only capable of taking limited action. If her Health falls below 0, she falls unconscious. If her Health reaches -5, any additional damage converts her nonlethal damage to lethal damage on a point-for-point basis.

Whenever a character takes damage, lethal damage is subtracted first from her Health, and nonlethal damage is subtracted second. The remaining Health total is used to determine if the character falls unconscious or suffers any wound penalties.

For example, a character with a base Health of 4 suffers two lethal and two nonlethal wounds, making her current Health 0. She is badly beaten and exhausted, but still on her feet. Unfortunately, she suffers two more lethal wounds, making her current Health -2. Instead of falling unconscious and dying, however, she is only unconscious because it is the two nonlethal wounds that reduced her Health to -2. Without them, she'd have a current Health of 0 and be merely disabled. If she suffers any more lethal damage, she will start dying. She will be in big trouble unless she receives medical attention soon.

## States of Being

**Exhausted:** If your character takes enough nonlethal damage to reduce his Health to 0, he is exhausted and only capable of taking limited action. Instead of attacking, defending, and moving all in the same combat turn, he may only perform one of these actions each turn. If he wishes, he may exert himself and perform all three actions normally, but suffers a nonlethal wound immediately afterward, causing him to fall unconscious.

**Disabled:** If your character takes enough lethal damage to reduce his Health to 0, he is disabled and

only capable of taking limited action. Instead of attacking, defending, and moving all in the same combat turn, he may perform only one of these actions each turn. If he wishes, he may exert himself and perform all three actions normally, but suffers a lethal wound immediately afterward, causing him to fall unconscious and begin dying.

**Unconscious:** If your character takes enough nonlethal damage to reduce his Health below 0, then he falls unconscious. He will remain unconscious for one minute per point of damage below 0. If your character takes three points of damage, reducing his Health to -1, he will regain consciousness in one minute.

**Dying:** If your character takes enough lethal damage to reduce his Health below 0, he falls unconscious and begins dying. He will continue to take one lethal wound per turn until he receives medical attention or stabilizes on his own.

**Dead:** If your character takes enough lethal damage to reduce his Health to -5, he is dead, but may be resuscitated if he receives immediate medical attention.

**Remaining Conscious:** If your character takes enough damage to knock him unconscious, he may try to remain conscious through sheer willpower. Make a reflexive Willpower roll with a difficulty rating of 2. Your character suffers a penalty to his Willpower roll equal to his negative Health rating.

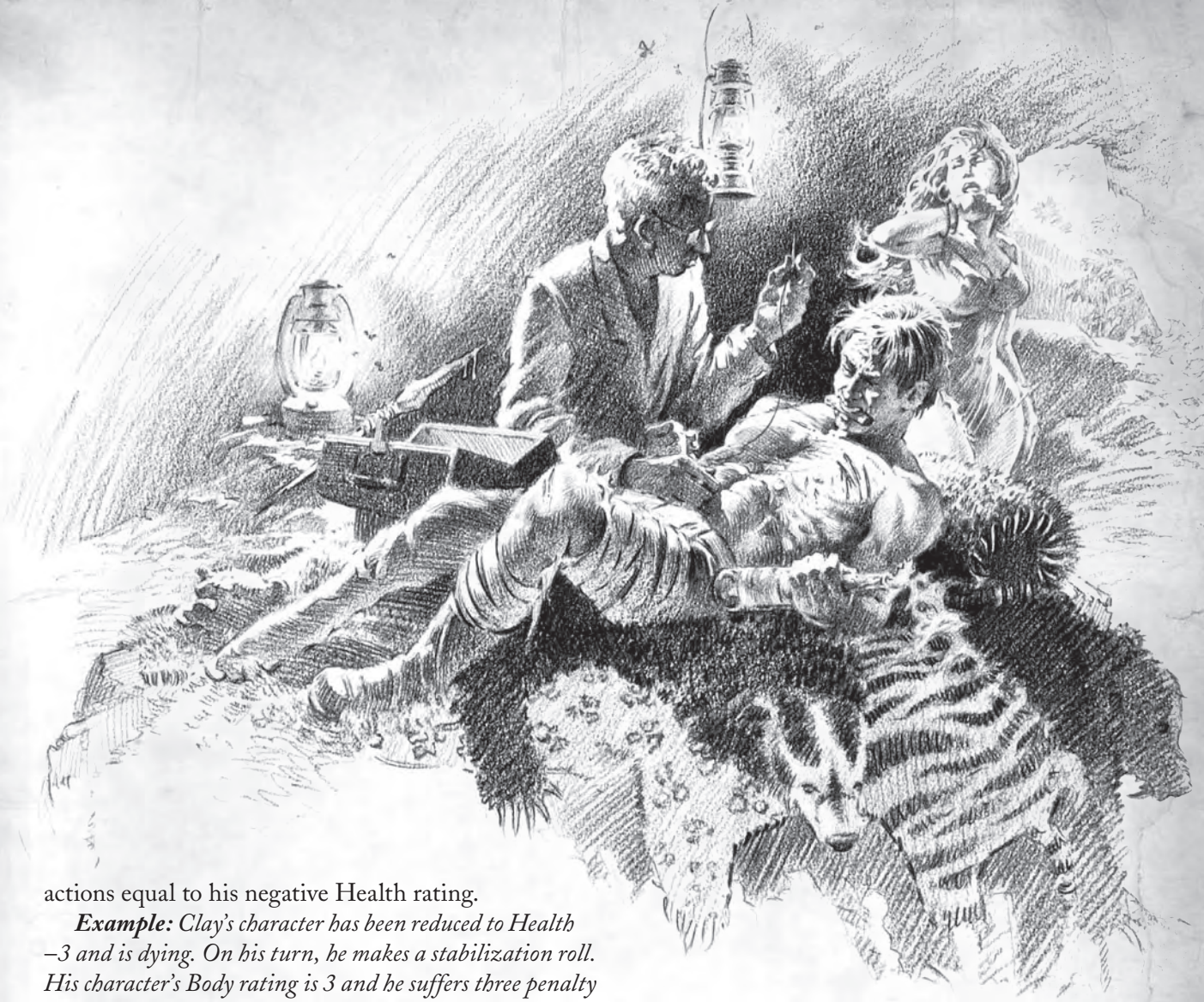
If you roll fewer than two successes, your character falls unconscious as normal. If you roll two or more successes, your character remains conscious but is considered exhausted (or disabled if suffering from lethal wounds) and suffers a penalty to all actions equal to his negative Health rating. If he takes any additional damage, he must make another roll to remain conscious using the new penalty.

*Example:* Clay's character takes three lethal wounds, reducing his Health to -3. Clay wants his character to try to remain conscious, but his character's Willpower rating is 2, giving him a modified dice pool of 1. His character automatically falls unconscious because he cannot possibly roll two successes with one die.

**Stabilizing:** If your character is dying, he may attempt to stabilize himself each combat turn. Make a reflexive Body roll with a difficulty rating of 2. Your character suffers a penalty to his Body roll equal to his negative Health rating.

If you roll fewer than two successes, your character continues to die as above, but may attempt to stabilize again next combat turn using the new penalty. If you roll two or more successes, your character stabilizes and does not lose any additional Health. When he wakes up, he is considered disabled and suffers a penalty to all





actions equal to his negative Health rating.

**Example:** Clay's character has been reduced to Health -3 and is dying. On his turn, he makes a stabilization roll. His character's Body rating is 3 and he suffers three penalty dice on the roll, so his final dice pool to stabilize is three. He rolls the dice and scores two successes. His character stabilizes before he loses any more Health, but he is still unconscious and will be disabled when he wakes up.

**Note:** A skilled doctor or medical professional may attempt to stabilize a dying character. Make a Medicine roll with a difficulty rating of 2. The doctor attempting to stabilize the dying character suffers a penalty equal to the injured character's negative Health rating. If he rolls two or more successes, the dying character is stabilized as normal. If he rolls fewer than two successes, the dying character is not stabilized, but he may try again next turn.

### Healing Rate

Characters normally heal one nonlethal wound per day and one lethal wound per week. Inside the Hollow Earth, however, characters heal two nonlethal wounds per day and one lethal wound every four days.

## Healing

The Hollow Earth is a dangerous place, and characters will get hurt there. They might eat something poisonous, run afoul of a prehistoric creature, or have a fight with another surface dweller. Player characters lead dangerous and exciting lives, and that means they are going to need medical attention from time to time if they want to live to tell the tale.

### First Aid

First aid can literally be a lifesaver. When properly administered, first aid can reduce the severity of an injury or even bring someone back from the brink of death.

The most life threatening aspect of a wound is the shock and trauma that go along with it. Treating an injured person for this can actually reduce the severity of his wound.

Make a Medicine roll to treat a wounded charac-



## Chapter Four

ter. Each rolled success heals one point of nonlethal damage, or converts a point of lethal damage into nonlethal. Nonlethal damage is always healed before lethal, representing easing the shock and trauma of the wounded person.

First aid takes one minute to perform and must be administered within one hour after injury to have any benefit. After the hour is up, the damage becomes permanent and the wound must heal naturally. First aid may be administered each time a character is wounded, but it cannot heal more than the most recent damage.

**Example:** *Laura's character is in bad shape. She suffered eight points of lethal damage, reducing her Health to -3. Molly's character performs first aid on her. Molly makes a Medicine roll and scores three successes. The first success converts a point of lethal damage into nonlethal, and the second success heals the nonlethal wound completely. The remaining success converts another point of lethal damage into nonlethal, leaving Laura's character with six points of lethal damage and one point of nonlethal. She's still badly hurt, but better off than she was before.*

### Medical Care

Healing takes time, but can be aided with medical attention. Normally, nonlethal damage heals at the rate of one point per day, and lethal damage heals at the rate of one point per week. Under the care of a skilled medical professional, a character heals much faster. The number of successes rolled by the character treating the patient decreases the amount of time it takes to heal a wound. For example, a character with one lethal and two nonlethal wounds receives medical assistance. The doctor looking after him rolls three successes, meaning that he will heal three times faster. Therefore, the two nonlethal wounds will heal the first day and the lethal wound two days later.

### Trying Again

If a character wishes to treat an injured person again, hoping to get a better result, she may do so, but each successive attempt imposes a cumulative -2 penalty on the Medicine roll. The new result, for better or for worse, replaces the previous result.

### Medical Supplies

Whether performing first aid, surgery, or providing long-term medical care, each Medicine roll uses one unit of medical supplies. If a character runs out of medical supplies, he can improvise with torn bandages and hard alcohol (or the like), but he suffers a -2 penalty on his Medicine roll. Making more medicine requires a Craft roll. One unit of medicine requires the

appropriate amount of raw materials and has a difficulty rating of 2. Each extra success on the Craft roll produces one additional unit of medicine.

### Healing inside the Hollow Earth

The Hollow Earth is a primitive, savage place. Everything seems to grow bigger, stronger, and tougher there. While the exact cause is unknown, living creatures heal much faster than on the surface. Because it is difficult to tell time inside the Hollow Earth, most adventurers are unaware of the phenomena. They only know that they have gone to sleep and woken with their wounds fully healed. Naturally, this quickened healing leads to misjudging the exact amount of time spent sleeping and contributes to the disorienting effect of traveling inside the Hollow Earth.

On the surface world, characters heal one nonlethal wound per day, or one lethal wound per seven days of rest; they heal at twice that rate inside the Hollow Earth. Characters with the Quick Healer Talent (see p. 69) heal at four times the normal rate. Medical care speeds healing up even further.

## ENVIRONMENT

Environmental damage comes in many forms. Your character could have an accident, contract an illness, or suffer from exposure to the elements. Depending on the nature of the situation, environmental damage can be either lethal or nonlethal.

Many of the conditions listed below have durations of days, weeks, or even months. Tracking the passage of time is difficult under the Hollow Earth's eternal noonday sun. Both players and characters alike may have no idea how much time is passing in the game. Therefore, it is up to the Gamemaster to determine what constitutes a "day" inside the Hollow Earth.

### Deprivation

Exploration is a dangerous business, and one of the greatest dangers is running out of supplies. Whether due to an accident, miscalculation, or outright treachery, going without food or water for an extended period of time is bad for your health.

Unlike other environmental sources of damage, your character's Body rating has little to do with how long he can go without food and water before he starts weakening. Instead, it factors into his Health rating that determines how long he can withstand deprivation before expiring.



**Dehydration:** Your character suffers a lethal wound each day he goes without water. He will continue to take lethal damage until he once again has a steady supply of water.

**Starvation:** Your character suffers one lethal wound each week he goes without food. He will continue to take lethal damage until he gets a steady supply of food.

**Note:** If your character goes without both food and water, he suffers damage from lacking both. Also—as if effects of deprivation weren't bad enough—dehydrated or starving characters lack the energy to heal their wounds. All healing stops until the character regain regular access to food and water.

## Disease

The surface world is not the only place where diseases are spread. Diseases do exist in the Hollow Earth, but it is not known whether they were carried from the surface to the interior, or vice versa. Regardless, becoming infected by a disease or infecting others is a risk an explorer has to take.

Different diseases pose different problems. Whether battling the common cold or a more debilitating disease, a character is likely to take damage over time, and possibly suffer more serious effects if the malady is left untreated.

Most diseases and illnesses have an Infection rating, which represents the how hard it is to avoid contracting the disease or fight off the illness. Make a Body roll whenever your character is exposed to an illness (see Resistance, p. 43) and compare the number of successes to the Infection rating.

If you roll at least as many successes as the disease's Infection rating, your character avoids contracting the disease; however, he may become infected later if he is exposed to it again.

If you roll fewer successes than the Infection rating, your character contracts the disease and suffers its effects. To recover from a disease, make an extended Body roll against the Infection rating of the disease. Typically, each roll represents one day of sickness; you will need to accumulate between five to ten successes to fully recover from the disease. If being tended by a doctor, she may substitute her Medicine rating for your character's Body roll.

### Sample Diseases

#### Scurvy

Scurvy is one of the most common illnesses encountered by explorers. It's a familiar condition to anyone

who has been on a long sea voyage, but little is known about its prevention. Scurvy is not caused by starvation, but by deficient nutrition; specifically, a deficiency of Vitamin C. Lack of fresh food, especially vegetables, will cause scurvy.

**Symptoms:** The diseased character's skin turns gray; he becomes bloated, and his eyes assume a heavy, lidded expression. He loses energy and is wracked with aches and pains: especially in his joints. His gums bleed, his breath is fetid, and his teeth may fall out.

**Infection:** Scurvy is not an infection, but will develop in a number of months equal to a character's Body rating after his last intake of fresh food. After that, the diseased character will take one nonlethal wound per week until he once again has access to a regular supply of fresh food. In addition, the character is unable to heal wounds while suffering from scurvy and suffers a -1 penalty to all actions due to his low energy.

**Recovery:** Long-term medical attention will not cure scurvy, nor is it an illness that can be fought off by a character's immune system. A character will recover normally once he starts eating fresh food again.

#### Smallpox

Smallpox is a very serious and sometimes fatal disease that is only transmitted by humans. The name is derived from the Latin word for "spotted" and refers to the raised bumps that appear on an infected person. Infection usually occurs by inhaling the virus, which can remain on clothing, bedding and other surfaces for up to one week. As such, the disease usually starts in the lungs, invades the bloodstream, and eventually spreads to the rest of the body.

**Symptoms:** At first, the infected character suffers from a high fever, lack of energy, aches and pains, and sometimes vomiting. Later, sores form in the character's mouth and a rash spreads all over her body, eventually becoming raised bumps. By this point, the character is usually too sick to perform normal activities.

**Infection:** 2 (3 if in direct contact with bodily fluids). Direct, prolonged, face-to-face contact—or contact with infected bodily fluids—is typically required to catch smallpox.

An infected character usually feels fine for the first week, and displays no symptoms. She gradually begins to suffer symptoms over the second week, at which point the disease has taken hold. After the first week, the character takes a lethal wound per day until she recovers or succumbs to the disease. Characters infected with smallpox suffer a -1 penalty to all actions due to lethargy.



## Chapter Four

**Recovery:** 2 (10 successes are required to recover from the disease). Each Body roll represents one day of illness, starting from the day smallpox is contracted. Long-term medical attention has almost no affect on smallpox. However, if the smallpox vaccine is administered to the diseased character, she gains a +2 bonus to her Body roll for the purposes of recovery.

### Drowning and Suffocation

Under normal circumstances, your character can hold his breath for one minute per point of Body rating. In combat, your character holds his breath for one turn per success on a reflexive body roll.

After this time passes, your character will be forced to take a breath and suffer the effects of whatever he breathes in. If he inhales water or thick smoke, for example, he will receive one nonlethal wound per turn until he is able to breathe normally. Your character cannot hold his breath again until he has had a chance to catch his breath.

### Electricity

Characters run the risk of getting electrocuted from a variety of sources, including being struck by lightning, touching a live wire, or being purposely shocked by an enemy.

If electrocuted, no attack roll is made. Your character automatically takes damage based on the intensity of the shock. If an opponent attacks your character with an electrified weapon, such as a live wire, a touch attack is made (see Touch Attacks, p. 126). Your character gets to roll his Active Defense rating against the attack, but loses any armor bonuses from metal or other conducting materials.

The amount of damage done by a shock depends on the power of the electrical charge. Note that electricity is caustic damage (see sidebar, p. 134) and will have a reduced effect against larger creatures.

Electrical Shock	Damage
Minor (a strong shock)	1 L
Major (an electric fence)	2 L
Severe (a electric generator)	3 L
Deadly (an industrial power line)	4 L

Damage will continue as long as your character remains in contact with the electricity. If the electrical current is continuous, your character may not be able to escape. The electrical shock may cause his muscles to contract and prevent him from pulling away. You

### Caustic Damage

Caustic Damage—most notably that caused by fire, electricity, and poison—is scaled for human-sized characters but would prove a greater or lesser threat depending on the victim's size. An electrical fence that can stop a horse could kill a dog, but wouldn't do much to a T. Rex besides make him angry. To account for this, reduce caustic damage by one point for each two Size levels above zero, or increase it by one point for each two Size levels below zero. For Size 1 or -1 creatures, a "+" sign is added to the damage to indicate the possibility of taking an extra point of damage (see Taking the Average of Odd Numbers, p.110). Larger creatures take no damage from caustic damage that is reduced to zero, but may still feel pain when they come in contact with it.

**Example:** Clay's character is armed only with a torch when he is attacked by a wolf. Against an average-sized human, the torch would do 1 point of lethal damage, but the wolf is Size -1, so the damage increases to 1+. As with Taking the Average, the "+" indicates a 50% chance of an extra point of damage. In this case, one die is rolled and it comes up a success, so the wolf takes two points of fire damage from the torch. Unfortunately, the next opponent Clay encounters is a triceratops, which is Size 2. The torch's damage is reduced to zero against the large dinosaur. Burning the dinosaur with a flame that size would probably startle and enrage it, but not injure it. If only he could use the torch to make a bigger fire...

must make a Strength roll with a difficulty equal to the electricity's damage rating in order for your character to escape.

If your successes equal or exceed the electricity's damage rating, your character pulls away and will not continue to take damage. If you rolled fewer successes than the damage rating, your character continues to take damage but may attempt another escape on his next turn.

### Exposure

Extremely hot and cold conditions can be detrimental to your character's health. Prolonged exposure can even be fatal. Exposure to extreme temperatures does nonlethal damage every hour that your character is without shelter. The amount of damage your character takes is determined by how extreme the conditions are.



Temperature (Fahrenheit)	Damage
Over 120 degrees	4 N
110 – 120 degrees	3 N
100 – 110 degrees	2 N
90 – 100 degrees	1 N
50 – 90 degrees	0
40 – 50 degrees	1 N
30 – 40 degrees	2 N
0 – 30 degrees	3 N
Below 0 degrees	4 N

Having adequate protection, such as warm furs, will keep your character from suffering from exposure. However, the Gamemaster will determine the level to which your character can afford protection. Even the thickest furs won't protect her long when the temperature is -30 degrees Fahrenheit. Also, weather conditions such as rain, wind, or high altitude may intensify the damaging effects of exposure.

## Falling

Exploration is a dangerous business, and characters need to be on their toes all the time. In particular, they need to watch their handholds and footing or they may slip and fall. Whether they fall a few feet off a ladder or hundreds of feet off a cliff, landing is likely to hurt your character.

Most falling damage is nonlethal, unless your character lands on something sharp and pointed, such as jagged rocks. Your character takes one nonlethal wound per ten feet he falls (rounded up).

**Terminal velocity:** Your character reaches terminal velocity once he falls 100 feet and will take no additional damage for falling farther. Once he's reached terminal velocity, however, falling damage is lethal.

**Breaking a Fall:** If your character has the Acrobatics Skill, he may try to break his fall by grabbing objects to slow down, or by trying to land in a softer spot. The difficulty rating to break a fall is 2, but the Gamemaster may adjust it up or down based on circumstances. Make an Acrobatics roll to reduce your character's falling distance. For each success in excess of the difficulty, the character reduces his effective falling distance by ten feet.

**Hard and Soft landings:** If your character happens to land in a soft spot, such as water or a snow bank, the Gamemaster may reduce the amount of damage for the fall, depending on how soft the landing area is. Conversely, if your character lands on a particularly hard surface, such as jagged rocks, the Gamemaster may increase the amount of damage he takes or convert it to lethal instead of nonlethal damage.

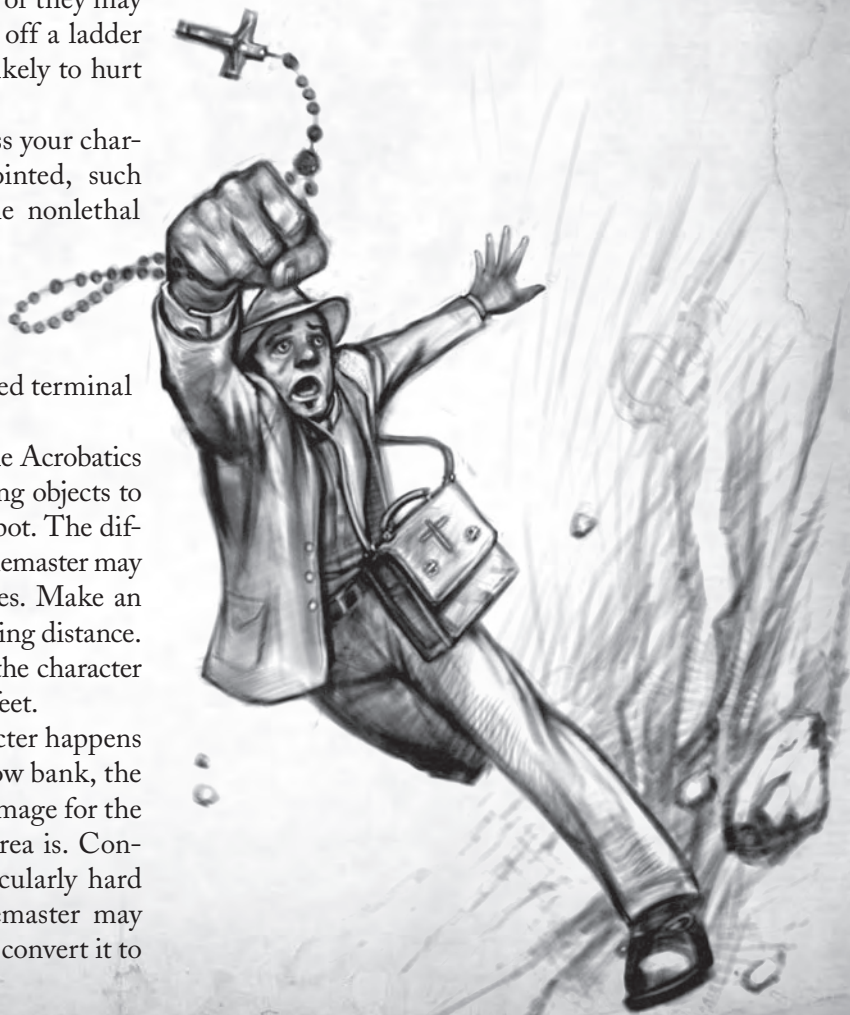
## Fatigue

A character can do without rest or sleep for a short time, but he will eventually suffer ill effects. Your character suffers one nonlethal wound for each day he goes without sleep.

Your character can perform a strenuous activity, such as jogging or heavy manual labor, for a number of hours equal to his Body rating. After this limit, your character suffers a nonlethal wound for each additional increment of time based on his Body rating. The fatigue remains until the character rests or sleeps for eight hours plus the number of wounds he has suffered.

## Fire

Fire is crucial to survival for most explorers, but it can also be one of the most dangerous hazards they face. Fire consumes nearly everything it touches, and can be an extremely potent weapon. Care should be taken, however, as a fire can easily get out of control and turn on the person who set it.





## Chapter Four

If burned, your character automatically takes damage based on the intensity of the fire. If an opponent is attacking your character with a flaming weapon, such as swinging a torch, then a touch attack is made (see Touch Attacks, p. 126). Your character gets to roll his Active Defense rating against the attack, including armor bonuses, to avoid taking damage.

In general, the hotter the fire, the more damage it does. Note that fire is caustic damage (see sidebar) and will have a reduced affect against larger creatures.

Fire Intensity	Damage
Molten rock or metal	4 L
Chemical fire (third-degree burn)	3 L
Campfire (second-degree burn)	2 L
Torch (first-degree burn)	1 L

If your character is exposed to flame for more than a turn, anything combustible he is wearing catches fire, and he will continue to take damage even if he escapes from the original blaze. Rolling on the ground or jumping into water will normally extinguish a fire and prevent your character from continuing to take damage.

If there is no water available, you must make a Dexterity roll with a difficulty equal to the fire's damage rating in order to extinguish the fire by rolling on the ground.

If your successes equal or exceed the fire's damage rating, your character puts the fire out and will not continue to take damage. If you roll fewer successes than the damage rating, your character continues to take damage, but may make another attempt to put out the fire on his next turn.

## Poisons and Drugs

Poisons and drugs can all be detrimental to your character's mental and physical well-being. They can also have a variety of different side effects, which usually translate into bonus or penalty dice on certain actions. Some poisons and drugs affect your character only once, while others affect her repeatedly over a period of time.

There are several different methods for ingesting a drug or poison. Depending on the specific toxin, your character may have to inhale it, ingest it, inject it, or simply touch it to suffer its effects.

There is little defense against ingesting or inhaling a drug or poison. Your character either has to detect the poison before eating it, or hold her breath to avoid inhaling it.

In the case of an injection, your character defends herself normally. If the poisoned weapon does damage to your character, she also has to resist the effects of the poison.

If an opponent is merely trying to touch your character with a poison, such as a cobra spitting venom, then a touch attack is made (see Touch Attacks, p. 126). Your character gets to roll her Active Defense rating against the attack (including armor bonuses) to avoid skin contact with the poison.

Most drugs and poisons have a Toxin rating, which represents the difficulty of resisting the effects of the substance. Make a Body roll whenever your character is poisoned (see Resistance, p. 43), and compare the number of successes to the Toxin rating.

If you roll at least as many successes as the Toxin rating, your character resists the effects of the poison. However, she may not be so lucky if she gets another dose.

If you roll fewer successes than the Toxin rating, your character suffers from the effects of the poison. If the poison inflicts damage immediately, your character takes an amount of damage based on the poison's potency.

If the poison does damage over time, the Toxin rating simply determines if the poison takes effect. The poison will then do damage over time until your character accumulates enough successes on an extended Body roll to get the poison out of her system. Typically, each roll represents one hour and your character will need to accumulate between five to ten successes to fully clean the poison from her system. If being tended by a doctor, he may substitute his Medicine rating for your character's Body roll.

**Note:** poison is considered caustic damage (see sidebar) and will have a reduced effect against larger creatures.

Toxin	Damage
Deadly toxin (cyanide)	4 L
Dangerous toxin (snake venom)	3 L
Strong toxin (toxic spores)	2 L
Weak toxin (food poisoning)	1 L

## Sample Drugs Alcohol

Your character can safely consume as many alcoholic drinks per hour as his Body rating. For each additional drink beyond that, he suffers a -1 penalty to all actions. However, alcohol can temporarily reduce the effects of pain and cold. Drinking alcohol increases your character's tolerance to cold for the remainder of the hour.

The effects of alcohol slowly fade at the rate of one



penalty die per hour, until your character is completely sober again. However, if your character has more drinks than twice his Body rating, he will become violently ill and suffer a nonlethal wound. If he continues to drink beyond that, the Gamemaster may impose even harsher penalties.

### Hallucinogens

Hallucinogens can be taken in a variety of ways, but whether they are ingested, inhaled, or just touched, they disorient the drugged character and may make him act erratically and possibly see things that aren't there. Depending on the strength of the hallucinogen, the character will suffer a -1 to -4 penalty to all actions. However, depending on the nature of the drug, the character may experience tremendous insights or visions of the future. The effects of a hallucinogen normally last for eight hours minus the character's Body rating.

### Sample Poisons

#### Cyanide

**Toxin:** 5

**Damage:** 4 L

The effects of cyanide poisoning may include vomiting, convulsions, shortness of breath, loss of consciousness, and death. It is usually administered as a poison through inhalation or ingestion, such as the infamous "suicide pills."

#### Venom

**Toxin:** 4

**Damage:** 1 - 4 L

There are a wide variety of venomous creatures, such as snakes, spiders, and scorpions. However, there are many other kinds of poisonous creatures as well, and the Hollow Earth has more than its share of poisonous plants and animals. The amount of damage done by a venomous creature is not necessarily determined by its size. Even very tiny creatures can be deadly to humans if their venom is potent enough. In addition, some venom can inflict additional side effects, such as paralysis, that will affect the character for a short time.

## ATTACKING OBJECTS

Sometimes a character will want to break an object, such as smashing in a door or breaking a lock. Objects take damage much like people do, but the amount of damage they can take depends on the size of the object and its durability. A small object made of metal will be

harder to break than a large one made of glass.

The type of material the item is made out of determines its Defense rating. In this case, the Defense rating of the item represents how resistant it is to damage. Attacking an object is subject to the same modifiers for size and range as attacking an opponent. All successes rolled in excess of the object's Defense rating damage the item.

Material	Defense
Glass	2
Wood	4
Stone	6
Metal	8

## Structure

The amount of damage that an item can take depends upon the item's size and quality of construction. To calculate an object's Structure, add the Size modifier below to the object's Defense rating. However, the Size modifier cannot drop an object's base Structure below zero. Also, unlike humans, an object will break as soon as its Structure drops below 0. If its Structure reaches -5, it is utterly destroyed and can never be repaired.

Size	Structure
+8	+8
+4	+4
+2	+2
+1	+1
0	0
-1	-1
-2	-2
-4	-4
-8	-8

## Attacking a Hand Held Object

When attacking an item held in an opponent's hand, the character must make a called shot to hit the object, using the base Defense of the person holding it or the object's Defense (whichever is greater). Any successes in excess of the object's Defense roll do damage as normal.



## ⊕ **EXAMPLE OF PLAY**



Alex's character is a big game hunter named Mick Hardigan. He's an expert marksman who has hunted dangerous animals all over the world. Hardigan takes pride in his accomplishments and has a vast collection of trophies from his hunting expeditions. He believes no one in the world is a better hunter, and he's out to prove it. Unfortunately, he's run out of challenges, and is starting to get bored. Where is he going to find prey worthy of his skills?

That's when he caught wind of an expedition looking for an experienced guide and big game hunter. The chap leading the expedition was most insistent on seeing evidence of the hunter's skills. Of course, Hardigan was more than happy to show off his trophies. Each time the chap saw one, he would ask if Hardigan had ever killed anything bigger. Wherever this expedition was heading, Hardigan knew he had to go with them.

When the expedition leader finally let on that their destination was the Hollow Earth, Hardigan was more than a little bit skeptical. After seeing the evidence, Hardigan had to allow for the possibility that such a place might exist; if it did, then so did the dinosaurs—and for that possibility alone, he'd take the chance.

As it turned out, the chap was right about everything: The Hollow Earth, the dinosaurs—everything. The only problem is that Hardigan has been relegated to guiding the expedition through this bizarre place. The sun never moves, making it nearly impossible to navigate, and he's had to rely on visual markers instead.

Most of the time, he's not sure if they're walking in circles or not.

Worst of all, the expedition leader has made them avoid big game, trying to keep the expedition out of harm's way. It's been more than Hardigan can bear, so when the expedition made camp tonight, he waited until the rest of the party fell asleep, then slipped away to go hunting.

Hardigan moved through the jungle carefully, looking for game. He'd spotted the tracks of several herbivores—of the sort he'd already killed for food. They were no challenge. No challenge at all.

And then he finds it. A huge track, nearly four feet long and six inches deep, sunk into the soft jungle soil. It's the footprint of a giant three-toed biped; a *Tyrannosaurus Rex*, he's sure of it. This is the challenge Hardigan has been looking for. Hunting and killing a T. Rex would be the ultimate challenge of his hunting skills! He cannot let this opportunity pass him by.

The Gamemaster warns Alex that a T. Rex is a very powerful creature and likely more than one character can handle. Alex reminds him that his character has the Overconfident Flaw and, as a big game hunter, he can't pass up the opportunity to take on the King of the Dinosaurs! The Gamemaster agrees that going after a T. Rex by himself qualifies as roleplaying Hardigan's Flaw—he will undoubtedly be in over his head—and awards a Style point. This gives Hardigan a total of six



Style points and with that much in the bank, Alex is feeling pretty optimistic about his character's ability to take down the T. Rex.

Tracking down the T. Rex requires an extended Survival roll. The Gamemaster tells Alex that each roll represents fifteen minutes of tracking, and he will need to accumulate ten successes to find the dinosaur because the trail has gone cold. Fortunately, the T. Rex is easy to follow because of its large, distinctive tracks. The Gamemaster sets the difficulty rating for the Survival roll at 1. Each success rolled in excess of the difficulty counts toward the ten successes needed to find the creature.

Hardigan's Survival rating is 5, and he has a Skill Specialization in Tracking, giving him a dice pool of six. Taking the Average of his dice pool nets Alex three successes: more than enough to track the creature without having to make any dice rolls. Without pausing the story, the Gamemaster tells Alex that Hardigan has no trouble following the trail. He catches up to the Tyrannosaurus in a clearing a little over an hour later.

The T. Rex is huge: well over 25 feet tall, with a scaly hide and an enormous mouth full of dagger-like teeth. Deciding to be nice, the Gamemaster tells Alex that the Tyrannosaurus hasn't spotted Hardigan; it's busy devouring a small kill, so Hardigan can still choose to leave in safety.

Alex replies that Hardigan's whole life has been building to this moment, and he's not about to back out now. Instead, he's going to try to sneak into position where he can get a clean shot at the T. Rex.

Sneaking into position requires an opposed Stealth vs. Perception roll. Alex will make a Stealth roll for Hardigan, and the Gamemaster will make a Perception roll for the T. Rex. The character with the most successes wins. If both characters have the same number of successes, the T. Rex will win because it is considered the defender.

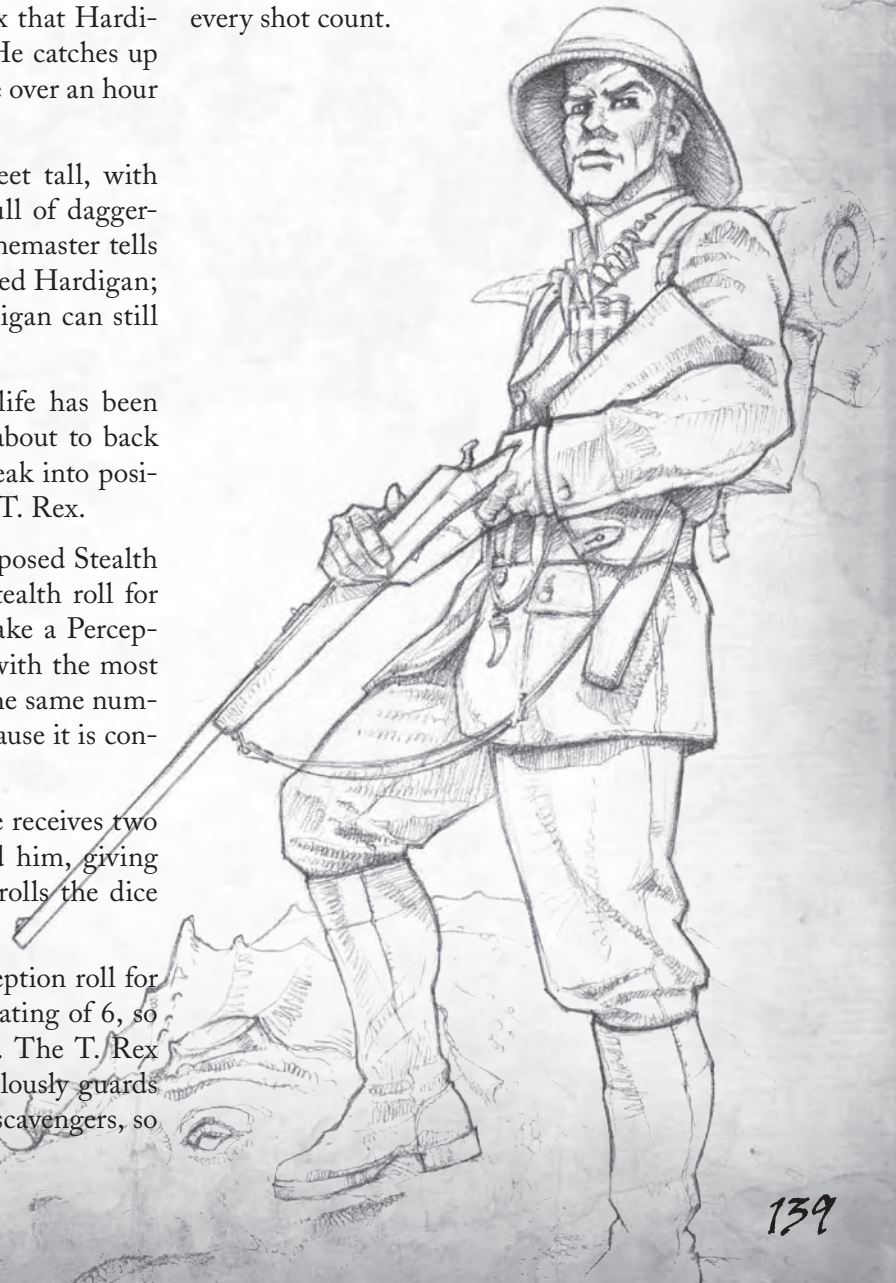
Hardigan's Stealth rating is 6, plus he receives two bonus dice for all the tree cover around him, giving him a modified dice pool of eight. He rolls the dice and gets three successes.

Next, the Gamemaster makes a Perception roll for the Tyrannosaurus. It has a Perception rating of 6, so he rolls six dice and gets four successes. The T. Rex spots Hardigan! The giant carnivore jealously guards its kills and is always on the lookout for scavengers, so it turns to attack the hunter.

The Gamemaster signals the beginning of combat, and time switches into combat turns. The first step in combat is to roll Initiative for each character. The character with the most successes takes the first action, followed by the character with the next highest total, and so on. If two or more characters end up with the same number of successes, the character with the highest base Initiative rating goes first.

Alex rolls Hardigan's Initiative rating of 6 and gets three successes. The Gamemaster rolls the T. Rex's Initiative rating of 4 and gets two successes. With the highest Initiative, Hardigan gets to take the first action.

Alex's character is in deep trouble. He was hoping to surprise the T. Rex with his first shot and kill it before it had a chance to react. Unfortunately, the T. Rex spotted Hardigan before he could attack and now, if he is going to survive this encounter, he has to make every shot count.









Hardigan is going to have to hit the T. Rex where it hurts. Making a called shot to hit a vulnerable area penalizes the attacker's dice pool, but Hardigan has the Accuracy Talent, which reduces this penalty. Alex wants to reduce this penalty as much as possible, so he decides to boost Hardigan's Accuracy Talent. He spends all six of his Style points to boost Hardigan's Accuracy Talent to its maximum level, which allows him to ignore up to a -8 called shot penalty for the duration of the combat. If he can do enough damage to the Tyrannosaurus before it gets to him, he just might get out of this alive.

Boosting Hardigan's Accuracy Talent is a reflexive action, so Alex still gets to attack this turn. He decides that Hardigan is going to stand his ground and try to kill the T. Rex, or at least hurt it enough to dissuade it from attacking him. He'd love to be able to shoot the T. Rex more than once, but his modified Winchester rifle has a rate of fire of one shot per turn.

Instead, he declares that Hardigan is making a called shot to hit a vital area. This means he suffers a penalty to his dice pool equal to the target's Defense rating, but any successes rolled automatically do damage. The T. Rex's Defense is 8 (modified for size), which means that Alex suffers a -8 penalty on his attack roll. Because of his boosted Talent, however, Alex gets to ignore this penalty and attack the T. Rex with his full dice pool.

Alex's modified dice pool to attack the T. Rex is 14. Hardigan's Firearms rating is 9, plus he has a Skill Specialization in Rifles and he gets four bonus dice for his modified Winchester rifle. The Tyrannosaurus is 50 feet away, so there are no range penalties on the attack roll. Alex gets to ignore the called shot penalty, so he has a final dice pool of 14 to shoot the T. Rex.

Alex would love to buy some bonus dice, but he spent all of his Style points boosting Hardigan's Accuracy Talent and there are no other characters around to help him. So, Alex makes his attack roll and hopes for the best. If he can manage to stun the T. Rex, it will lose its next attack and buy him some more time.

Alex rolls the dice and gets a whopping eight successes! The Gamemaster does not make a Defense roll for the T. Rex because of the called shot, so the dinosaur takes the full eight points of lethal damage, reducing its Health from 16 to 8. The shot hits the dinosaur in a soft spot near its heart. It's a devastating blow but, unfortunately, the T. Rex's Stun rating is eight, which means that it's not enough damage to stun the creature.

Now it's the T. Rex's turn. The enraged reptile charges Hardigan. The T. Rex has a Move of 12, which means that it can move 60 feet per combat turn with a normal move. This is more than enough to move it into melee range with Hardigan and still be able to attack. The T. Rex charges across the clearing, roaring, the ground trembling beneath its feet. It opens its huge maw, filled with gleaming teeth, and snaps at Hardigan.

The Tyrannosaurus attempts to bite Hardigan. Its Brawl rating is 14, plus it gets four bonus dice for its bite attack. Because of its size, however, the T. Rex suffers a penalty to attack targets smaller than itself. The T. Rex's Size rating is 4 and Hardigan's Size rating is 0, so the huge predator suffers four penalty dice on its attack roll, giving it a final dice pool of 14 to bite Hardigan.

The Gamemaster rolls the dice and gets seven successes. Alex rolls Hardigan's Defense rating of six and only gets two successes. Hardigan takes five points of lethal damage. Once again, Alex wishes he still had some Style points left, so that he could reduce the damage; alas, he does not, and his character takes the full damage. The T. Rex chomps down on Hardigan's upper torso, picking him up off the ground and shaking him like a rag doll.

Alex marks off five lethal wounds on his character sheet, reducing Hardigan's Health from 5 to 0. He's not dying, but that's not the worst of it. He's taken more damage than double his Stun rating, which means that even though he's not dying, he's been knocked out. He will remain unconscious and defenseless for one minute per point of damage inflicted in excess of his doubled Stun rating. His Stun rating is 2 and he took five points of damage, so unless the T. Rex eats him before then, Hardigan will regain consciousness in one minute.

Will the T. Rex consume its unconscious victim? Has Hardigan's foolhardiness cost him his life? Alex is dying to know the answer to these questions, but the Gamemaster decides to keep him in suspense and leave it as a cliffhanger. The Gamemaster switches the focus back to the rest of the characters who wake some time later to find Hardigan missing. How long have they been asleep? Will they be able to help him—assuming they can even find him? The Hollow Earth is always a dangerous place, but it's even more perilous without a guide...



## ⊕ CHAPTER 5: EQUIPMENT



Having the right piece of equipment can make or break an expedition. It can also mean the difference between life and death for an explorer. No one wants to be stranded in the Hollow Earth without some way to get home, or run out of ammunition at the wrong time. The following vehicles and items are generally available in the 1930s, and represent some of the useful things an explorer can take with him (or acquire) when exploring the Hollow Earth.

### WEAPONS

Few explorers will head into uncharted territory without some kind of weapon, and the Hollow Earth is a dangerous place. This section describes a number of melee and ranged weapons, from simple clubs all the way up to flamethrowers and Gatling guns.

**Damage (Dmg):** The number of bonus dice added to your attack roll when using the weapon. It also indicates the type of damage it inflicts: lethal (L) or non-lethal (N).

**Strength (Str):** The minimum Strength rating needed to wield the weapon effectively. A character with a lower Strength rating suffers a -2 penalty to his attack roll for each point of Strength he is under the minimum. Using a two-handed weapon with one hand increases the minimum Strength required (to wield the weapon) by one point.

**Capacity (Cap):** The amount of ammunition the weapon can carry, indicating how many times it can be fired before it has to be reloaded. It also indicates how each weapon is loaded: belt (b), clip (c), internal (i), magazine (m), or revolver (r).

**Range (Rng):** The distance in feet that the weapon is effective before range penalties are incurred; each increment after the first imposes a -2 penalty to the attack roll (e.g., if a weapon's range is twenty feet, a -2 penalty will be incurred for targets between twenty and forty feet away, a -4 penalty will be incurred for targets between forty and sixty feet away, and so on).

**Rate:** The weapon's rate of fire, indicating how many times it may be fired each combat turn. Weapons with a rate of fire of 1 may only be shot once per combat turn, while weapons with a rate of fire less than 1 have to be reloaded after each shot (e.g.,  $\frac{1}{2}$  means that the weapon may be fired once every two combat turns). Semiautomatic (M) and Automatic (A) firearms may be used to make multiple attacks the same combat round (see Total Attack, p. 121).

**Speed (Spd):** The weapon's general speed, indicating how often it may be used in combat: Fast (F), Average (A), or Slow (S). Weapon speed is for use with the optional Continuous Combat rules.

**Cost:** The cost of the weapon or item in U.S. dollars in the 1930s. This number may be adjusted up or down to account for supply and demand.



Melee Weapon	Dmg	Str	Spd	Cost	Wt
Axe, Hand	2L	2	A	\$1.00	3 lbs.
Axe, Two-Handed	3L	2	A	\$2.00	4 lbs.
Bayonet (Fixed)	2L	2	A	\$2.00	1 lb.
Brass Knuckles	1N*	1	F	\$1.00	0.5 lbs.
Chain	1N*	2	A	\$1.00	6 lbs.
Cleaver	2L	2	A	\$1.25	2 lbs.
Club	2N	2	A	—	3 lbs.
Club, Two-Handed	3N	2	A	—	8 lbs.
Cutlass	3L	2	A	\$6.00	4 lbs.
Dagger	1L	1	F	\$1.00	1 lb.
Entrenching Tool	2N*	2	A	\$2.50	2.5 lbs.
Hammer	2N	2	A	\$1.00	2 lbs.
Hammer, Two-Handed	3N	2	A	\$1.50	7 lbs.
Katana	3L	2	A	\$45.00+	3 lbs.
Kukri	2L	2	A	\$6.00+	3 lbs.
Machete	2L	2	A	\$1.50	2 lbs.
Nightstick	2N	2	A	\$0.75	1.5 lbs.
Penknife	OL	1	F	\$0.50	—
Pickaxe	3L	2	A	\$1.50	6 lbs.
Pistol Butt	1N	1	A	—	—
Polearm	4L	2	S	\$10.00+	10 lbs.
Rapier	2L	2	F	\$12.00	2.5 lbs.
Rifle Butt	2N	2	A	—	—
Saber	3L	2	A	\$15.00	3 lbs.
Sap	1N	1	F	\$0.25	3 lbs.
Scimitar	3L	2	A	\$10.00+	3 lbs.
Spear	3L	2	A	—	9 lbs.
Straight Razor	OL	1	F	\$0.75	—
Switchblade or Stiletto	1L	1	F	\$1.00	0.5 lbs.
Sword, Cane	2L	2	F	\$10.00+	3 lbs.
Sword, Long	3L	2	A	\$15.00+	3 lbs.
Sword, Short	2L	2	A	\$4.50	2 lbs.
Sword, Two-Handed	4L	3	S	\$20.00+	8 lbs.
Torch, Burning	1L*	2	A	\$0.10	1 lb.

\* See weapon description for special rules

Archaic Firearm	Dmg	Str	Rng	Cap	Rate	Spd	Cost	Wt
Blunderbuss	4L*	3	25 ft.	1 (i)	½**	A	\$40.00+	6 lbs.
Pistol, Flintlock	3L	2	50 ft.	1 (i)	½**	A	\$15.00+	1.5 lbs.
Rifle, Flintlock	3L	2	100 ft.	1 (i)	½**	A	\$20.00+	5.5 lbs.

\* See weapon description for special rules

\*\* Characters with the Instant Reload Talent double this weapon's rate of fire

Modern Pistol	Dmg	Str	Rng	Cap	Rate	Spd	Cost	Wt
.22 Short Automatic	1L	1	50 ft.	6 (m)	M	A	\$6.00	0.5 lbs.
.32 Automatic	2L	2	50 ft.	8 (m)	M	A	\$15.00	1 lb.
Colt Peacemaker	3L	3	50 ft.	6 (r)	M	A	\$40.00	3 lbs.
Derringer	2L	1	10 ft.	1 (i)	1	A	\$4.00	1 lb.
Derringer, Double	2L	1	10 ft.	2 (i)	1	A	\$8.00	1 lb.
Colt M1911	3L	3	50 ft.	7 (m)	M	A	\$40.00	3 lbs.
Luger P08	2L	2	50 ft.	8 (m)	M	A	\$70.00	2 lbs.
Mauser M1896	2L	2	50 ft.	10 (m)	M	A	\$80.00	3 lbs.
Pocket Revolver	2L	2	50 ft.	6 (r)	M	A	\$15.00	1 lb.
S&W .38 Special	2L	2	50 ft.	6 (r)	M	A	\$25.00	2 lbs.
Walther PPK	2L	2	50 ft.	8 (m)	M	A	\$40.00	1 lb.
Webley Mark 1	3L	3	50 ft.	6 (r)	M	A	\$35.00	3 lbs.

Ranged Weapon	Dmg	Str	Rng	Rate	Spd	Cost	Wt
Blowgun	OL*	1	25 ft.	1**	A	\$0.75	1 lb.
Bolas	*	1	25 ft.	1	A	—	2 lbs.
Boomerang	1N	1	25 ft.	1	A	\$0.75	2 lbs.
Bow	2L	2	50 ft.	1**	A	\$5.00	3 lbs.
Crossbow	3L	2	100 ft.	½**	A	\$9.00	7 lbs.
Javelin	1L	2	25 ft.	1	A	\$0.50	2 lbs.
Longbow	3L	3	100 ft.	1**	A	\$12.00+	3 lbs.
Net	*	2	10 ft.	1	S	\$5.00	20 lbs.
Sling	1N	1	50 ft.	1**	A	—	0.5 lbs.
Whip	ON*	1	10 ft.	1	A	\$2.00	2 lbs.

\* See weapon description for special rules

\*\* Characters with the Instant Reload Talent double this weapon's rate of fire

Ammunition	Cost
20 gauge shells (25)	\$1.00
20 gauge slugs (25)	\$1.00
12 gauge shells (25)	\$1.00
12 gauge slugs (25)	\$1.00
10 gauge shells (25)	\$1.25
10 gauge slugs (25)	\$1.25
.22 long rifle (100)	\$0.50
.30-06 (100)	\$8.00
.32 ACP (100)	\$5.00
.38 caliber (100)	\$5.00
.445	\$9.00
.45 ACP (100)	\$9.00
9mm Parabellum (100)	\$6.00
Arrows (20)	\$2.00
Bolts (20)	\$4.00
Flare (1)	\$0.50
Flintlock Shot (25)	\$3.00



# Chapter Five

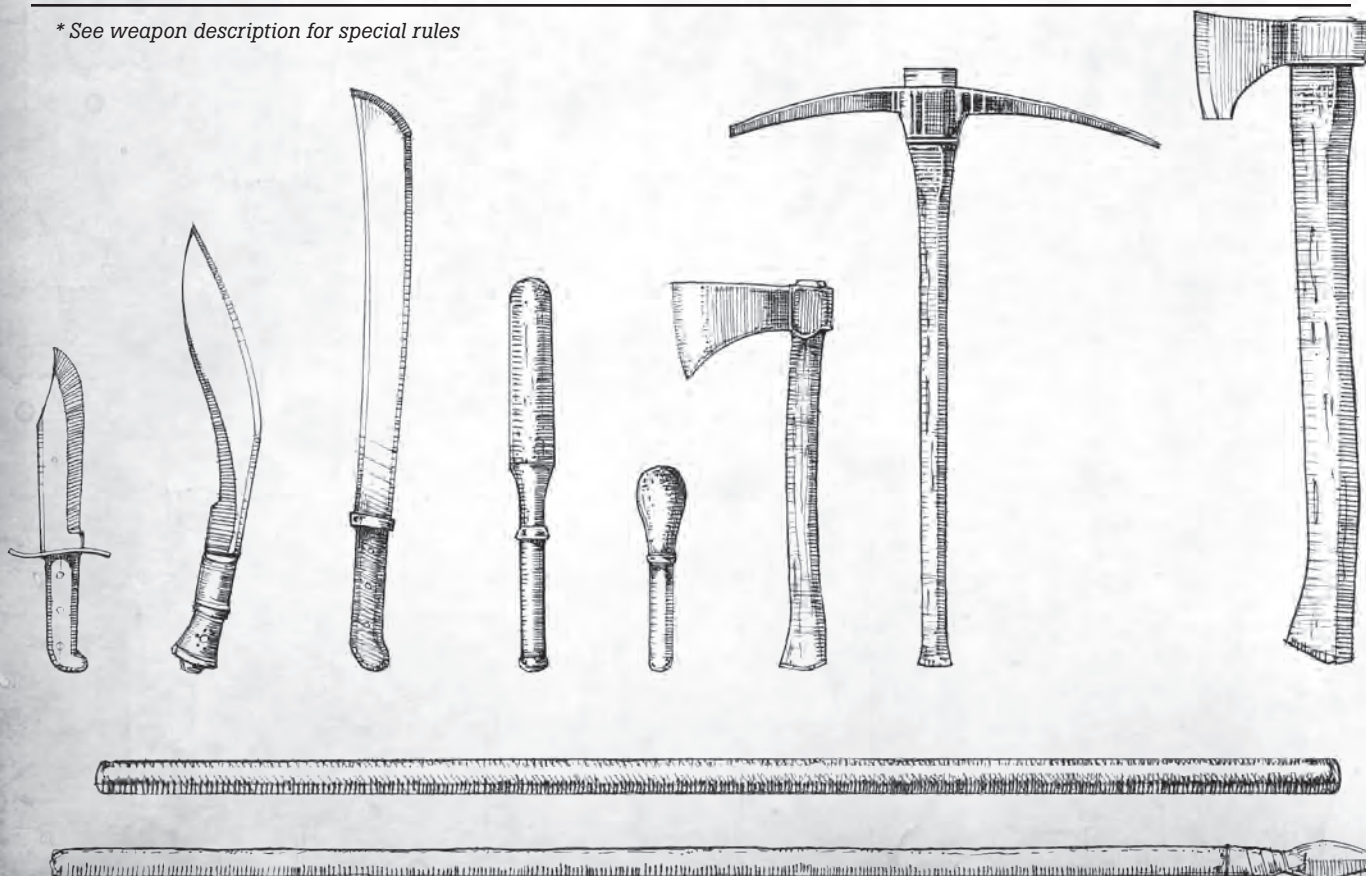
Modern Longarm	Dmg	Str	Rng	Cap	Rate	Spd	Cost	Wt
.22 Bolt-Action Rifle	2L	2	100 ft.	6 (i)	M	A	\$13.00	7.5 lbs.
.30-06 Bolt Action Rifle	3L	2	100 ft.	5 (i)	M	A	\$75.00	9 lbs.
.303 Lee-Enfield Rifle	3L	2	100 ft.	5 (c)	M	A	\$50.00	9 lbs.
Buffalo Rifle	4L	3	100 ft.	1 (i)	½	A	\$100.00	12 lbs.
Mauser Rifle	3L	2	100 ft.	5 (c)	M	A	\$50.00	8.5 lbs.
Shotgun, 20 Gauge	2L	2	25 ft.	5 (i)	M	A	\$35.00	6 lbs.
Shotgun, 12 Gauge	3L	2	25 ft.	5 (i)	M	A	\$40.00	8 lbs.
Shotgun, 10 Gauge	4L	3	25 ft.	5 (i)	M	A	\$60.00	10 lbs.
Shotgun, Sawed-Off	4L	2	10 ft.	2 (i)	M	A	\$20.00	5 lbs.
Springfield M1903 Rifle	3L	2	100 ft.	5 (c)	M	A	\$50.00	9 lbs.
Thompson M1921 SMG	2L	2	50 ft.	50 (d)	A	A	\$100.00	12 lbs.
Winchester M1894	3L	2	100 ft.	8 (i)	M	A	\$40.00	7 lbs.

Heavy Weapon	Dmg	Str	Rng	Cap	Rate	Spd	Cost	Wt
Browning .30 MG	3L	*	100 ft.	100 (b)	A	A	n/a	100 lbs.
Browning M2 .50 MG	4L	*	250 ft.	100 (b)	A	S	n/a	128 lbs.
Browning								
Automatic Rifle	3L	3	100 ft.	20 (m)	A	A	n/a	19 lbs.
Gatling Gun	4L	*	250 ft.	400 (m)	A	S	n/a	500 lbs.

\* This weapon must be mounted on a vehicle or tripod

Explosives	Dmg	Str	Rng	Cap	Rate	Spd	Cost	Wt
Dynamite Stick	4L*	2	10 ft.	n/a	1	A	\$1.00	1 lb.
Flamethrower	3L*	3	25 ft.	6 (i)	1	S	n/a	70 lbs.
Flare Gun	2L*	2	50 ft.	1 (i)	½	A	\$1.00+	2 lbs.
Grenade, Hand	4L*	2	10 ft.	n/a	1	A	n/a	1 lb.
Grenade, Rifle	4L*	2	50 ft.	n/a	1	A	n/a	2 lbs.
Molotov Cocktail	2L*	2	10 ft.	n/a	1	A	n/a	1 lb.

\* See weapon description for special rules





**Weight (Wt):** The weight of the weapon or item in pounds. Characters that carry too much weight cannot move as fast and will tire out sooner.

## MELEE WEAPONS

Although guns are the preferred weapons of choice for most characters, there are times when a knife or sword is far more useful. As the world and its people are more thoroughly explored, strange and exotic weapons are sometimes found and utilized. Explorers who spend a great deal of time among other cultures may learn how to use these weapons. Some of the primitive civilizations beneath the earth's surface know nothing of firearms—they hunt and wage war with axes, bows, and spears. Explorers should not overlook the effectiveness of these simple weapons, especially when angry hordes are approaching and bullets are running low!

**Axe, Hand:** These are small one-handed hatchets, throwing axes, and tomahawks.

**Axe, Two-Handed:** Two-handed axes include battle axes and more mundane axes used for chopping wood.

**Bayonet (Fixed):** A bayonet attached to the end of a rifle allows it to be used as an effective melee weapon, especially when charging or resisting a charge. Most modern military rifles are designed to accept a bayonet.

**Brass Knuckles:** A must for the explorer who prefers to solve problems with his fists, brass knuckles can inflict serious damage. They are small enough to be carried in a pocket and donned when trouble arises. Your character uses his Brawl rating when using brass knuckles.

**Chain:** Chains make excellent weapons, as they can entangle limbs, strangle opponents, or simply bludgeon the victim. If using a chain as a ranged weapon, it has a range of ten feet. Chains longer than ten feet in length cannot be used effectively as a weapon. To entangle an opponent, make a Melee touch attack (see Touch Attacks, p. 126). If your character's attack is successful, no damage is done. Instead, compare the amount of damage your character would have done versus an opponent's Strength rating. If you rolled more damage than her Strength rating, the opponent is entangled and she must succeed in a Strength roll in order to break free on her next turn. If you rolled more damage than twice your opponent's Strength rating, she is entangled and may be either disarmed or knocked to the ground.

**Cleaver:** A heavy blade found in most kitchens and restaurants, cleavers are also sometimes used as part of exotic, Far Eastern fighting styles.

**Club:** Clubs include anything from chair legs, sturdy wooden branches, baseball or cricket bats, and other bludgeoning implements. Because a club can be fashioned from nearly anything, they have no effective cost.

**Club, Two-Handed:** Includes any large club wielded with two hands, such as enormous tree branches or strengthened war clubs.

**Cutlass:** This long, heavy sword has a slightly curved blade and a large, protective hilt that can bash an opponent in the face. Its popularity with pirates and other rogues has never diminished, despite the decline of swords as weapons.

**Dagger:** Daggers include small-bladed weapons of all kinds, from kitchen knives, K-Bars, and unfixed bayonets. Few explorers go anywhere without a dagger (or three) hidden about their person. Daggers can be thrown up to thirty feet.

**Entrenching Tool:** The U.S. Army issues every soldier an entrenching tool. Explorers carry them for both their functionality and their use as an emergency weapon. If your character wishes to do lethal damage with it (by hitting someone with the edge of the entrenching tool), you receive a -2 penalty on your attack roll.

**Hammer:** Includes blacksmith hammers, small sledges, and other one-handed bludgeoning weapons with a metal head.

**Hammer, Two-Handed:** Two-handed hammers include mauls, sledgehammers, and warhammers. Nazis with a bent for the archaic sometimes wield massive warhammers adorned with runes.

**Katana:** Although rare outside of Japan, the officers and agents of that nation carry these fine swords as both a weapon and a sign of authority. The price listed is for a relatively cheap katana, with little adornment. Antique katanas or those made by famous swordsmiths can be virtually priceless.

**Kukri:** This bizarre knife hails from Indonesia and is known for its large blade that curves inward, giving it a nasty cut. They are common in the South Seas, but considered more objects of curiosity or collector's items in the West.

**Machete:** A favorite of explorers everywhere, this is a cleaver-like tool with a large heavy blade. It is normally used to cut through thick vegetation or jungle undergrowth but may be used as a weapon if need be.

**Nightstick:** Also called a billy club or truncheon, nightsticks are carried by law enforcement officials who wield them when use of a gun is considered unwise or unnecessary.



## Chapter Five

**Penknife:** The penknife's blade is tiny and used more as a tool than a weapon, but for the explorer in need, it's good to have one on hand.

**Pick:** Picks can be found in the hands of farmers, laborers, or the slaves of evil masterminds. The sharp point of a pickaxe can inflict tremendous damage.

**Pistol Butt:** Known as "pistol whipping," the butt of a gun can be used to deal damage.

**Polearm:** Polearms are large blades attached to the end of a spear-like pole. There are dozens, if not hundreds, of different types of polearms—glaives, halberds, and naginatas being just a few. In this day and age, they are rarely seen outside of military parades, although evil masterminds may arm their minions with them.

**Rapier:** Rapiers have thin, slender blades designed for thrusting rather than slashing attacks. The guard of the rapier is often large and ornate, used to catch and deflect an opponent's blade. Rapiers are often used in conjunction with a dagger (in the off-hand).

**Rifle Butt:** Most modern longarms are sturdy enough to be used as a melee weapon (by striking someone with the butt of the gun).

**Saber:** Sabers are long, heavy swords—used primarily from horseback—with a slightly curved, single-edged blade.

**Sap:** A sap is a small and sturdy leather pouch with a flexible handle filled with lead shot, sand, or other heavy, dense material. Also known as a blackjack, its main use is to strike someone on the head while they are unaware, more than likely knocking them out in the process.

**Scimitar:** Scimitars include any type of longsword that features a gently curving blade, making it very effective on horseback. Scimitars are extremely common in the Middle East, and with the advent of the modern cinema, the image of the Arabian figure wielding his scimitar has become ingrained in the minds of moviegoers everywhere.

**Spear:** Whether used by primitive cultures or by explorers during a hunt, spears are found in the hands of many people. Spears can be used as melee or ranged weapons, with a ten-foot range.

**Straight Razor:** Although the shape and size of a straight razor makes it inconvenient during combat, the incredibly sharp blade makes it popular with assassins, torturers, and gangsters.

**Stiletto and Switchblade:** Stiletos have blades that remain hidden inside the handle until a button is pressed, causing the blade to emerge vertically from the handle. Switchblades are similar, but the blade flicks out

from the side of the handle. Both are weapons of choice for street hoodlums, assassins, and gangsters.

**Sword, Cane:** A favorite of noblemen and gentrified masterminds, sword canes hold a rapier-like blade inside the shaft of a cane. It is extremely difficult to determine from a cursory glance that a cane contains a sword.

**Sword, Long:** Longswords are essentially any sword with a blade longer than eighteen inches that can be wielded in one or two hands, including the classic style of double-edged blades used by knights of lore.

**Sword, Short:** Short swords include large knives and small double-bladed swords. Short swords are light enough that they can be used in the off-hand, often in conjunction with a pistol.

**Sword, Two-Handed:** Two-handed swords include massive bastard swords, German *zweihanders*, Scottish claymores, and Japanese *no-daichi*. They are slow to use, but deliver incredible amounts of damage.

**Torch, Burning:** A torch is little more than a club with one end lit on fire. As such, it may be used to bludgeon and/or burn an opponent. To burn an opponent, make a Melee touch attack (see Touch Attacks, p. 126). If your character's attack succeeds, she inflicts one point of lethal damage. If her opponent is wearing something combustible—such as loose clothing or has been doused with a flammable liquid—he is set on fire and will continue to take fire damage each turn until he puts himself out (see Fire, p. 135).

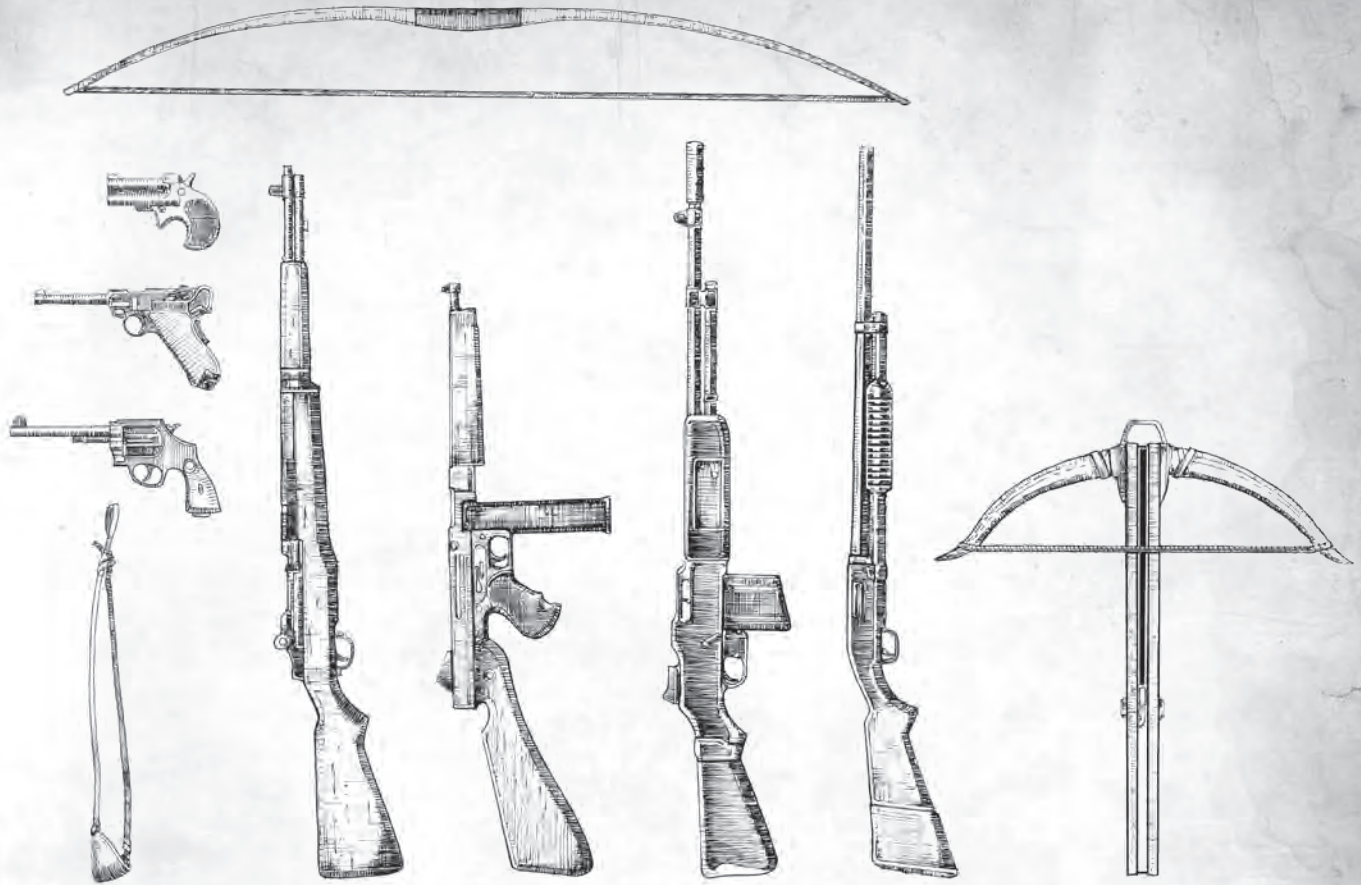
## RANGED WEAPONS

Described here are a variety of ranged weapons. They are broken down into primitive and modern—primitive weapons are often, but not always, found in the hands of less civilized people.

### Primitive Ranged Weapons

**Blowgun:** Primitive jungle-dwelling people use blowguns mainly for hunting small game. They have a short range and deal minimal damage, but the darts of these weapons are commonly coated with some form of toxin—the dart need only break the skin for this poison to do its work. Make an Archery attack roll as normal. If your character's attack succeeds, he inflicts normal damage and his opponent must resist the effects of the poison on the dart (see Poisons and Drugs, p. 136).





**Bolas:** Bolas are small weights attached to two or three long slender cords. They are rapidly twirled and thrown at the target, who becomes entangled as the weights whip around her limbs. To entangle an opponent, make an Archery touch attack (see Touch Attacks, p. 126). If your character's attack is successful, no damage is done. Instead, compare the amount of damage your character would have done versus the opponent's Strength rating. If you rolled more damage than her Strength rating, the opponent is entangled and she must spend a turn to free herself from the bolas. If you rolled more damage than twice the opponent's Strength rating, she is trapped and cannot escape until someone frees her.

**Boomerang:** A curved stick that is thrown at an opponent. If the boomerang misses the target, it will loop back in the direction of the user. Boomerangs are relatively easy to make for those who know how, and are excellent for hunting small game. If your character misses his target, but you rolled at least two successes on your Archery roll, the boomerang returns to your character and may be thrown again. Boomerangs normally inflict nonlethal damage, but metal ones may do lethal damage and require a special glove in order to catch them.

**Bow:** Bows are still used by some indigenous tribes and long-lost civilizations as the ranged weapon of choice.

They can shoot a variety of different arrow types.

**Crossbow:** Crossbows are rare, but are still sometimes used by hunters or found hanging on the walls of stately homes and castles. Crossbows fire projectiles called bolts, which are shorter than regular arrows. Crossbows take one turn to reload after firing.

**Javelin:** Javelins are slender, light, throwing weapons used for war and hunting game. They are ineffective during melee combat.

**Longbow:** Bigger, thicker, and requiring more strength than a regular bow, longbows have superior range and penetration.

**Net:** Primarily used for either fishing or trapping game, nets are found in the hands of those wanting to capture their prey alive. A net that can be carried and thrown by a single person is ten-feet-long by ten-feet-wide (large enough to catch a Size 0 creature) and includes a trailing rope used to pull the captured victim back. To entangle an opponent, make an Archery touch attack (see Touch Attacks, p. 126). If your character's attack is successful, no damage is done. Instead, compare the amount of damage your character would have done versus opponent's Strength rating. If you rolled more damage than her Strength rating, the opponent is entangled and she must spend a turn to free herself



from the net. If you rolled more damage than twice the opponent's Strength rating, she is trapped and cannot escape until someone frees her.

**Sling:** Slings use either small rocks or lead bullets, and are still utilized by primitive people as an effective hunting tool. Because slings are crafted from simple, easy-to-find materials, they effectively have no cost.

**Whip:** Whips can entangle limbs, wrap around throats, or safely swing an explorer over pits and chasms. Whips do little actual damage, but inflict incredibly painful wounds, and produce a loud crack that can intimidate lesser foes. To entangle an opponent, make a Melee touch attack (see Touch Attacks, p. 126). If your character's attack is successful, no damage is done. Instead, compare the amount of damage your character would have done versus the opponent's Strength rating. If you rolled more damage than his Strength rating, the opponent is entangled and he must succeed in a Strength roll in order to break free on his next turn. If you rolled more damage than twice the opponent's Strength rating, he is entangled and may be either disarmed or knocked to the ground.

### Arrow Types

Bows can shoot a variety of different arrow types, each with different properties. Arrows are purchased by type and you may not combine the properties of more than one arrow type.

**Standard:** Typical arrows with a hard, pointed tip that do normal weapon damage.

**Blunt:** Arrows with a broad, blunt head that do non-lethal weapon damage.

**Fire:** Arrows designed to ignite a target. They suffer a -1 penalty to weapon damage, but may set a target on fire. Make an Archery touch attack (see Touch Attacks, p. 126). If your character's attack succeeds, she inflicts one point of lethal damage. If the opponent is wearing something combustible—such as loose clothing or has been doused with a flammable liquid—he is set on fire and will continue to take fire damage each turn until he puts himself out (see Fire, p. 135).

**Hunting:** Arrows with a sharp or jagged head designed to do maximum damage. They add +1 bonus die to weapon damage. They cost double the normal arrow price.

**Poison:** Arrows dipped in a poison or toxin. They suffer a -1 penalty to weapon damage but may poison an opponent. Make an Archery attack roll as normal. If your character's attack succeeds, he inflicts damage and his opponent must resist the effects of the poison on the arrow (see Poisons and Drugs, p. 136).

## Blackpowder Firearms

Blackpowder firearms are rarely seen, except by long-lost tribes of people who managed to gain some understanding of gunpowder or the occasional hunter who insists on doing things the hard way.

**Blunderbuss:** Blunderbusses are blackpowder weapons with large, flaring barrels that project gouts of shot in a wide cone. Each ten-foot range increment spreads the cone by five feet, allowing the wielder to attack multiple opponents with one shot (e.g., if your character fires a blunderbuss at a target twenty feet away, you suffer a -2 penalty on your attack roll, but will target the opponent and anyone standing next to him). A Blunderbuss can be packed with tiny bits of metal, nails, and rocks, making it versatile in the field. It takes one turn to reload a blunderbuss.

**Pistol, Flintlock:** With the advent of cartridges, flintlock firearms have long gone out of favor, but can still be found with enthusiasts, hunters, and extremely backwater communities. It takes one turn to reload a flintlock pistol.

**Rifle, Flintlock:** These include slightly more advanced versions of the primitive firearms, with rifling in the barrel for better accuracy. It takes one turn to reload a flintlock rifle.

## Modern Ranged Weapons

Firearms were undergoing a bit of a revolution in the 1930s. For the first time, average citizens were able to purchase and possess automatic weapons (e.g., the Thompson SMG), which led to a virtual arms race between law enforcement and the criminal element. For explorers, firearms were easy to obtain, powerful, and sturdy enough to withstand the rigors of the wilds.

## Modern Pistols

Semi-automatic pistols became increasingly popular, reliable, and accessible during this time. While most explorers enjoy the reliability of their revolvers, the capacity and strength of semi-automatics is hard to resist.

**.22 Short Automatic:** While not as small as a Derringer, this tiny pistol was designed as either a "lady's" weapon or a back-up pistol to be worn in an ankle holster. It is generally used as a weapon of last resort.

**.32 Automatic:** As clip-fed pistols grew in popularity, numerous manufacturers made their own versions



of this small .32 caliber pistol. It doesn't deliver much of a punch, but is perfect as a holdout pistol.

**Colt Peacemaker:** Although long out of date, the Colt Peacemaker can still be found in the hands of those in the Wild West or in backwater lands. It fires powerful .45 caliber rounds.

**Derringer and Double Derringer:** Although there are dozens of different companies that make such tiny holdout pistols, the Derringer is easily the most famous and pervasive. It is a concealable weapon that fires .32 caliber rounds. The Derringer holds a single shot, while the Double Derringer holds two, with separate barrels and triggers.

**Colt M1911:** This powerful pistol is the main sidearm of the U.S. Army. The sturdy construction and heavy stopping power of its .45 caliber slug make it popular with explorers everywhere.

**Luger P08:** Sleek, elegant, and effective, the Luger P08 is the standard firearm for officers of the Nazi regime.

**Mausers M1896:** One of the most distinctive pistols ever made, the Mauser is often known as the "Broom-handle." The magazine loads into a chamber in front of the trigger guard, and the handle has a slot for a stock attachment. Mausers are popular sidearms both

for Nazi explorers and those looking for a bit of flair.

**Pocket Revolver:** This is the name for a huge variety of brands that make essentially the same type of weapon. A pocket revolver is a .32 caliber weapon designed more for concealment than firepower.

**Smith and Wesson M1917 Revolver:** This reliable revolver is found in the hands of police officers within the United States and Canada.

**Walther PPK:** The Walther PPK is a relatively new weapon designed to replace the Luger (described above) for the German Army. Although small and easy to use, the Walther lacks the punch of most similarly-sized pistols.

**Webley Mark 1 Revolver:** This powerful handgun uses .445 Webley rounds, making it comparable to the Colt M1911 in terms of firepower. It was the common sidearm for the British Army up until a few years past the turn of the century. Explorers enjoy its stopping power and heft. It is commonly worn with a lanyard attached to the butt to ensure that it doesn't fall far from the user's grasp. To load the weapon, the user must open up the gun, which ejects the spent cartridges.

## Modern Longarms

Although there are still a few places in the world that employ blackpowder weapons, almost every other modern longarm uses cartridge rounds. Few explorers would head out on an expedition without a rifle, shotgun, or other powerful weapon for hunting or protection.

**.22 Bolt-Action Rifle:** There are hundreds of companies that produce these simple weapons. They are effective for hunting small game and for target shooting, and are far more likely to be found in the possession of farmers than soldiers.

**.303 Lee-Enfield Rifle:** The Lee-Enfield is a ubiquitous rifle found in client states of the British Empire. It can be loaded with a ten-round magazine, a five-round stripper clip, or individually loaded for single shots. The robust design makes it extremely popular with soldiers everywhere.

**.30-06 Bolt-Action Rifle:** A popular hunting firearm, this rifle is often fitted with a scope for maximum accuracy.

**Buffalo Rifle:** The weapon of choice for big-game hunters everywhere, this monstrous rifle fires .50 caliber rounds and is meant to bring down the largest game, including elephants, crocodiles, and, of course, buffalo. It is a single-shot weapon that requires loading after each shot.

### Shotgun Ammunition

One appeal of shotguns is that they can be used to fire several different types of shot. Described below are some popular options.

**Buckshot:** The most common shell, buckshot fires relatively large pieces of shot for maximum damage—used for hunting deer, elk, or by the police or military for anti-personnel. Buckshot produces the damage shown for each shotgun listed.

**Birdshot:** This shot is considerably smaller in size and is used for shooting down birds without completely pulverizing them in the process. It is still lethal, but deals much less damage than buckshot. Birdshot suffers a -1 penalty to weapon damage.

**Slugs:** This is a solid slug of lead that deals massive amounts of damage. It is used for hunting large, dangerous game such as buffalo or bear. However, it can only hit a single target instead of all targets in a spray. Slugs gain a +1 bonus to weapon damage.

**Rock Salt:** Shells can have their buckshot or birdshot removed and replaced with rock salt. Although still damaging at point blank range, it merely deals an incredibly painful sting from a distance as the salt burrows into flesh. Damage from rock salt retains the number of dice damage, but is changed from lethal to nonlethal damage.



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**Mauser Rifle:** In various forms, the Mauser has served as Germany's primary weapon since before the turn of the century. It is a bolt-action rifle that uses a five-round stripper clip. The Mauser's excellent design and prolific numbers means that it can be found in the hands of soldiers all around the world.

**Shotgun, 20 Gauge:** Used primarily for hunting ducks, geese, and other waterfowl, these come in either five-round pump action or double-barreled models.

**Shotgun, 12 Gauge:** The most common type of shotgun used by hunters, farmers, and trap shooters. It comes in either five-round pump action or double-barreled models.

**Shotgun, 10 Gauge:** The ten-gauge shotgun is the most powerful of its type. This massive gun is used for hunting large game.

**Shotgun, Sawed-Off:** Sawing off the barrels of a shotgun (typically a twelve- or ten-gauge) makes this weapon easier to use in close combat, spraying the shot in a greater cone, but drastically reducing the range. Each ten-foot range increment spreads the cone by five feet, allowing the wielder to attack multiple opponents with one shot (e.g., if your character fires a sawed-off shotgun at a target twenty feet away, you suffer a -2 penalty on your attack roll, but will target the opponent and anyone standing next to him).

**Springfield M1903 Rifle:** The Springfield M1903 served as the basic rifle for foot soldiers of the U.S. Army and was recently replaced by the M1 Garand. Thousands of Springfields can still be found in the hands of certain soldiers, as well as in armies and militias around the world.

**Thompson M1921 SMG:** The only automatic weapon legally available for civilian use (in the United States), the Thompson is the staple weapon for gangsters, rumrunners, and G-Men. It uses a fifty-round drum (giving it a distinct shape). This weapon is capable of autofire (see Autofire, p. 118).

**Winchester M1894 Rifle:** This rugged longarm found its heyday in the American West, where it was manufactured by the millions and carried by farmers, ranchers, and desperadoes of all types. Its classic lever-action design and excellent accuracy make it popular with explorers.

### Heavy Weapons

Heavy weapons are found only in the hands of the military or by explorers with patrons who have close ties to the military. They are heavy, loud, and effective at mowing down opponents. Unless otherwise stated,

heavy weapons cannot be fired unless they are placed on a solid object or mount.

**Browning .30 Machine Gun:** The Browning .30 caliber machine gun is a mainstay of the U.S. Army and is carried by troops, mounted on jeeps, and may even be utilized as the primary weapons of aging biplanes. Although a single person can operate it, the Browning works best with two personnel—one as the shooter and the other feeding the ammunition and reloading. It must be set on an object or mounted on a bipod or tripod to be fired. A water tank surrounds the barrel, lending to its great weight and bulk, and keeps this enormous weapon cooled. This weapon is capable of autofire (see Autofire, p. 118).

**Browning Automatic Rifle:** Commonly referred to only by the acronym B.A.R., the Browning Automatic Rifle is the standard "heavy weapon" carried by foot soldiers in the U.S. Army. Because of the size and weight, it is commonly issued to the largest and strongest soldier in a squad. It can be fired single shot or on automatic. This weapon is capable of autofire (see Autofire, p. 118).

**Browning M2 .50 Machine Gun:** This huge, air-cooled machine gun was ostensibly created as an anti-vehicle weapon—use against personnel is prohibited by international law, but few soldiers pay attention to the rules when the enemy is bearing down. This weapon is capable of autofire (see Autofire, p. 118).

**Gatling Gun:** The first Gatling guns were used during the Civil War and were fired using a hand crank. Mad scientists and brilliant engineers of the 1930s have taken the main principal of the Gatling gun and made it better through the use of clockwork automation, steam power, or electrical current. These weapons can be mounted on their own carriage, attached to a pintle mount on vehicles, or incorporated into the arms of robots and steam armor. This weapon is capable of autofire (see Autofire, p. 118).

## EXPLOSIVES AND ODDITIES

This section includes explosives and other weapons that do not fall into any other particular category.

**Dynamite, Stick:** Explorers often carry sticks of dynamite during expeditions both for mundane purposes, and also as makeshift weapons. A stick of dynamite explodes in a five-foot radius, damaging everything in the area (see Area of Effect Attacks, p. 127). Dynamite is typically sold in bundles of twelve sticks and requires fuses, cut to specific length (one inch of fuse burns in about one second).



Wiring multiple sticks of dynamite together grants a +2 damage bonus and increases the explosion radius by five feet for each additional stick (maximum of six sticks).

**Flamethrower:** The Germans were the first to use a man-portable flamethrower, employing it against the French during WWI. The modern version consists of a heavy backpack with two canisters—one carries the fuel and the other is pressurized, making the carrier a potential walking bomb if the flamethrower is hit by gunfire. Explorers may carry them to flush out dangerous game that responds only to fire. To use a flamethrower, make a Firearms touch attack (see Touch Attacks, p. 126). If your character's attack is successful, her target takes three points of lethal damage and immediately catches fire. The target continues to take fire damage each round until he puts himself out (see Fire, p. 135).

**Flare Gun:** Flare guns are intended for use as a signaling device, but can be utilized as a weapon in a real emergency. If shot in the air, the flare releases an incredibly bright light that illuminates a 50-foot radius; this effect lasts for thirty seconds. To use a flare as a weapon, make a Firearms touch attack (see Touch Attacks, p. 126). If your character's attack succeeds, he inflicts one point of lethal damage. If the opponent is wearing something combustible—such as loose clothing or has been doused with a flammable liquid—she is set on fire and will continue to take fire damage each turn until she puts herself out.

**Grenade, Hand:** While there are several different types of grenades, all are treated the same in regard to the rules. Hand grenades explode in a five-foot radius, damaging everything in the area (see Area of Effect Attacks, p. 127). Grenades normally come six to a box.

**Grenade, Rifle:** These special grenades are designed to be fired from the end of a rifle, propelling it much farther than anyone could ever throw. Because it triggers on impact, a rifle grenade cannot detonate unless used in this manner—dropping or striking it doesn't provide the strength necessary to make it explode. Rifle grenades explode in a five-foot radius, damaging everything in the area (see Area of Effect Attacks, p. 127). Grenades normally come six to a box.

**Molotov Cocktail:** A Molotov cocktail is a simple explosive made from gasoline mixed with a small bit of oil in a breakable glass bottle. The top is corked off with a greasy bit of cloth or rag. When lit and thrown, the bottle shatters, showering a five-foot radius with burning fuel (see Area of Effect Attacks, p. 127). An opponent inside the area of effect takes two points of lethal damage and immediately catches fire. He continues to take fire damage each round until he puts himself out (see Fire, p. 135).

## GENERAL EQUIPMENT

Explorers who head out into the field make sure to pack the right type of gear in order to survive. Listed below are some of the clothing, armor, equipment, and tools that might come in handy during the course of an adventure. If a piece of equipment is not listed, a quick search on the Internet or in a 1930s catalog can yield the price (and sometimes weight) of the desired item.

**Defense:** The Defense bonus provided by the piece of armor.

**Strength:** The minimum Strength rating needed to wear the armor. A character with a lower Strength rating suffers a -2 penalty to attack rolls for each point of Strength he falls below the minimum.

**Dexterity:** The penalty to Dexterity due to the restrictive nature of wearing the armor. This penalty affects all Dexterity-related Skills and abilities.

**Cost:** The cost of the item in U.S. dollars in the 1930s. This number may be adjusted up or down to account for supply and demand.

**Weight:** The weight of the item in pounds. Characters who carry too much weight cannot move as fast and will tire out sooner.

## Armor

Armor and shields are rarely, if ever, used in the 1930s. The power and accuracy of most firearms render them virtually obsolete. However, characters in the Hollow Earth are likely to run across people still using archaic armor and shields.

Armor	Defense	Strength	Dexterity	Cost	Weight
Chainmail	+2	2		\$50.00	25 lbs.
Leather	+1	1		\$25.00	15 lbs.
Plate	+4	3	-1	\$100.00	50 lbs.
Shield, Metal	+2	3		\$25.00	10 lbs.
Shield, Wood	+1	2		\$10.00	5 lbs.

Clothing	Cost	Weight
Diving Suit, Basic	\$12.00	4 lbs.
Diving Suit, Dry	\$75.00	8 lbs.
Outfit, Arctic	\$40.00	10 lbs.
Outfit, Average	\$10.00	2 lbs.
Outfit, Desert	\$20.00	2 lbs.
Outfit, Explorers	\$20.00	2 lbs.
Outfit, Luxury	\$50.00+	2 lbs.
Outfit, Poor	\$5.00	2 lbs.
Outfit, Workman	\$7.50	2 lbs.
Uniform	\$10.00	2 lbs.



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Survival Gear	Cost	Weight
Backpack	\$5.00	4 lbs.
Bedroll	\$3.00	—
Binoculars	\$30.00	2 lbs.
Blanket, Survival	\$2.00	1 lb.
Camp Cot, Portable	\$6.00	—
Candles (12)	\$0.25	1 lb.
Crampons, Ice	\$5.00	2 lbs.
Flare (1)	\$0.50	0.5 lbs.
Flashlight	\$3.00	1 lb.
Goggles, Ice	\$2.00	—
Grappling Hook	\$3.00	2 lbs.
Kit, First Aid	\$2.50	1 lb.
Kit, Personal Basics	\$1.00	—
Lamp, Spelunker	\$6.00	1 lb.
Lantern, Carbide	\$0.50	2 lbs.
Mosquito Netting	\$2.00	1 lb.
Pitons, Climbing (6)	\$0.50	1 lb.
Rain Slicker	\$5.00	2 lbs.
Rations, Field (per day)	\$0.50	1 lb.
Rope, 50-ft.	\$1.50	4 lbs.
Sleeping Bag	\$4.00	5 lbs.
Tarpaulin, 20-ft. by 20-ft.	\$10.00	5 lbs.
Telescope, Collapsible	\$50.00	1 lb.
Tent, 1-Person	\$9.00	5 lbs.
Tent, 2-Person	\$12.00	10 lbs.
Tent, 4-Person	\$25.00	20 lbs.

Professional Equipment	Cost	Weight
Camera, Movie	\$100.00	20 lbs.
Camera, Still	\$4.00	2 lbs.
Film, Still Camera (24)	\$0.50	—
Film Canister, Movie	\$10.00	2 lbs.
Kit, Disguise	\$8.00	1 lb.
Kit, Lockpicking	\$30.00	1 lb.
Kit, Photo Development	\$15.00	3 lbs.
Kit, Surgeon	\$15.00	3 lbs.
Transmitter, Portable	\$500.00	100 lbs.
Tripod, Camera	\$8.00	10 lbs.

Tools	Cost	Weight
Bolt Cutters	\$3.50	5 lbs.
Crowbar	\$2.00	2 lbs.
Glasscutter	\$0.75	—
Hacksaw	\$0.75	1 lb.
Handsaw	\$2.50	1 lb.
Kit, Blacksmith	\$100.00	100 lbs.
Kit, Carpenter	\$10.00	50 lbs.
Knife, Swiss Army	\$1.00	—
Pickaxe	\$1.50	6 lbs.
Shovel	\$1.50	5 lbs.
Toolkit, Mechanic	\$15.00	35 lbs.
Wire cutters	\$1.25	—

Misc. Equipment	Cost	Weight
Alarm Clock	\$3.00	0.5 lbs.
Bandolier	\$1.00	2 lbs.
Cigarette Lighter	\$0.35	—
Fuse, 10-ft.	\$2.00	0.5 lbs.
Gas Mask	\$15.00	2 lbs.
Handcuffs	\$2.50	—
Holster, Belt	\$3.00	2 lbs.
Holster, Concealed	\$4.00	1 lb.
Kit, Gun Cleaning	\$4.00	0.5 lbs.
Phonograph	\$50.00	10 lbs.
Radio Receiver	\$50.00	20 lbs.
Scope	\$30.00	—
Suitcase	\$6.00	5 lbs.
Typewriter	\$35.00	10 lbs.
Watch, Pocket or Wrist	\$5.00+	—

**Chainmail:** Armor made of interlocking metal rings. It provides a +2 Passive Defense bonus without impeding movement.

**Leather:** Armor made of thick hide or stiff leather that provides a +1 Passive Defense bonus without overly restricting movement.

**Plate:** Armor made from thick, shaped pieces of metal. It provides a +4 Passive Defense bonus, but restricts movement. Characters wearing plate armor suffer a -1 Dexterity penalty.

**Shield, Metal:** A large, shaped piece of metal strapped to your character's forearm. It provides a +2 Passive Defense bonus, but prevents your character from using his shield hand for anything else.

**Shield, Wood:** A large piece of thick wood strapped to your character's forearm. It provides a +1 Passive Defense bonus, but prevents your character from using his shield hand for anything else.

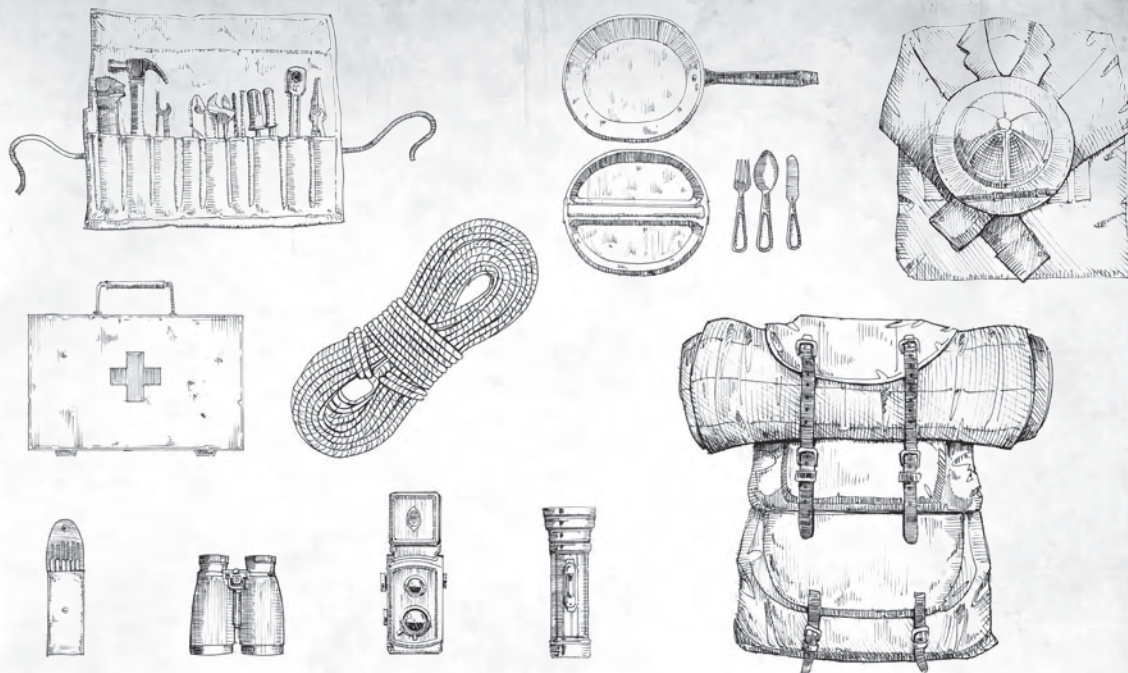
## Clothing

Clothing makes the explorer. Rather than describe each article of clothing, *Hollow Earth Expedition* assumes clothing is purchased in outfits that include pants (or skirt or dress for women), shirt, coat, underwear, and shoes. Every character is assumed to own at least one average outfit at the beginning of the game; additional outfits must be purchased.

**Diving Suit, Basic:** This includes a tight swimsuit and a snorkel, mask, and flippers. Most divers also carry a knife, which is purchased separately.

**Diving Suit, Dry:** This specially treated body suit fits over the diver's body and comes with gloves. Designed for use in cold water, this suit keeps the diver dry, unless the suit is somehow torn or breached.





**Outfit, Arctic:** This outfit is designed for survival in extreme cold. It includes multiple layers of down or quilt, heavy boots or mukluks, gloves, parka, and hat. Ice goggles (see Outdoor and Survival Gear) must be purchased separately.

**Outfit, Average:** Average outfits are just that—the fashions and material worn by regular people during a typical day.

**Outfit, Desert:** Desert outfits are designed to protect a person from the searing heat of the sun and wind, while still being loose and comfortable. It includes boots or sandals, breeches, a cotton or a silk shirt, and a hat, turban, or kaftan.

**Outfit, Explorer:** Explorer outfits vary slightly in terms of function, but include heavy khaki pants or shorts, a multi-pocketed shirt, and sturdy boots. They also come with headgear, including pith helmets.

**Outfit, Luxury:** This category includes business suits or “casual” clothing made from the finest of materials and latest fashions. This outfit may grant a +1 Charisma bonus in circumstances where a person’s clothing could have a social impact.

**Outfit, Poor:** This outfit is dirty, shabby, out of date, patched together, or all of the above. This clothing may result in a –1 Charisma penalty in circumstances where a person’s clothing could have a social impact.

**Outfit, Workman:** Workman outfits include denim or canvas pants, a thick cotton shirt, leather apron, boots, and other accoutrements used by factory workers, carpenters, and other blue-collar vocations.

**Uniform:** This is a catchall category for any type of uniform—from a soldier’s fatigues to a doorman’s outfit. Uniforms can be practical and designed to withstand abuse, or decorative and impractical for anything beyond ceremony.

## Outdoor and Survival Gear

Explorers who head into uncharted territory make sure they carry the necessary equipment to get there and back.

**Backpack:** A sturdy frame pack that can withstand the rigors of exploration from the arctic to deepest jungle. Backpacks can hold up to 100 pounds of equipment.

**Bedroll:** A simple, cotton padding that can be easily rolled up and carried.

**Binoculars:** These binoculars represent the tough and durable instruments issued to soldiers in the field. They allow a character to see up to four times farther than the unaided eye. Price and weight include case.

**Blanket, Survival:** This is a thick cotton blanket that has been treated to repel water on one side. It is vital in colder climates.

**Camp Cot, Portable:** A camp cot has a collapsible frame, making it easy to transport. Sleeping on a camp cot always makes for a comfortable night’s sleep off the ground.

**Candles (12):** The price and weight are for a dozen white, beeswax candles. Each taper candle burns for eight hours.



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**Canteen:** A canteen holds one quart of liquid and includes a strap to be worn over the shoulder, or a clip to attach to a belt.

**Compass:** No explorer worth his salt would venture into the unknown without a compass. However, those who delve into Hollow Earth may discover that getting a bearing on magnetic north is nearly impossible and they must find alternate methods to determine direction.

**Crampons, Ice:** Ice crampons are metal spikes that strap on to the bottom of an explorer's boots. They allow a person to move at normal speed while traveling on ice.

**Flare:** A flare is roughly the size of a stick of dynamite. When the cap is removed and struck on the top of the flare, it erupts into an extremely bright red light. A flare provides illumination in a ten-foot radius. If used as an improvised weapon, treat as a burning torch (see Melee weapons, p. 145). A flare lasts for ten minutes before expiring.

**Flashlight:** Also known as a "torch," this battery-operated light produces a ten-foot cone of illumination. The batteries can last for two hours on continuous use before needing to be replaced.

**Goggles, Ice:** Ice goggles are large eye coverings, often carved from wood. They have a central horizontal slit that prevents snow-blindness in sunny, arctic conditions. Wearing ice goggles severely limits a person's view and imposes a -2 penalty to all rolls involving sight.

**Grappling Hook:** A three-tined hook used for climbing, granting +2 bonus on climbing rolls. If used as an improvised weapon, treat as a club (see Melee Weapons, p. 145).

**Kit, First Aid:** This small, portable kit contains basic materials to perform simple first aid. A First Aid Kit provides a +2 bonus to first aid rolls, and is good for five uses.

**Kit, Personal Basics:** This basic toiletry kit contains a razor, shaving cream, combs, brushes, toothbrush, and other personal hygiene essentials.

**Lantern, Battery:** A battery-operated lantern throws light in a thirty-foot cone (five feet wide for every ten feet of distance); the battery lasts for four hours on continuous use before needing to be replaced.

**Mosquito Netting:** This tightly woven mesh is draped over sleeping quarters to allow the breeze to pass through, but keep mosquitoes and other insects from getting in.

**Pitons, Climbing (6):** These specialized spikes are designed to pierce into rock and hold on. They have rings on the back, allowing attachments for hooks and ropes.

**Rain Slicker:** This rubberized or water-resistant canvas coat comes with a hood to keep your character dry.

**Rations, Field (per day):** Compact, well-preserved, nutritious food—such as pemmican and hardtack—suitable for travel.

**Rope, 50-foot:** A fifty-foot length of hemp rope, used for climbing, setting up tents, or tying up prisoners.

**Sleeping Bag:** A thick sleeping bag effective down to temperatures of zero degrees Fahrenheit.

**Spelunker Lamp:** This battery-operated lamp has a strap that allows it to be worn on a person's forehead (or over a helmet). The light shines in a thirty-foot cone (five feet wide for every ten feet of distance), and the battery is good for two hours before needing to be replaced.

**Tarpaulin:** A twenty-foot by twenty-foot sheet of canvas with eyelets on the corners and middle edges, making it ideal for protecting an encampment from inclement weather.

**Telescope, Collapsible:** Although considered something of a relic, some explorers still carry and use telescopes. They can be extended to allow a character to see up to eight times farther than the unaided eye, and they collapse for easy carrying. Because your character uses only one eye when looking through a telescope, the field of vision is flat and does not grant easy depth perception.

**Tent, 1-Person:** A tent (canvas, hemp rope, and metal stakes) small enough to be carried by a single person.

**Tent, 2-Person:** As above, but with enough room to comfortably hold two people and their gear.

**Tent, 4-Person:** As above, but with enough room to comfortably hold four people and their gear. This size tent is commonly carried on a pack mule or in a vehicle, for ease of transport.

## Professional Equipment

Professional equipment includes any gear that requires a certain skill (e.g., photography or surgery) to be used effectively.

**Camera, Movie:** A relatively portable camera that can be carried by a single person. Movie cameras must be combined with moving picture film to operate, and should be mounted on a camera tripod for best results.

**Camera, Still:** A hand-held camera with a large flash that takes black-and-white pictures.

**Film, Moving Picture:** This film comes in a large canister that affixes to the top of a moving picture camera. It holds enough film to shoot ten minutes worth of pictures.



**Film, Still Camera:** A roll of film (with 24 exposures) for a regular still-shot camera.

**Kit, Disguise:** A portable box that contains basic makeup, fake noses, mustaches, spirit gum, and other material used to create an effective disguise. This kit will provide a +2 bonus to disguise rolls, and is good for five uses.

**Kit, Lockpicking:** A lockpicking kit contains picks, tongs, tweezers, skeleton keys, and other implements used to open locks. This kit provides a +2 bonus to lockpicking rolls.

**Kit, Photo Development:** Includes all the necessary equipment and chemicals to develop 100 photographs.

**Kit, Surgeon's:** A surgeon's kit has everything necessary to perform emergency surgeries in the field. It includes scalpels, forceps, bandages, sulfa powder, a pint of ether, gauze, and other specialized medical equipment. This grants a +2 bonus to Medicine rolls, and is good for ten uses.

**Transmitter, Portable:** The term "portable" is a relative term for this radio. This is a large transmitter that must be hooked up to some form of power supply to operate. A portable transmitter weighs 200 pounds.

**Tripod, Camera:** A tripod used for mounting a moving-picture camera.

## Tools

The tools described here are typically grouped into "kits" of several types of tools and equipment that are commonly used by a craftsman, repairman, or artisan. Unique tools, or those commonly used alone, receive their own description.

**Bolt Cutters:** Bolt cutters give a +2 bonus to Strength rolls when cutting through metal, such as locks.

**Crowbar:** A crowbar grants a +2 bonus to Strength rolls when breaking open chests, prying walls apart, or performing other feats of brute strength. It can also be used as a club.

**Glasscutter:** A small, specialized tool used for making clean cuts through glass.

**Hacksaw:** A small saw used to cut through metal. A character can cut through one inch of metal every ten minutes.

**Handsaw:** A small, portable saw with a sheath.

**Kit, Blacksmith:** Includes small anvil, tongs, hammers, and other implements used to forge tools and weapons by hand.

**Kit, Carpenter:** Includes hammers, awls, planes, rulers, a saw, and other implements used for carpentry.

**Kit, Watchmaker's:** This kit contains all the tools necessary to fix tiny, intricate watches and other fragile and detailed mechanics. It includes a jeweler's loupe for close-up work.

**Knife, Swiss Army:** No explorer should leave home without one of these. The classic Swiss Army Knife has a penknife, corkscrew, awl, bottle opener, tiny scissors, and mini saw blade.

**Pickaxe:** In addition to loosening dirt and stone, a pickaxe can also make an effective melee weapon.

**Shovel:** An essential tool for explorers involved in excavations and archaeological work. If used as a weapon, treat as a two-handed club. If your character wishes to do lethal damage with it (by hitting someone with the edge of the shovel), you receive a -2 penalty on your attack roll.

**Toolkit, Mechanic:** This heavy, portable toolkit includes wrenches, screwdrivers, hammers, pliers, and other basic tools that mechanics use to fix and build equipment.

**Wire Cutters:** These small clippers are used to cut through thin wire, such as the kind found on chain-link fences or barbed wire.

## Miscellaneous Equipment

Described below are various pieces of equipment that do not fall into any given category.

**Alarm Clock:** A basic wind-up alarm clock.

**Bandolier:** A bandolier is a leather strap worn across the chest. It has slots to hold fifty individual rounds of ammunition.

**Cigarette Lighter:** A metal butane lighter that contains enough fuel for thirty minutes of constant burning. It will illuminate a ten-foot diameter with dim, flickering light.

**Fuse:** This is a fuse used for detonating dynamite. It must be lit with an open flame to activate. Most fuses are designed to burn at a rate of one inch per second.

**Gas Mask:** First utilized in significant numbers during WWI, gas masks come with a filter canister that provides protection against airborne poisons and gases.

**Handcuffs:** Steel handcuffs used by law enforcement officers around the world.

**Holster, Belt:** A leather pistol holster that attaches to a belt.

**Holster, Concealed:** This specially designed holster is



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meant to hide a small pistol under clothing. It is typically worn on the back, under the shoulder, or on the ankle.

**Kit, Gun Cleaning:** Crucial for keeping guns in operating order, gun cleaning kits include swabs, oil, brushes, and other tools for removing dirt and grime.

**Radio Receiver:** This is a basic radio found in the homes of millions of people around the world. The range of a radio varies, depending on how close it is to a transmitting station and the vagaries of the weather.

**Scope:** When a scope is fixed to a compatible firearm and properly calibrated, the effective range of the weapon may be doubled. To use a scope, the shooter must make a Total Attack to acquire his target in the lens (see Total Attack, p. 121). Without taking time to aim, the weapon's range is normal. Scopes are typically designed for rifles, but are found on certain rare pistols.

**Suitcase:** This is the standard of civilian travelers worldwide. A typical suitcase can hold approximately four cubic feet, but is difficult to carry when loaded up with more than twenty or thirty pounds.

**Typewriter:** A portable manual typewriter. Although it's unlikely that an explorer would consider hauling one of these into the field, overzealous reporters, journalists, or scientists may insist on having one to do their work while on an expedition.

**Watch, Pocket or Wrist:** Pocket watches attach to the belt with a thin chain and are carried in the front pocket, while wristwatches are strapped onto the wrist. The price listed is for a basic, cheap model that must be wound frequently to keep accurate time.

## VEHICLES

Explorers travel on, above, and even below the surface of the earth and find themselves doing so in all manner of vehicles. Described below are vehicles reflecting both the actual types found in the 1930s, as well as some more unusual modes of transportation that embrace the Pulp feel of the era.

**Size:** The relative size of the vehicle as compared to average humans (Size 0). Vehicle Size modifies its Defense and Structure and factors into how many passengers it can carry.

**Defense (Def):** How difficult it is to hit and damage the vehicle.

**Structure (Strc):** The amount of damage a vehicle can take before it is inoperable. Vehicles will continue to run until their structure is reduced to zero (or less), at which point they stop functioning.

Land Vehicle	Size	Def	Strc	Spd	Han	Crew	Pass
APC	2	8	12	50	-2	1	2-10
Car, Common	2	4	8	100	0	1	4-6
Car, Luxury	2	6	8	100	+2	1	4-8
Jeep	2	4	10	50	-2	1	3
Motorcycle	1	6	6	100	+2	1	0-1
Truck, Civilian	2	4	10	50	-2	1	11
Truck, Military	2	6	12	50	-2	1	11

Water Vehicle	Size	Def	Strc	Spd	Han	Crew	Pass
Fishing Boat	2	4	10	25	-2	4	1
Powerboat	2	6	8	25	+2	1	4
Rowboat	1	4	6	Str	0	1	2
Sailboat, Small	2	4	8	5-10	-2	2-4	6
Submarine	8	6	24	10	-2	12-16	4-8
Submersible, Small	2	4	12	10	0	1-2	0
Tramp Steamer	8	6	24	25	-2	8-12	6-12
Yacht	4	4	14	25	-2	4-6	6-10

Air Vehicle	Size	Def	Strc	Spd	Han	Crew	Pass
Airship	16	2	18	50	-2	15	50
Balloon	4	2	6	5-10	-2	1	2
Biplane	2	6	6	100	+2	1	1
DC-3	8	4	22	150	-2	2	28
Ford 3AT Trimotor	4	4	12	100	0	2	8
Martin B-10 Bomber	8	6	24	100	-2	4	20
Sikorsky VS-300	2	4	8	25	0	1	1
Triplane	2	6	8	100	+2	1	1

**Speed (Spd):** The speed at which a vehicle moves in miles per hour. If driven in combat, a vehicle moves five times its speed rating in feet (e.g., a jeep moves fifty miles per hour; in combat it will move 250 feet per turn). The driver may make a double move with a vehicle, as normal (see Move, p. 127).

**Handling (Han):** How maneuverable a vehicle is and how easy it is to operate. Handling modifies the operator's Drive or Pilot rolls.

**Crew:** The number of people required to operate a vehicle.

**Passengers (Pass):** The number of passengers a vehicle can carry.

## Land Vehicles

Explorers may spend a lot of time in cars and trucks as they set out across the globe. The 1930s was an era when almost anyone could afford to purchase a car or truck, although many of the roads, especially in rural areas, lacked much in the way of pavement.

**APC (Armored Personnel Carrier):** Armored Personnel Carriers are large, heavily armored vehicles used by the military for transporting troops in hostile territory.



They are slow and ponderous, but offer a great amount of protection from shrapnel and small arms fire. APCs have firing ports on the front, sides, and back, allowing soldiers on the inside to fire from the safety of the vehicle.

**Civilian Car, Common:** This is a catchall term for any regular, civilian car used in this era, including the Ford Model T and Ford Model A—the cars of the masses. Civilian cars fit four people comfortably, or up to six if packed tightly.

**Civilian Car, Luxury:** Faster and far more posh than an average civilian car, luxury civilian cars include the Duesenberg and the Mercedes-Benz. Luxury cars have fine leather interiors and large, powerful motors. The interior is roomier than a common car, seating six people comfortably, or up to eight if packed tightly.

**Jeep:** Originally designed for the military, jeeps are small, durable off-road vehicles that are easy to maintain and fix.

**Motorcycle:** A simple two-stroke engine motorcycle. While racing models exist, the type described here is designed for rough-terrain and is often used by military scouts and couriers.

**Truck, Civilian:** Any large vehicle used to haul goods and/or personnel. Trucks have poor handling and relatively low speed, but are capable of hauling several thou-

sand pounds worth of goods. Trucks can haul up to ten passengers, with up to two in the cabin (plus the driver) and the remainder riding in the back, where there may or may not be seats.

**Truck, Military:** Military trucks are similar to civilian trucks, but have beefier chassis and suspension to absorb the rigors of off-road and combat conditions.

## Water Vehicles

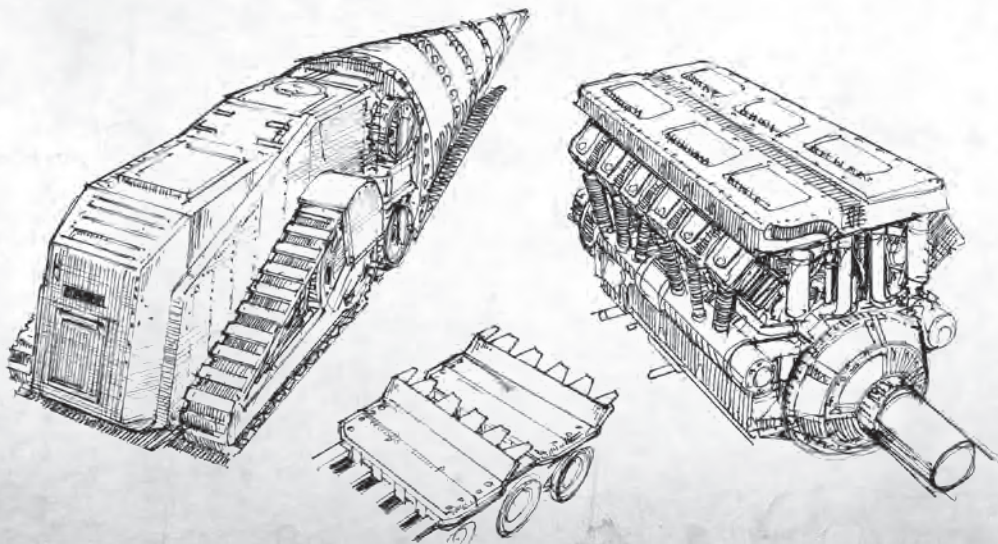
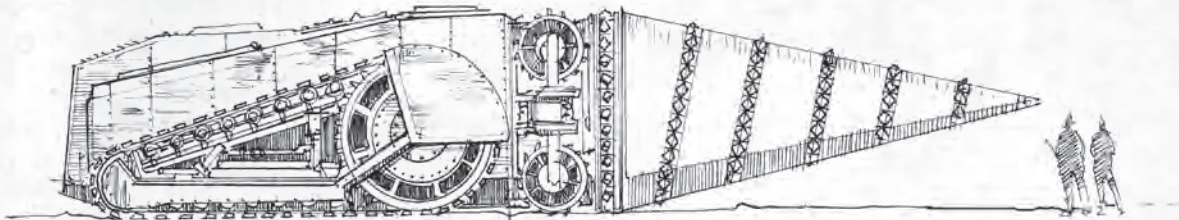
Described below are several types of water-based vehicles that explorers may find themselves on or in—including submarines!

**Rowboat:** A small boat powered by oars. This category also includes life rafts and escape boats found on larger vessels.

**Sailboat, Small:** This includes any wind-powered vessel operated by four or fewer crew members. Most sailboats of this size are for pleasure, although some are used as fishing vessels.

**Power Boat:** Power boats are gas-powered vessels that serve a variety of purposes. Their powerful engines and shallow keel allow them to go almost anywhere.

**Fishing Boat:** Slow but sturdy fishing boats ply the open waters of the ocean, dragging their nets or lines in search of fish, crab, or other seafood. Because crews find themselves out at sea for weeks or months on end, fish-





## Chapter Five

ing boats have large supplies of food and water.

**Yacht:** Status symbols of the rich and powerful, yachts are large, gas-powered vessels with spacious and luxurious accommodations.

**Tramp Steamer:** The bulk of goods are transported on small to medium-size “steamers” with large cargo capacity and little in the way of entertainment or other accommodations. Explorers often find themselves on Tramp Steamers headed to far-flung and exotic locales, as most captains of such vessels ask few questions of their passengers, as long as they provide cash up front.

**Submersible, Small:** This is a small, experimental submarine capable of holding two people. Submersibles have a limited operating depth, but are perfect for traversing through underwater caverns and other hard to reach places under the waves. A submersible can go up to six hours underwater, down to depths of 500 feet.

**Submarine:** Submarines were coming into their own during the 1930s. Described here is a typical hunter-killer model employed by various navies of the world. The diesel engine allows it to travel topside for up to 1500 miles before needing to be refueled, while the large batteries allow it to submerge for up to 36 hours at a time before needing to be recharged by the engines. Submarines have a maximum depth of 1000 feet.

### Air Vehicles

Described here are a number of airplanes and lighter-than-air vehicles commonly employed by explorers in their expeditions.

**Airship:** Airships are massive dirigibles that formed an impressive fleet in the 1930s. Before the Hindenburg disaster in 1937, airships were filled with hydrogen, which gave greater buoyancy, but proved extremely flammable. Airships require enormous fields with tethering poles to make a landing.

**Biplane:** Although obsolete, biplanes are still common aircraft used by everyone from crop dusters to the armies of small nations. Biplanes are slow compared to modern airplanes, but are very maneuverable.

**Triplane:** Triplanes have a range and speed similar to biplanes, but their triple-decked wings allow them even greater maneuverability.

**Ford 3AT Trimotor:** A medium-sized plane with good range. Bush pilots in far-flung places commonly use it.

**Douglas DC-3:** The DC-3 is the ubiquitous passenger airplane of the mid-to late-1930s. Its long range and spacious cabin make it popular with passengers and crew

alike. The DC-3 can fit 28 passengers for day flights or 14 passengers as a sleeper plane.

**Martin B-10 Bomber:** The Martin B-10 Bomber is typical of the transition to larger, faster bombers that began to appear before WWII.

**Sikorsky VS-300 Helicopter:** One of the first commercially viable helicopters, the Sikorsky VS-300 is cantankerous and difficult to pilot, but its ability to land and take off almost anywhere offers great hope to the future of helicopters. This model did not appear until the late 1930s, but serves as a model for potentially viable helicopters created by brilliant engineers or mad scientists. At this early stage of development, however, the Sikorsky lacks much in the way of cargo space—100 pounds maximum.

**Balloon:** Although slow and almost impossible to maneuver, explorers may still use balloons to traverse over difficult terrain.

### WEIRD SCIENCE

The world of *Hollow Earth Expedition* is one of harrowing adventure, two-fisted explorers, and, of course, mad scientists bent on taking over the world. This is a time where science is both progressive and unhindered by “limitations.” Inventors, scientists, and medical doctors with experimental tendencies may delve deep into “things that should not be.” Some do so with the betterment of mankind in mind; others do so for revenge, greed, or just to see what will happen.

This section describes a sample of artifacts that are the result of weird science. Some items are small and portable, while others are enormous and built into place. Because each artifact is a unique item, no price or weight has been assigned to them. Instead, each item is considered an Artifact (see Artifacts, p. 72).

#### Etheric Disturbance Monitor

##### Artifact 1

The Etheric Disturbance Monitor (EDM) resembles a large Geiger counter with a cone-shaped object attached to the front. When activated, the device detects the tiny “ripples” in the ether generated by the presence of supernatural creatures, and the radiation from psychokinetic or telepathic powers. These are indicated on a small screen (similar in appearance to radar) and by a beep—the louder the beep, the closer the creature or power source. Make an Electronics roll whenever your character uses the EDM to detect psychic energy around him. The more successes you roll, the more sensitive the device is to the strength and source of the psychic energy.



## Spectrovision Goggles

### Artifact 1

These large goggles allow the user to see through a variety of spectrums, including infrared, x-ray, and other unique forms of radiation. Each turn, the goggles can be “tuned” to a different setting allowing one of the following abilities:

*Infrared:* The wearer can see the heat given off by creatures and the surrounding landscape, allowing him to see in darkness. However, it’s impossible to discern color and difficult to see specific details, such as a person’s facial features.

*X-Ray:* The wearer can see into or through an object no farther than 10 feet away. This setting can pierce through two feet of wood, a foot of stone, or an inch of metal. Lead completely blocks vision, however.

*Radio Waves:* The wearer can see radio waves, including their source of direction and intensity. By making a Perception roll, the wearer can identify and follow a specific radio wave.

## Jet Pack

### Artifact 2

This experimental jet pack fits onto a person’s back and uses a top-secret fuel to generate the necessary thrust to get a person off the ground and grant them incredible speed, if limited maneuverability. The user can carry another person, which reduces the speed by half and reduces the Handling to -4.

Artifact	Size	Def	Strc	Spd	Han	Crew	Pass
Jet Pack	-1	4	5	100	-2	1	0

## Steam Armor

### Artifact 3

Both the U.S. Military and the Nazi party have been making forays into creating steam-powered armor for individual soldiers. In addition to providing thick armor that can deflect most bullets, steam armor also grants tremendous strength to the wearer at the cost of limited speed and mobility. Heavy weapons such as Gatling guns and flamethrowers may also be mounted on it.

Artifact	Size	Def	Str	Dex	Move	Note
Steam Armor	+1	+6	+2	-1	-2	Heavy weapon mount

## Robot

### Artifact 4

The word “robot” was coined in the 1930s, but alternate names exist: automaton, mechanical golem, and artificial person, et al. Robots are mindless creatures that can perform simple, repetitive tasks. Most are pro-

grammed to obey their master’s verbal commands, up to and including destroying enemies. Robots are treated as characters with the following statistics:

## Robot

Archetype: Artifact

Motivation: Duty

Style: 0

Health: 10

### Primary Attributes

Body: 6

Charisma: 0

Dexterity: 3

Intelligence: 6

Strength: 5

Willpower: 3

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 1

Initiative: 9

Move: 8

Defense: 8

Perception: 8

Stun: 6

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	Average
Athletics	5	5	10	(5)
Brawl	5	5	10	(5)
Engineering	6	4	10	(5)
Firearms	3	5	8	(4)
Gunnery	6	3	9	(4+)
Mechanics	6	4	10	(5)
Melee	5	4	9	(4+)

### Talents

Giant (+1 Size rating)

Intelligent (+1 Intelligence rating)

Tough (+1 Body rating)

### Resources

Artifact 1 (Built-in Gatling Gun)

### Flaw

Automation (-2 penalty to any roll that requires original or creative thought)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	Average	Notes
Gatling gun	4 L	-1	11 L	(5+) L	Weapon is capable of autofire
Sword arm	4 L	-1	12 L	(6) L	
Punch	1 N	-1	10 N	(5) N	

## Drilling Machine

### Artifact 5

A marvel of engineering, the drilling machine is no mere boring device. It is a vehicle to take mankind into the Hollow Earth itself! The drilling machine is the size of two civilian trucks placed end to end. The front is made up of massive drill bits, fast-acting acid projectors, sonic heat generators, or some other exotic method that can chew through rock as though it were butter. Drilling machines can carry up to six people, including the operator and one person acting as engineer. The Drilling Machine has the following statistics:

Artifact	Size	Def	Strc	Spd	Han	Crew	Pass
Drilling Machine	8	8	24	10	-2	1-2	6



## ⊕ CHAPTER 6: GAMEMASTERING



Hollow Earth Expedition takes its inspiration from one of the grandest storytelling arenas: pulp adventure! The breakneck pacing, nonstop dangers, exotic locations, and larger-than-life characters of the pulps are rich fodder for your HEX adventures. As the Gamemaster, you have the very enjoyable task of conveying the unique, exciting qualities of this genre to the players. This chapter assumes that Hollow Earth Expedition is not your first experience with running a roleplaying game, so it does not cover some of the basic steps of setting up an adventure or campaign. It includes information on bringing the pulp adventure genre to life at your gaming table, and how to apply its concepts and conventions to your HEX stories. It examines the conventions of the genre and how they apply specifically to tales set in the Hollow Earth, discusses basic story structure and story archetypes, touches on merging character and story, and finally, offers a wealth of resources you can draw from to make your HEX games memorable and exciting for you and your players.

### TELLING STORIES IN THE HOLLOW EARTH

#### Genre Conventions

A convention is a concept or device the Gamemaster and players all agree upon and accept, at least tac-

itly, in order for the game to be enjoyable and function as intended. Conventions are sometimes traditional and sometimes far-fetched, but they permeate nearly all literary and cinematic traditions. Samuel Taylor Coleridge referred to the condition generated by these conventions as the “willing suspension of disbelief.” Roleplayers are no strangers to this concept! Examples of conventions from other genres include the ubiquitous magic and stereotyped racial characteristics (wise elves, grumpy dwarves, et al.) from the high fantasy genre; the careful concealment of the guilty party’s identity until the very end of the story in the mystery genre; and the fact that all the characters in a given region gather together on the same day each month, regardless of circumstances, in every live-action roleplaying game. Without conventions, these games cannot function. Strict adherence to ironclad believability destroys imagination—the essential ingredient in the alchemical mixture that is roleplaying.

#### *Heroes Are Larger Than Life*

The heroes in pulp adventure tales are almost always men and women who possess moral, mental, or physical characteristics that set them apart from everyday folk in some distinctive way. Traditional pulp adventure heroes exhibit the key qualities of bravery, integrity, and honesty that define the protagonists of this genre. Such heroes might seem a little rough around the edges but they are good-hearted and sometimes noble at their core.



That's not to say that pulp heroes are incorruptible, but their motivations are generally pure. That's what makes them heroes. They're more easily duped, or pressured into acting against their nature by the threat of harm to something they hold dear, than they are tempted into despicable acts by baser emotions. Refer to the Character Creation chapter for guidelines and examples of how this convention applies to *HEX* heroes.

### *Villainous Villains*

On the other side of the fence the villain looms no less large, but the moral compass that should guide his way is irreparably broken. Although the villain may disguise his true nature behind a pleasant demeanor or kindly gestures, he is typically wicked beyond redemption. Some of the most interesting pulp adventure villains are fallen heroes, men and women whose morals have been twisted by circumstance or ego: gangsters who were altar boys in childhood but couldn't escape a life of crime thrust on them by family tradition; femme fatales who had a chance at an honest life but chose the cold comfort of money and luxury instead; scientists who vowed revenge on a government that spurned their wild and dangerous inventions; indeed, anyone who once stood for fair play and justice but then turned their backs on these in favor of a darker path. See Villainy in the Hollow Earth in the Long Campaigns section, below, for a more detailed examination of how to use a *HEX* villain to your game's best advantage.

### *Moral Clarity*

The pulps were relatively free of the moral dilemmas and ethical gray areas found in the noir era of late 1940–1950, though the two genres are often confused. In the world of *Hollow Earth Expedition*, the Nazis are not misunderstood political reformers trying to save a poverty-wracked German state. They are a force of deliberate evil—a military threat building at an alarming speed—determined to crush the free people of the world under their jackbooted heels. Although the individual Nazi soldier may be nothing more than an otherwise honest Johan trying to support his family back home in Düsseldorf, when he's assigned to duty in the Hollow Earth, he becomes the enemy of all that is just and right in the world.

While hero and villain might bicker over the meaning of right and wrong, neither is likely to be persuaded to switch sides by the other's entreaties or cajolery. Sometimes a hero's sidekick or a villain's moll might be enticed to switch sides (and this little slice of drama can be a great source of subplots in any *HEX* adventure),

but the genuine hero and villain of the tale should remain true to their larger-than-life characteristics.

### *Cliffhangers*

An encounter or scene that ends suddenly, usually with the heroes stuck in a dangerous predicament, is known as a cliffhanger. Used appropriately, this can help you maintain drama and tension. Even if the players know their characters are unlikely to perish arbitrarily, the uncertainty of not knowing how they will escape their dire straits, or what awful events might befall them when they do, creates impatient demand for more. We're going to examine the cliffhanger a little more carefully than other genre conventions because it's one of the simplest, most immediate and satisfying ways to give your *HEX* adventures that extra dash of pulp-era atmosphere.

### *Creating a Cliffhanger*

The easiest way to create a cliffhanger is to wait until the opportunity arises—and in the typical *HEX* adventure, that occurs relatively often! Let the characters get deep into a dangerous situation and then leave the action unresolved. You can involve one, some, or all of the characters in a cliffhanger at nearly any point in the adventure.

If a cliffhanger opportunity arises in the midst of a game session, and all the party members are threatened simultaneously, take a break for food or just to stretch. Let the players stew a bit; refuse to answer questions or make rulings about their characters' situation until play resumes again. If the cliffhanger threatens only some of the party members because the others are involved in a scene that's separated by time or distance, you can leave the cliffhanger scene in limbo while cutting away to the action elsewhere, returning to resolve the cliffhanger situation a bit later. Cliffhangers also make great endings for a single play session: just leave the characters sweating and pick up the action when you next resume play.

#### Sample *HEX* Cliffhangers:

- Characters are stuck inside a ruin that's filling rapidly with water, and they'll drown if they don't find an egress or a means of shutting off the water supply.
- The heroes must quickly choose between a stampeding herd of dinosaurs and a natural hazard, such as a steep cliff, a raging river, or a quicksand-filled swamp.
- Just when the characters have evaded the dinosaur



## Chapter Six

that's been stalking them all day, they come face to face with an even bigger, hungrier creature.

- The party's scientist character cannot resist the lure of the alien technology, and pushes a button or pulls a lever, causing an ominous hum to emanate from the machine.
- The hero hangs on to the edge of a cliff, trying desperately to avoid the fatal plunge to the chasm below.
- The characters are in a damaged airplane that's plummeting toward the ground.
- The villain traps the heroes in a deserted building, and sets it on fire as he departs.
- The heroes find themselves caught in a diabolical trap that will destroy them if they don't find a means of escape within the next few minutes.

**Caution:** Don't create cliffhangers that the characters have no possibility of surviving! Always ensure that there's a way out of whatever danger threatens their lives. Perhaps, when forced to choose between being trampled by stampeding dinosaurs or pitching themselves off a cliff, characters who opt for the precipice manage to grasp protruding vines or tree roots; maybe the heroes facing a watery death in a sealed temple ruin will discover a secret passage that leads

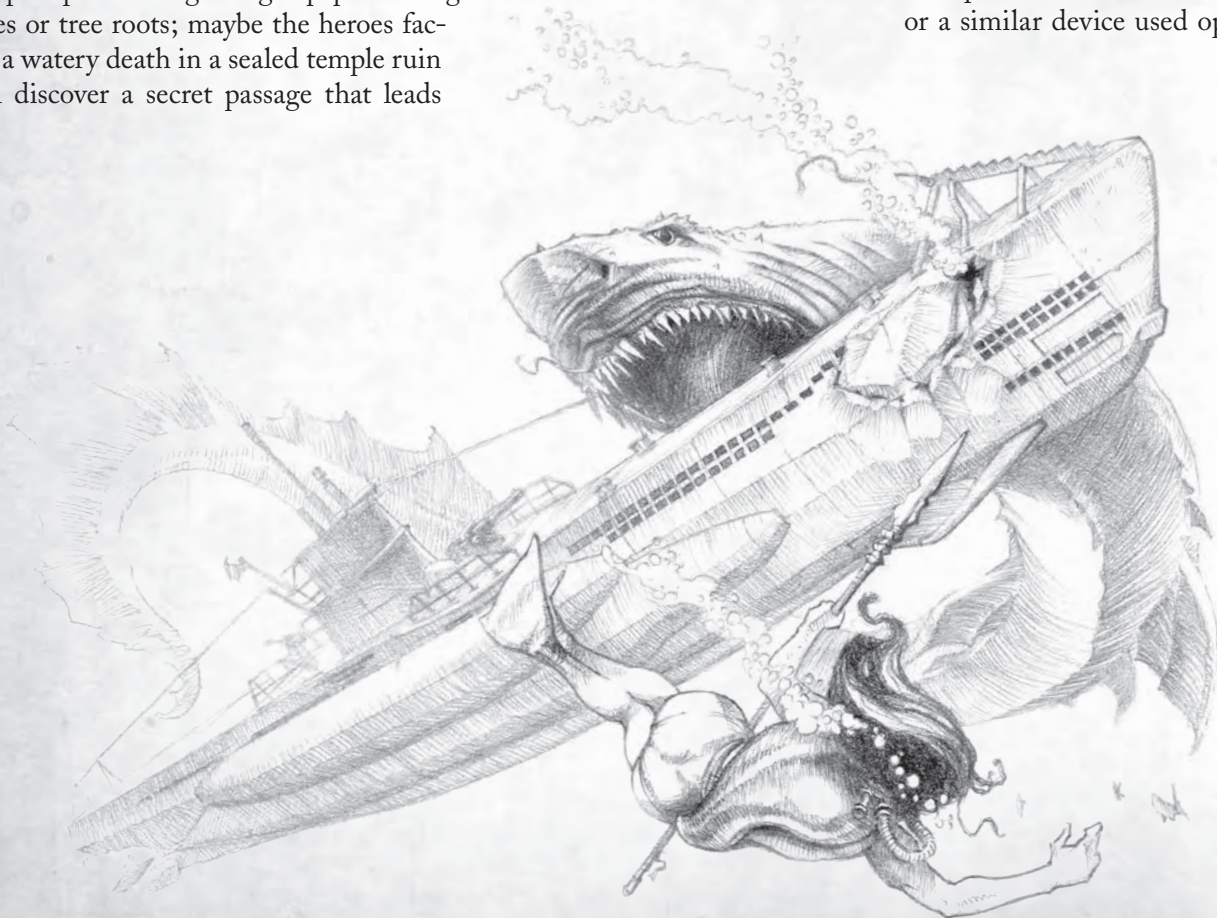
them to freedom, or perhaps they manage to shift some stones and make an escape by bringing down a section of wall.

### Uncertain Death as a Cliffhanger

Cutting away from a scene just as it appears a character will pay the ultimate price is an effective means of building dramatic tension. This type of cliffhanger doesn't apply only to heroes; villains can benefit from this tactic, too. More than one pulp adventure villain was presumed dead (e.g., she appeared to suffer a fatal attack of poisonous spiders, or fell off a cliff on to jagged rocks protruding from a storm-tossed sea) only to return in the following adventure. The only difference is that we don't see the villain's narrow and sometimes improbable escape from her predicament because it occurs off-stage.

### Deathtraps as Cliffhangers

One of the staple cliffhanger devices of the classic pulp adventures is the deathtrap, a mechanism the major villain constructed intentionally to function as an inescapable means of execution, or a similar device used oppor-





tunistically. The deathtrap is rarely fatal to the player character because it customarily contains at least one flaw that the hero can exploit to escape. This may be a cut-off switch just out of reach (until the hero sweet-talks the villain's beautiful but misguided mistress into throwing it) or a hidden passage that the antagonist has overlooked. These devices are storytelling elements that can be used to give the players an interesting puzzle to solve, and to heighten the dramatic tension of confrontations with the nemesis.

#### Sample *HEX* Deathtraps:

- A locked, airtight room slowly fills with poison gas.
- A device holds two people fast; escape for one means certain doom for the other.
- The character must choose between one of two doors: behind one is a ravenous, deadly monster, and behind the other lies freedom. (Guess which one he always manages to choose, somehow?)
- The heroes find themselves imprisoned in a room filled with sleeping saber-toothed tigers; the slightest noise will awaken the beasts.
- A character is lowered slowly by rope or chain into a pool filled with sharks, crocodiles or flesh-eating piranha.

It's vital that the deathtrap have an out: the characters must have some means of escape available. The best deathtraps are defeated by some innate characteristic of the player characters caught within. For instance, the characters might be caught inside a connected series of Atlantean chambers with walls that close in slowly to crush them to death. One of the trapped heroes, an archaeologist, recognizes a pattern in the Atlantean writing carved into a wall panel and uses his knowledge of pictograms or language to switch off the mechanism. You can also create deathtraps that offer the characters a chance to use some of that specialized equipment—lockpicks, flamethrowers, sleep-gas grenades, a coil of copper wire, a rock hammer, a copy of the *Wall Street Journal*—that they've insisted on lugging around ever since they reached the Hollow Earth.

Few permanent structures exist in the Hollow Earth, so a fair number of deathtraps will be improvised. The antagonist might take advantage of a device or room she's found in an abandoned city, or she might have her villainous henchman construct a deathtrap out of materials at hand. The former sort of deathtrap may have hidden means of escape that the villain hasn't detected, while the latter kind of device probably has structural or design flaws that the characters can exploit.

## Maxims for the Gamemaster

What are the *HEX* guiding principles? They are, briefly:

### *Evoke a Sense of Discovery*

The Hollow Earth is never a mundane place. Player characters should be continually reminded that they have entered an alien world abundant with perils and mysteries (see *Things Are Not Always What They Seem*, below). Although the discovery itself happens only once, and usually at the very beginning of a *HEX* adventure, it should nonetheless be sufficiently memorable that it remains one of the defining moments of the scenario or campaign. You can continue to reinforce the sense of discovery throughout the characters' experience with frequent introductions to new features of the Hollow Earth setting. Something unexpected and wondrous (and potentially life-threatening) is always just around the corner! Nothing in the Hollow Earth is ordinary, and characters should never become complacent about their surroundings. If you sense that your player characters are becoming jaded about their environment, try reminding them of the strange, threatening nature of the Hollow Earth: introduce a new creature type, plot an encounter with a new lost civilization, reveal another layer of Atlantean secrets, or bring a new villain onstage.

### *Keep It Moving*

Regardless of the type of tale you're weaving or mood you're creating, the Hollow Earth is an energetic place! That doesn't mean there's no time for discussion between characters, but game sessions shouldn't be allowed to degenerate into lethargic planning sessions. Endless Character discussion regarding the very best and most advantageous method of sneaking past the armed Lizardmen doesn't stay true to the spirit of the pulp adventure genre. When in doubt about what to do next, opt for action! Interrupt a stagnating scene with an energizing component—the sudden arrival of an enemy, a dinosaur attack, or an earth tremor—to keep the pace moving rapidly.

It's not a pulp adventure without the fast pacing inherent in the genre. While nonstop action isn't possible or practical to maintain across an entire evening's gaming, you can still make sure that your characters don't have more than the minimum necessary time to stop and think, or plan, between scenes of furious action. The key is to remember that there's more than one type of action: some Gamemasters will confuse "action" with "combat," and while a good fight is certainly one way to keep the characters busy, it's not the only way nor is it always the most satisfying. You don't need to settle for a common brawl when you have the entire Hollow Earth at your disposal! The place is laden with action-worthy events and dramatic moments.



Whenever you feel that the pace of your game is lagging because the characters are getting bogged down by extraneous conversation or pointless speculation, try springing an action scene on them. The point isn't to penalize characters for taking the time to plan carefully, but rather to show them that time continues to pass relentlessly even when it's not to their advantage. Here are a few examples you can plug into nearly any *HEX* scenario:

- A scouting party of a lost civilization—Amazon warriors, Caribbean pirates, Spanish conquistadores, French Foreign Legionnaires in full dress uniforms—bursts onto the scene, weapons at the ready.
- While exploring ruins, a trap door opens beneath the heroes' feet, plunging them into a subterranean chamber inhabited by a hungry dinosaur.
- Cries for help pierce the air, leading to a confrontation with a horde of angry beastmen who have cornered a hapless surface-world explorer and are preparing to turn her into a lump of chutney.
- A flock of giant pterosaurs swoops down from the sky. Looking upward, the characters realize that each of the flying reptiles is being ridden and guided by a humanoid creature. The chase is on!
- The characters interrupt a carnivorous dinosaur devouring its kill.
- A horde of hairy apemen swarm the characters, seize one, and make off with him through the densest of jungles, leaving the remaining heroes no choice but to follow their kidnapped comrade.
- The characters run afoul of a squad of Nazis making their way between camps.

## *Things Are Not Always as They Seem*

Although it may appear to be merely a pocket world populated by prehistoric beasts and remnants of lost civilizations (and it is that, certainly), the Hollow Earth is home to mysteries that go deeper than what's visible on its subterranean surface. And this place doesn't give up its secrets easily! Events that seem supernatural may, in fact, have a scientific explanation, and vice versa. Consider always the core mystery of the Atlantean presence (or the ruins thereof) when developing your stories.

## *Make the Era Live*

You can enhance the fun and excitement of any *HEX* game session by helping your players visualize the pulp adventure genre's colorful atmosphere. Check through the list of resources in the Appendix (see p. 244) and consider inviting your players to an evening of pulp adventure preparation: rent a few of the films or television shows listed, locate books or comics and share them around, or visit the library to look at archived copies of period magazines and newspapers.

# Hex Conventions

*HEX* has a few of its own conventions, in addition to those of its parent genre.

## *Getting In Is Always Easier Than Getting Out*

Like the road to Hell, the routes that lead into the Hollow Earth are necessarily easier to traverse in one direction (getting in) than the other (getting out). Unless you're planning and playing a one-shot scenario, this should be a fundamental truth of your *HEX* stories. Character versus environment is an essential and central conflict in the game. If escape from the Hollow Earth were easy, players would feel no sense of reward or accomplishment when they finally emerge into the world above.

## *Guns Don't Kill Dinosaurs:*

### *People Kill Dinosaurs*

Human ingenuity triumphing over the savage and bestial is another key convention. Some players may want their characters to cope with prehistoric reptiles and other creatures of the Hollow Earth by standing their ground and blasting away with their guns. And that's fine in some instances: firearms will bring down some of the smaller beasts and beings your characters encounter, and lucky shots may even fell larger dinosaurs from time to time. But don't forget to reward heroes who utilize their superior intellect and surface-world experiences! Using oneself as bait to lure a charging triceratops straight off a cliff, building a trap to bring down a hillside avalanche on top of a hunting party of hostile tribal warriors, or puzzling out the correct usage of an Atlantean artifact in order to escape a crude but secure prison are all good examples of how characters can outwit the primeval without resorting to guns.

## *Is it Science or Magic?*

Men and women who live in the civilized nations of the 1930s have a healthy respect for scientific inventions and achievements. The Great War opened the floodgates of scientific innovation across a number of fields, including medicine, transportation, aviation, navigation, photography and, naturally, weaponry. It ushered in a new era of scientific inquiry. People are more comfortable than ever before with the benefits of science, and the few vestiges of superstition that once lingered in isolated pockets of the civilized world have all but been extinguished. Consequently, *HEX* heroes should be less prepared to believe in supernatural explanations for unfamiliar phenomena. If the last three decades have taught them anything, it's that there's a logical



explanation for everything (including the Stegosaurus that's currently pummeling their drilling machine).

### *Separated!*

Separation can create challenges for players (and the Gamemaster) in navigation, communication, and timekeeping. Despite this, it's a pulp genre mainstay and a guiding *HEX* convention.

Invariably, somebody in the party can be relied upon to take some action that splits him or her off from the rest of the heroes. When this occurs, take advantage and advance the plot through the actions of both groups by cutting back and forth between them, narrating scenes (or partial scenes) for each group in turn. While one group explores the abandoned encampment of an Amazon war band, the other can deal with the traitorous mercenary who was just revealed to be in the enemy's pocket all along. Short campaigns should probably feature just one party separation of any length. Long campaigns, on the other hand, might see the heroes becoming separated repeatedly throughout the course of the story. One-shot adventures might not include a party separation at all: let the allocated time be your guide.

Tracking the actions of separated parties can become a little difficult if the separation continues for an extended period of time, or if the heroes start heading off in directions you hadn't considered. When a party splits up, start tracking the actions of the individual groups. Record who does what, who finds which clues or learns which bits of information, and make a note about the timing because the groups may start progressing at different speeds (for instance, if one group finds a means of quick transport—horses, chariots, Atlantean hovercraft, etc.—and the other remains on foot, the party with the faster transportation will be covering ground more quickly). Don't be concerned about exact recording of the time that passes. Just try to keep a record of events in the sequence they occur so you can determine how the story should continue to flow. This can even work to the story's advantage, allowing you to compress what might otherwise be tedious and extended "getting from point A to point B" or "and then you find more rocks" narratives.

Since the characters are acting in isolation from one another, they can't know what one another might be doing; an extended party separation can sometimes wreak havoc with your plot. However, if the groups of characters start to undertake actions that aren't necessarily supportive of one another, resist the temptation to call a halt to the action or insist that the players alter

**Get to know the period together and you'll find yourselves inspired!**

Don't spend too much time during game play recreating the era. A few well-chosen references will do. This is an especially effective technique during the very beginning of a *HEX* campaign when the characters are preparing to leave for, or are already en route to, their rendezvous with the Hollow Earth. Include references to major news stories of the day by having the characters notice newspaper headlines and magazine cover stories, or overhear snippets of radio broadcasts. Mention a few name brands that were popular at that time, perhaps as advertisements or billboards. Get a dictionary of period slang and pepper the conversation of NPCs with popular phrases of the day. Play some period-appropriate music (there are a number of bands and performers who were all the rage in the 1930s and 1940s now available on audio CD from your local library or music store). Sports almanacs are filled with statistics from the entire history of athletics—maybe the first mate on the characters' doomed ship is a baseball fan, or maybe the major villain admires the tenacity and strength of a particular prize fighter. Drop famous names—perhaps Howard Hughes or Harry Houdini could be one of the semi-secret financiers of a Hollow Earth expedition, or maybe one of the characters is a thrill-seeking playboy who knows a lot of film or radio stars. You can even introduce some of these personalities in the course of play, allowing your characters to rub shoulders with some of the most famous individuals of the time, to give your stories an extra level of credibility.

their characters' choices. Instead, roll with the punches and try revising your story arc so that it incorporates and reflects the characters' choices into the action. Let's say, for example, that your party of *HEX* heroes is meant to be tracking down the son of a wealthy patron who is lost somewhere in the Hollow Earth. In the course of play they separate into two groups. One group stays focused on the goal, but the other decides to start exploring a nearby forest that has nothing whatsoever to do with the main plot. You could add a scene in the forest to reconnect the wandering group with their comrades or the main plot (or both), or perhaps have them encounter a tantalizing mystery that can't be solved immediately, but will plant a seed for future adventures.

If all else fails, separated parties are excellent excuses to introduce cliffhanger moments! Leave one character or group struggling to free itself from the deadly quicksand, cutting away to the other characters for a while. Once the latter group reaches a cliffhanger moment, return to the former and resolve that situation. Repeat as necessary!



### Story Structure

The successful (i.e., fun and entertaining) *HEX* story combines many of the conventions discussed above. Building a good adventure or campaign is more like an exercise in alchemy than science, though. You can follow a formulaic method, but sooner or later you'll find that you must depart from strict formula and add some untried ingredients to keep the experience fresh and interesting. Most pulp adventure stories do follow a formula, and you can borrow from that when assembling one-shot adventures or short campaigns (see below). Long campaigns will probably require the greatest departure from these tried-and-true approaches.

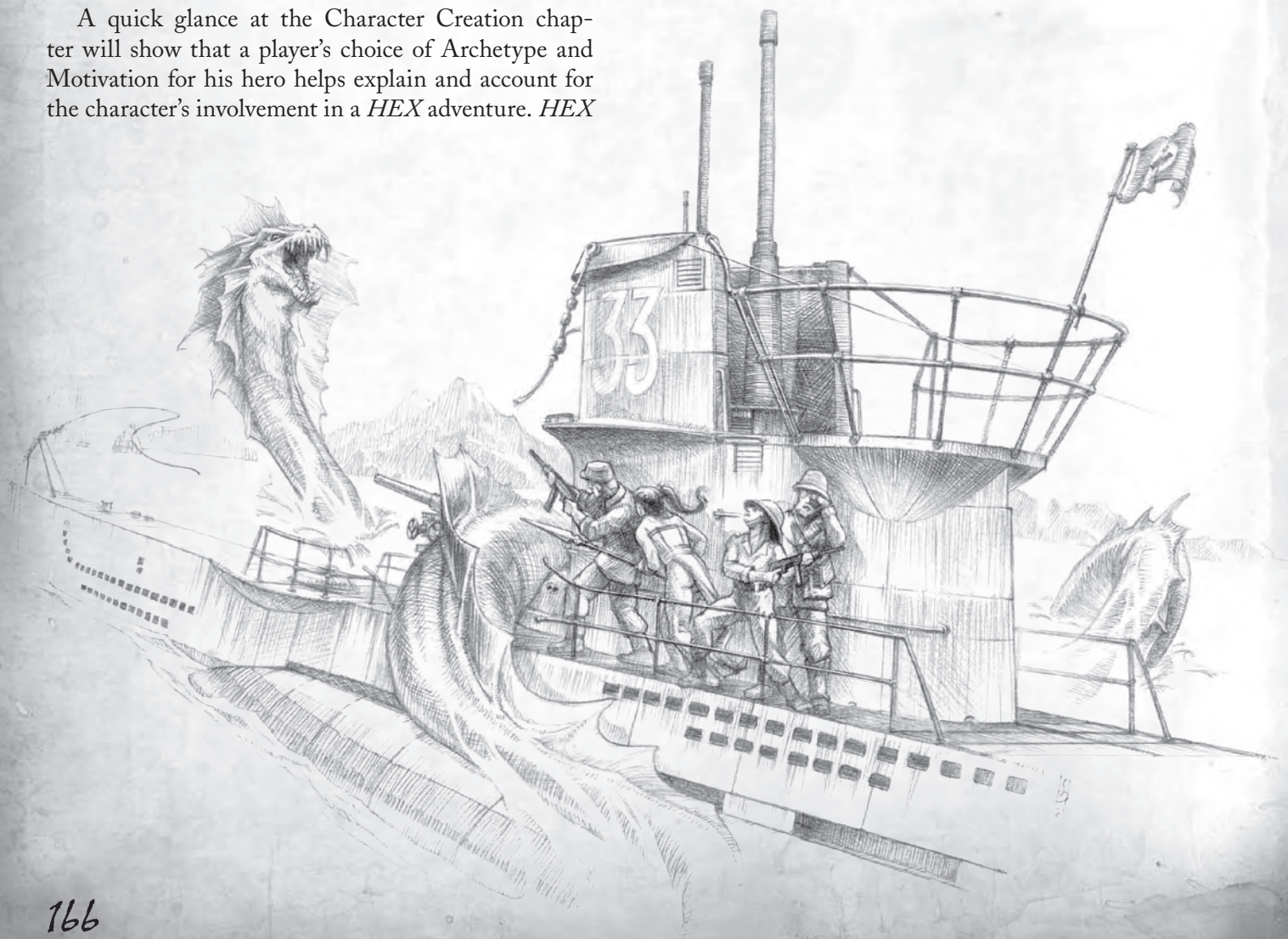
The *HEX* story works best when modeled after pulp adventure novel (or film) inspirations. Such stories have clearly-defined starting and ending points that feature some, or all, of the genre conventions discussed above. While it's possible to play *HEX* as an ultra-realistic science fiction game, or as a gritty, hard-boiled noir game, stories set in the Hollow Earth are intended to pay tribute to their inspirations.

A quick glance at the Character Creation chapter will show that a player's choice of Archetype and Motivation for his hero helps explain and account for the character's involvement in a *HEX* adventure. *HEX*

heroes can be literally anyone, provided they have some supportable reason for participating in the adventure. Once in the Hollow Earth, their method of arrival becomes far less important than the ideals, goals and emotions that influence their behaviors, because those are the factors that guide their reactions to the uncertain perils and wondrous discoveries that lie ahead.

### Assembling the Cast

The very best way to start a new *HEX* adventure is to sit down with your players and discuss exactly what kind of story or stories you want to share (see *Care and Feeding of Players*, p. 167). Let them pore over the rulebook, and direct their attention to the character creation chapter. Talk about some of the conventions and decide which ones your *HEX* campaign will support and which ones you may choose to ignore, tone down, or beef up to make play more enjoyable. After you've made some decisions together about the story





you're telling, move the discussion toward the character Archetypes and Motivations that might work best in that adventure.

Is your *HEX* campaign a short adventure about an expedition assembled and financed by the American government with the intention of finding and capturing a Nazi scientist? Characters in this story should probably tend toward a mix of physical and mental types, all experts in their field, such as Academic, Adventurer, Explorer, Hunter and Soldier. Archetypes such as Criminal, Celebrity and Missionary may seem out of place in this type of adventure. It's not that "civilian" Archetypes aren't equally enjoyable to play, but rather that they don't fit into the story you're telling in this instance. Now let's contrast that example with another: a long campaign centered on the survivors of a downed air ship or wrecked ocean vessel that must come to grips with the awful reality of being stranded in the Hollow Earth as they search for a way out. This adventure can support many different types of characters, from nearly any walk of life. An Occultist, Survivor and Scientist are all equally appropriate, even though they may have little in common superficially. Resist the temptation to allow players to make any type of characters that strikes their fancy and then try to shoehorn it into your adventure. This can only lead to a sense of dissatisfaction and frustration as the players try to deal with situations their Archetypes aren't well suited for.

Consider the scope of your campaign: what exactly will your campaign affect and where will it occur? Will it be a personalized story, limited to one or two specific areas of the Hollow Earth, that doesn't touch on any of the greater mysteries of this hidden world? Or is it a sweeping tale that visits multiple locations, lays bare the secrets of Atlantis, and shakes the world with the revelation of the Hollow Earth? While the same characters might arguably work in both stories, the latter works better with characters capable of making long treks across great distances (e.g., Adventurers, Explorers, and Survivors), facing off against a multitude of dangers, and who have interest in exposing the existence of the Hollow Earth to the world at large.

### *Themes and Character Motivations*

What are the major themes of your story? Answer this question in your own mind before you start rolling the dice for your first game. Better yet, answer the question in collaboration with your players after reading the Motivations section in the Character chapter. Exactly as discussed above with Archetypes, you and your players should talk about the kinds of Motivations that are appropriate to your adventure.

Structure your stories to highlight your major themes and give players ample opportunity to demonstrate their characters' Motivations through action. If, for instance, the Hunter in your party has chosen the Duty motivation, it's up to you to provide her with chances to prove devotion to her calling, preferably by presenting her with a choice. For instance, you might construct a scene in which the Hunter discovers that one of the party's NPC allies is about to betray them by breaking his word to guide them to safe ground. This gives the Hunter the chance to convince the ally to keep his word and, if successful, she'll garner some Style points.

### *Care and Feeding of Players*

The most common reason any roleplaying game campaign fails is because the group doesn't communicate. When the Gamemaster and players arrive at the table with differing expectations they never clearly articulate to one another, the unfortunate result is that the campaign ends after just a few game sessions. The story never gets resolved because the players or the Gamemaster (or both) aren't getting what they wanted or hoped for from the experience. The solution—and this cannot be stressed forcefully or often enough—is to communicate with one another, not only when setting up the first *HEX* adventure, but throughout the campaign. See Building a Party (p. 39).

Everyone probably realizes that there are as many different types of players as there are roleplaying games, but surprisingly few roleplayers take the time and effort to self-identify their preferences, much less communicate them to one another. Let's suppose that your *HEX* group consists of three players: Stephen, a long-time fan of the pulp adventure genre and a veteran roleplayer who enjoys tactical thinking and combat scenes; Laura, who has played a number of roleplaying games, and likes complex roleplaying challenges and problem-solving, but isn't familiar with the pulp adventure genre; and Clay, who has read a lot of pulp adventure novels but is a novice roleplayer, and hasn't really got a grip yet on what this is all about. And you're the Gamemaster, bringing a wealth of roleplaying experience, and filled with passion for the pulp genre. If this group is like most, the campaign begins after you have outlined or written an entire story arc (or at least a few adventures), and the players have created their characters, quite possibly in isolation. The first time that the players and their characters meet, in the context of this campaign, is on the very first night of play.

Stephen's character is an Explorer, a strong-jawed hero with a chip on shoulder and a can-do attitude;



## Chapter Six

his Motivation is Duty. Laura has created a Survivor, a plucky street urchin who stowed away on the vessel that brought the characters into the Hollow Earth; she selects *Escape* as her character's Motivation because she wants nothing more than to return home. Clay's character is also a Survivor, a derelict with little interest in anything except where his next meal is coming from. He has given his character the *Survival* Motivation. You, meanwhile, have crafted a long *HEX* campaign that focuses on stopping an expedition of Thule Society miscreants from laying their hands on a powerful Atlantean artifact. It doesn't take an advanced degree in screenwriting to see that if this adventure were a novel or a film, it would be doomed to failure. The characters don't support the story; the story doesn't support the characters; and the players and Gamemaster will all quickly become dissatisfied if they attempt to play in and run the campaign in this state. The tragedy is that this could have been avoided if the group had discussed its expectations and preferences, and selected Archetypes and Motivations that complement one another, before ever sitting down to that first adventure.

Consider the same group, assembled in a different manner. You, after deciding you want to run a *HEX* campaign, invite your players over for an evening of pre-campaign discussion. First you prime the pump by hosting a screening of a classic pulp genre film (see the Appendix, p. 244), and then you hand around copies of *Hollow Earth Expedition* so that your players can get a look at the types of characters and stories involved in this kind of roleplaying. Then you solicit their opinions about the kinds of characters they'd like to play, while describing the sort of story you were thinking of running. Some Gamemasters may consider this deviation from the norm akin to tipping off the enemy on the night before a major military offensive, but that kind of adversarial relationship between Gamemaster and player isn't much fun for anyone.

Let the players mull over all this information for a few days, then invite them back for a second night of discussion and character creation. Stephen likes the gist of your campaign idea and wants to play a stalwart hero-type character who has some military experience (who knew?) and believes strongly in personal obligation and responsibility. He makes it clear that he wants plenty of opportunities for his character to





get into situations he can resolve with his fists or guns, and the more potentially lethal the scrapes, the better. He creates an Explorer with the Motivation of Duty. Laura also likes the general campaign idea, but is concerned that it might be too focused on action and won't give her enough opportunities to develop her character's personality, which is what she really enjoys. She asks you to make sure that the group gets the chance to explore some of the strange cultures of the Hollow Earth, and that action scenes be interspersed with some juicy roleplaying moments. She sees that her original character idea, the street urchin Survivor, doesn't work so well in this story, and so she opts for an Adventurer instead: a tough-as-nails aviatrix with a dark secret. Laura chooses the Fame motivation, deciding that her character craves the attention and celebrity that a successful trip to the Hollow Earth will bring. It will be her character's plane that the adventurers use to enter the Hollow Earth. Clay, on the other hand, still isn't sure what to pick, but he feels comfortable expressing his concerns, and asks for some suggestions about characters that might work well with the others and mesh with the story. Eventually, after a little more discussion, he opts for an Academic—a professor of archaeology who also possesses a smattering of knowledge in several other areas that might prove useful in the course of the campaign, such as languages, physics and medicine. He chooses the Truth Motivation, making it clear that his character seeks nothing less than the genuine facts behind the mystery of the Hollow Earth. Then, and only then, do the players sit down together and create their characters. You, meanwhile, make careful notes on the ideas your players have expressed, with the intention of weaving their suggestions and preferences into the campaign you've already outlined. This is the recipe for a fun and very successful *HEX* campaign.

## Using Miniatures

Miniatures and props can add interest to your *HEX* game. *Ubiquity* is a flexible and innovative roleplaying engine, but it's not a tactical game, and doesn't lend itself as readily to scenarios that rely on the careful placement of miniature figures on scaled surfaces. Focusing on the exact movement of miniatures and their precise relationship to one another takes the spotlight off the one thing it should always shine on: the characters. It's perfectly all right, even helpful, to use miniatures and a few bits of terrain to help illustrate the relative distances between the lunging tyrannosaur, the flimsy raft of logs and the pirates lying in ambush; it's less helpful to become so wrapped up in moving the

miniatures around as exact representations of character position that the excitement of enjoying a pulp action adventure story is diminished in comparison. Keep your miniatures usage focused on loose representations of relative positions to avoid frustrations.

You may find it somewhat difficult to locate proper pulp-era metal or plastic miniatures. Fortunately, the toy industry prevails where the hobby business may falter! Check out your local toy store for a selection of inexpensive plastic dinosaurs, mundane animals, vehicles and soldiers. Sure, these figures aren't to scale (chances are good that your tyrannosaurus rex is about the same size as your pack mule), but they'll make excellent representations. If you can't find these timeless plastic toys, you can try using hand-drawn cardboard cutouts, poker chips, rocks and twigs from your backyard (they make great terrain), and weird landscape formations used to decorate fish tanks and terrariums.

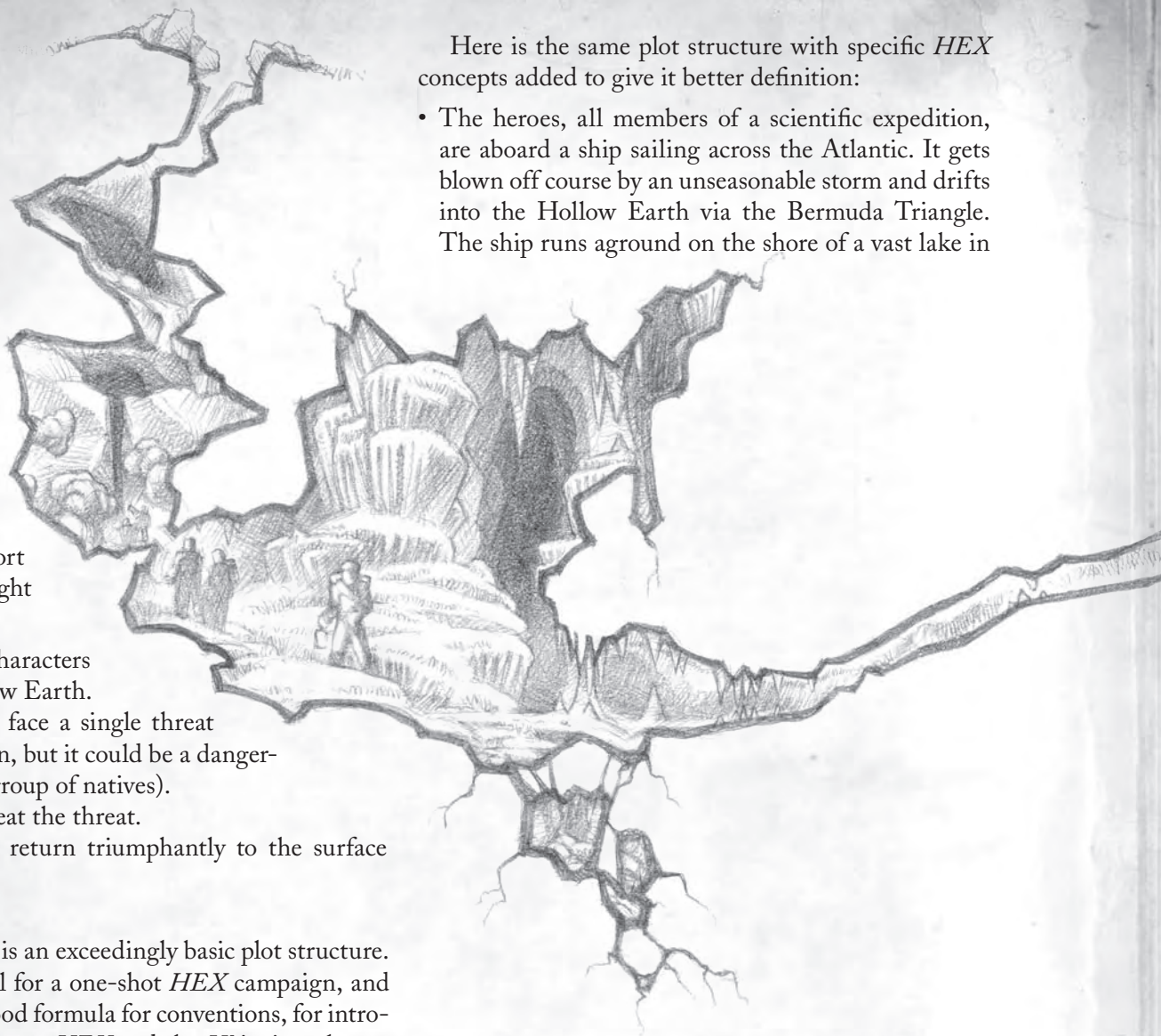
## Story Length: The Long and Short of It

*HEX* stories come in two sizes: long and short. The duration of your *HEX* story should be something that you and your players discuss before beginning your first game session, and the story length should be suited to your group's tastes. If you and your players are completely new to *HEX*, opt for a short campaign or one-shot adventure before attempting the long campaign.

## The Short Campaign

The short campaign lasts anywhere from one game session to three, or even four, consecutive sessions—generally the number of sessions required to complete a single, defined story arc. The main plot of these stories is usually very simple. Before play begins, players and the Gamemaster discuss what kind of plot they want to explore (see Care and Feeding of Players, p. 167). Once you've had that discussion, you can get right to work on your short campaign. Create a story goal, craft a major villain, and figure out how these two elements interact. Decide how the player characters will be introduced to their goal and to the villain, and sketch out a few situations that will challenge the heroes while revealing some of the main plot. You may find that you'll need to be more liberal with clues to any mysteries you include in the short campaign, since the players may feel very pressed for time (see Pacing, p. 171).





A sample short campaign plot might look like this:

- The player characters enter the Hollow Earth.
- The characters face a single threat (usually a villain, but it could be a dangerous animal or group of natives).
- The heroes defeat the threat.
- The characters return triumphantly to the surface world.

Note that this is an exceedingly basic plot structure. It works very well for a one-shot *HEX* campaign, and is an especially good formula for conventions, for introducing new players to *HEX* and the *Ubiquity* rules, or for novice Gamemasters. It won't satisfy veteran players craving a longer, deeper game experience.

It's generally best to gloss over the characters' arrival in the Hollow Earth in short campaigns. Limit the narrative to just a few minutes, and then pick up the action as the heroes emerge from their conveyance to glimpse the Hollow Earth for the first time. The bulk of the game session focuses on encountering and defeating the villain. In fact, you can begin your one-shot or short campaign right in the middle of the action with the heroes facing off against a threat. Let them cope with the peril and then give them a little breathing room before introducing the next action scene. Hint at the existence of the major villain if you've included one, possibly by introducing his or her villainous henchman or loyal minions first. Keep the pacing fast and use a cliffhanger in the climactic moments of the story to give your players that authentic pulp adventure rush!

Here is the same plot structure with specific *HEX* concepts added to give it better definition:

- The heroes, all members of a scientific expedition, are aboard a ship sailing across the Atlantic. It gets blown off course by an unseasonable storm and drifts into the Hollow Earth via the Bermuda Triangle. The ship runs aground on the shore of a vast lake in

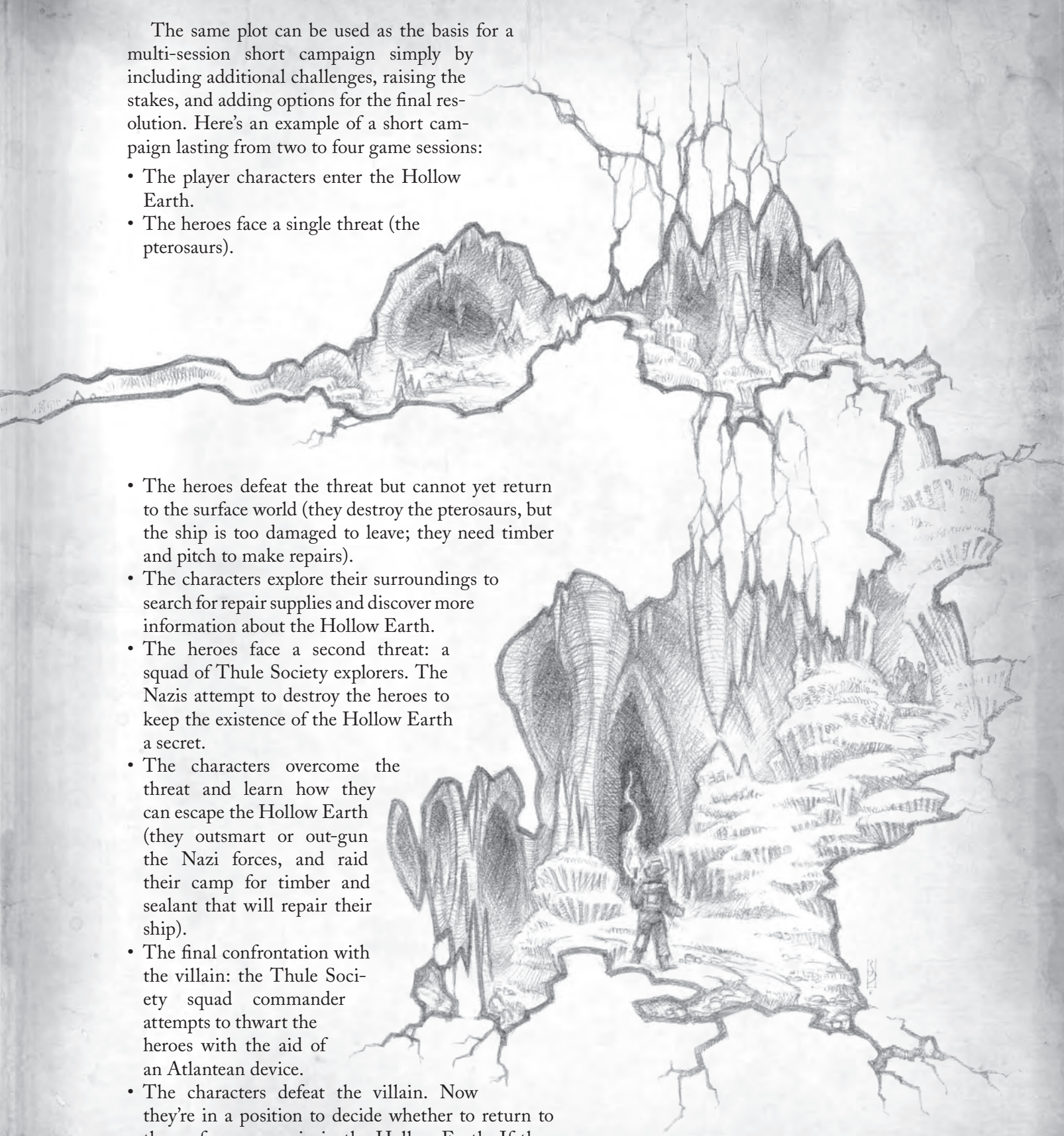
the Hollow Earth. It's still seaworthy but needs a few repairs before it can be floated safely.

- As the player characters investigate their surroundings, they come face to face with the prehistoric flora and fauna that inhabit the Hollow Earth. A pair of giant pterosaurs proves especially threatening, and their attacks make repairing the ship a difficult and dangerous proposition.
- The heroes modify some of the ship's netting (normally used for collecting scientific specimens) to trap one of the pterosaurs. Its cries lure the second pterosaur close enough for the crew to kill it with a volley of harpoons.
- With the marauding flying reptiles out of the picture, the heroes can repair their vessel, set sail, and make their way through a subterranean tunnel out into the surface world again.



The same plot can be used as the basis for a multi-session short campaign simply by including additional challenges, raising the stakes, and adding options for the final resolution. Here's an example of a short campaign lasting from two to four game sessions:

- The player characters enter the Hollow Earth.
- The heroes face a single threat (the pterosaurs).
- The heroes defeat the threat but cannot yet return to the surface world (they destroy the pterosaurs, but the ship is too damaged to leave; they need timber and pitch to make repairs).
- The characters explore their surroundings to search for repair supplies and discover more information about the Hollow Earth.
- The heroes face a second threat: a squad of Thule Society explorers. The Nazis attempt to destroy the heroes to keep the existence of the Hollow Earth a secret.
- The characters overcome the threat and learn how they can escape the Hollow Earth (they outsmart or out-gun the Nazi forces, and raid their camp for timber and sealant that will repair their ship).
- The final confrontation with the villain: the Thule Society squad commander attempts to thwart the heroes with the aid of an Atlantean device.
- The characters defeat the villain. Now they're in a position to decide whether to return to the surface or remain in the Hollow Earth. If they leave, they must decide whether to reveal the existence of the Hollow Earth to the outside world.





### Short Campaign Considerations

#### Pacing

Short *HEX* campaigns should be structured to pack a strong punch in a short span of time. Forget the slow burn and complex, multi-layered mysteries; concentrate instead on giving your players plenty of excitement. That's not to say that roleplaying through dialogue, intra-party planning, or narrative development don't all have a place in your short campaign, but they shouldn't be the main focus of play. Equip your short campaign with several major perils, both living and environmental, so that your players get a hint of the rollicking, seat-of-the-pants pacing that a longer campaign might entail. If you and your players enjoy the short campaign, you can always try a longer one later, perhaps using the events of the short campaign as a springboard for exploring some of the unsolved mysteries that came up in the course of play.

#### Locale

If the game is a one-shot event, try to keep the action confined to a limited geographic area—the valley in which the heroes' plane crashes, for example, or maybe the edge of the lake where their submarine surfaced. The heroes can try to explore the area, but you'll want to limit their progress in order to keep the story moving. Short campaigns involving multiple game sessions can afford to move the action beyond the characters' immediate vicinity, allowing them to explore some of the Hollow Earth's exotic regions. But try, even in these cases, not to let the plot get bogged down in endless exploration (unless that happens to be the key task facing the characters in the adventure premise).

#### Subplots

Keep your secondary storylines relatively simple and consider losing them altogether in one-shot games. Stay focused instead on the main conflict or crisis, whether it's locating an alternate source of fuel for the drilling machine, or capturing a renegade scientist who's gone over to the Nazi side. For short campaigns designed to last longer than a single session, consider adding just one or two subplots, such as a flirtation between a hero and an NPC, or maybe a traitor within the party's midst.

### The Long Campaign

This is the default type of *HEX* campaign and probably the most familiar to players and Gamemasters alike. Essentially a multi-part story featuring the same characters, the long campaign can be any length that the players and Gamemaster desire. A good rule of thumb is to have the campaign last until the player characters have accomplished their primary goal, secured a means of returning to the surface world, or both.

The long campaign should feature several cliffhangers and possibly a rescue situation (retrieving a party member or NPC ally from the clutches of the major villain, for instance, or from a dangerous environmental hazard like a tar pit or volcanic eruption). This narrative structure doesn't require you to be as clear about the story's development. It's perfectly ok, even desirable and fun, to allow the heroes to stumble almost blindly from one peril to the next while they get their bearings. Each new encounter or discovery should allow them to build up their knowledge of the Hollow Earth, until they're in a position to start putting all the pieces together. As in a short campaign, you can foreshadow the existence of your major villain at any point but the dramatic buildup to his first appearance should naturally be longer. Perhaps some of the native inhabitants of the Hollow Earth have encountered the antagonist previously and warn the players of this formidable presence. Eyewitness reports of the villain's cruelty can add spice to the initial confrontation.

Here's an example of a long *HEX* campaign outline, again drawing on the short campaign premise outlined above:

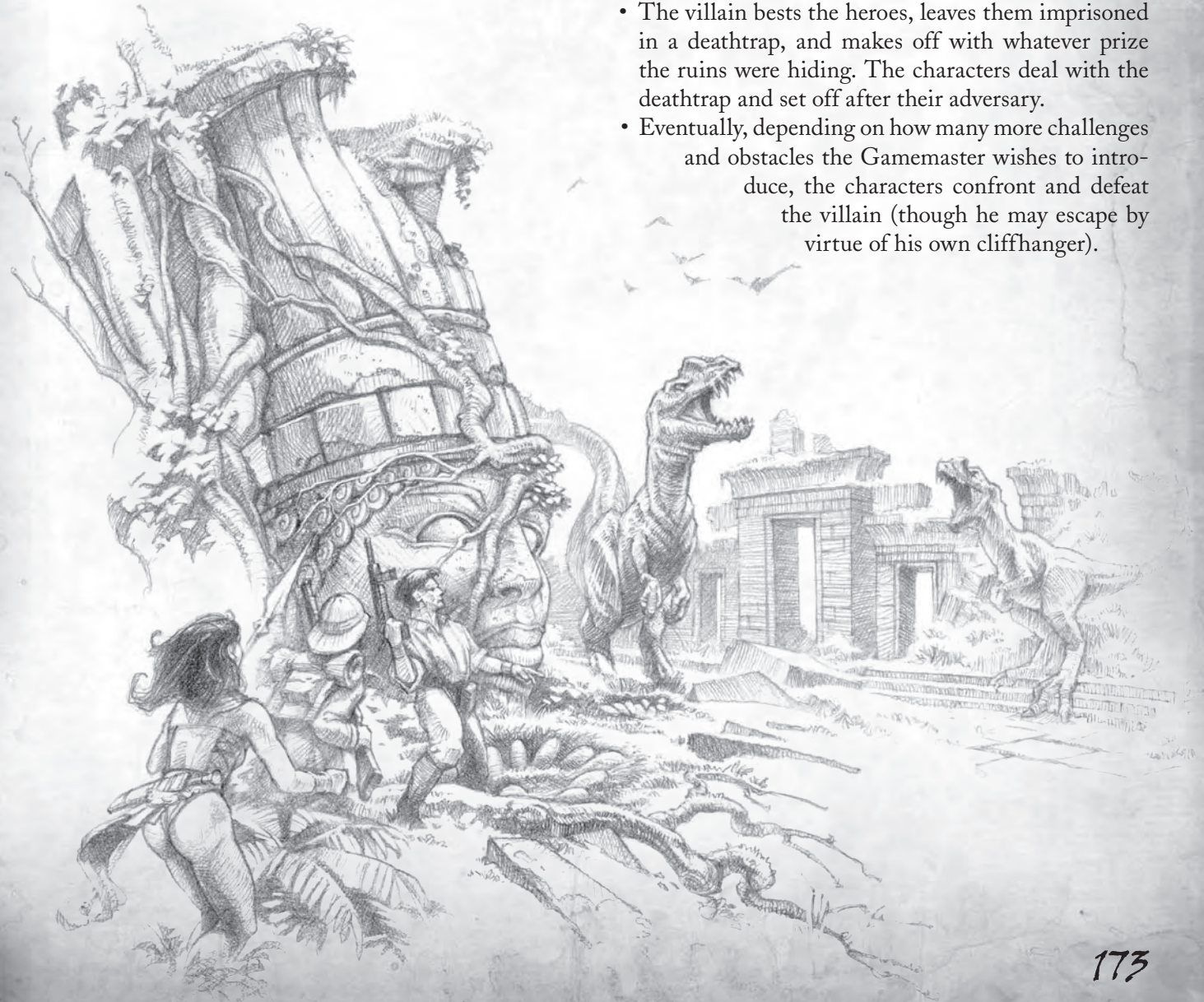
- The player characters enter the Hollow Earth. Spend more time on the "getting there" part, playing up the sheer weirdness of leaving the surface world for its interior, and the shock and wonder of discovering that the heroes have entered an utterly alien place. If the characters have entered the Hollow World through a particularly difficult means (i.e., a maelstrom in the Bermuda Triangle, or a rockslide in the Amazonian jungle), you may want to use this event as a separate encounter in and of itself.
- The heroes face a single threat (the pterosaurs).
- The heroes defeat the threat but cannot yet return to the surface world. They destroy the pterosaurs, but the ship is too damaged to leave; they need timber and pitch to make repairs. They also discover that one of the pterosaurs was wearing what looks like a collar manufactured from some kind of unknown metal, and that the collar bears markings utterly unfamiliar to any writing the heroes have ever seen before.



- The characters explore their surroundings in search of repair supplies, and discover more information about the Hollow Earth. Their travels could take them deep into a jungle, across a vast plain, around the edge of a steaming, stinking swamp, over a craggy highland, or through all of these terrain features. Along the way, the heroes encounter more dinosaurs and eventually run across a pueblo city inhabited by Spanish conquistadores with whom they converse to learn more about their predicament.
- The heroes face a second threat: a squad of Thule Society explorers, led by a villainous henchman, who attack the pueblo. The Nazis learn of the heroes' arrival in the Hollow Earth and attempt to destroy them in order to prevent the outside world from hearing of their work.
- The characters overcome the Thule Society goons, winning the trust of the Conquistadores. The leader of the Spaniards shares a secret with the characters: a map showing the location of an Atlantean

ruin. It is this the Nazis wished to obtain when they raided the pueblo.

- Map in hand, the characters set off for the ruin, traveling through even more strange territory. Along the way they encounter and avoid, or overcome, more environmental threats (and possibly more lost civilizations if the Gamemaster really wants to complicate things).
- Arriving at the ruin, the heroes discover a tribe of natives living nearby. In true pulp adventure fashion, the tribe is ruled by a comely young prince or princess (depending on which better suits the tale), and this ruler falls hard for a member of the party. Unfortunately, the tribe believes the ruins are cursed, and they will kill anyone who tries to enter them.
- The characters, possibly taking advantage of the tribal ruler's infatuation, find a way to enter the ruins. It's then that the major villain, who has followed the heroes all the way from the pueblo, makes his first appearance.
- The villain bests the heroes, leaves them imprisoned in a deathtrap, and makes off with whatever prize the ruins were hiding. The characters deal with the deathtrap and set off after their adversary.
- Eventually, depending on how many more challenges and obstacles the Gamemaster wishes to introduce, the characters confront and defeat the villain (though he may escape by virtue of his own cliffhanger).





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- Whether or not they regain whatever the major villain took from the ruins, the heroes also obtain a means of escape from the villain's lair.
- The characters are now in a position to return to the surface world if they wish. Whether they leave the Hollow Earth will depend not only on their original goal, but also on the events that have befallen them since arriving. Some party members might opt to remain behind to continue exploration, or to build a new life with a romantic partner; others may wish to depart as soon as possible. The departing characters are faced with one more dilemma: what, if anything, do they say about the Hollow Earth to the people on the surface? And what are the consequences of their decision?

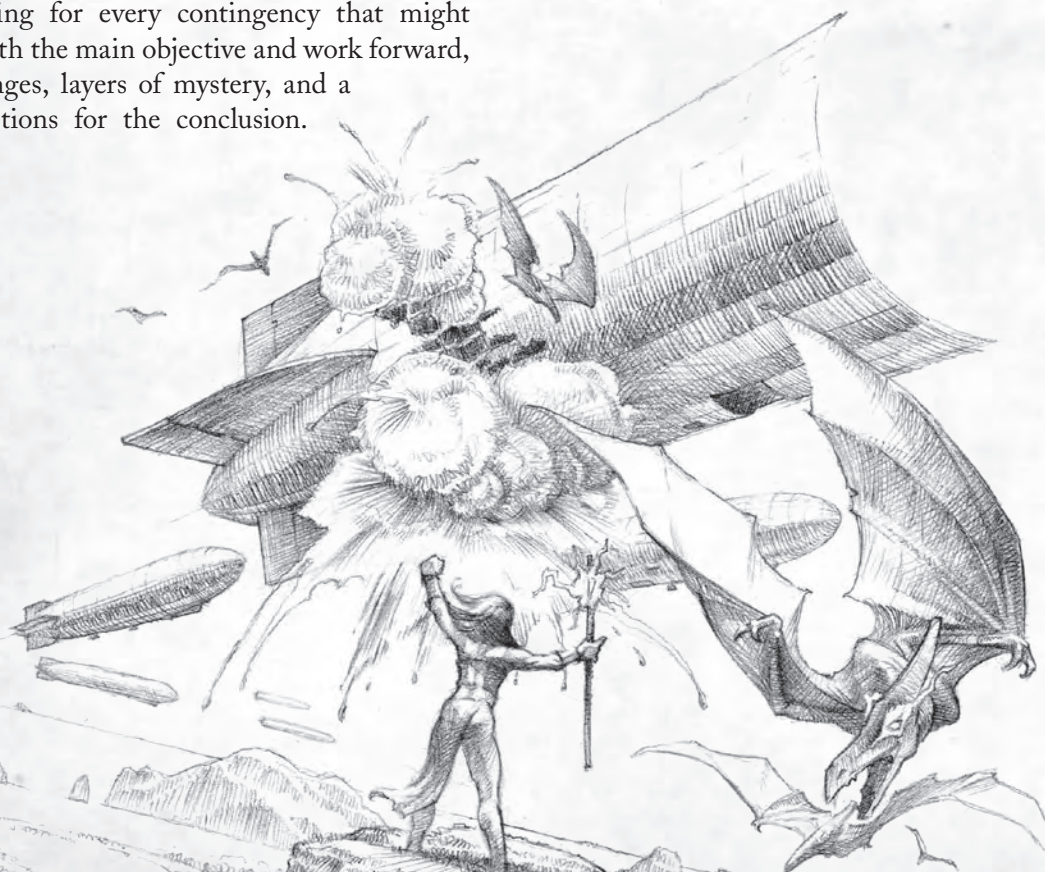
### Long Campaign Considerations

More so than one-shot or short campaigns, the long campaign requires a more identifiably structured plot. It doesn't, however, require an exhaustively detailed plot or planning for every contingency that might occur. Start with the main objective and work forward, adding challenges, layers of mystery, and a number of options for the conclusion.

Note that this advice on designing a long campaign presumes you've already discussed the story with your players and agreed on some basic elements for both characters and the tale itself; otherwise, refer to *Care and Feeding of Players*, p. 167.

### Pacing

You might be tempted to decrease the pace of play in a long campaign. But you'd be wrong! (Didn't see that coming, did you?) It only seems reasonable to slow down the pace since you have a lot more time, right? Actually the reverse is true: the quintessential *HEX* campaign indulges in exhilarating pacing that keeps your heroes on their toes, never letting them become complacent. The benefit of a longer campaign is that there can, and should, be even more action-oriented encounters and a greater sense of desperate danger than you can pack into a shorter campaign. That's not to say that you shouldn't permit your player characters to engage in scenes that involve plenty of dialogue, only





that it's important to remember that capturing the flavor of the pulp adventure means bracketing slower scenes with action that energizes and directs the flow of the game.

### *Locale*

The player characters have an opportunity to explore more of the Hollow Earth during a long campaign. Once the initial shock of discovering the Hollow Earth wears off (soon to be replaced by more shocking discoveries!), exploration can be a key feature of a long campaign, taking the characters throughout the hidden world's major geographical regions before they reach the point in the plot where they can opt to leave. Time spent traversing the different areas that comprise the Hollow Earth shouldn't become tedious, filled with nothing but descriptions of the landscape. Take advantage of the opportunity to punctuate your scenic narratives with a variety of dangerous creatures, plants, environments and mysteries.

### *Subplots*

The long campaign offers additional opportunity for more and deeper subplots. A subplot is any story arc that's subordinate to the main tale, and that generally has its origins in the characters' backgrounds. For example, romance is a time-honored subplot in the pulp adventure genre. You won't find too many stories in this field without at least one romantic flirtation. The best romances in the *HEX* campaign occur between characters and NPCs, particularly those who are inhabitants of the Hollow Earth. There's nothing like a budding love interest between a 20<sup>th</sup>-century person of the surface world and a lost-in-time throwback to bring the clash of cultures and morals into sharp relief! Other romances might occur between player characters, but these should be handled with due care, and discussed with the players involved outside the context of the game narrative (see *Care and Feeding of Players*, p. 167). Any inherent flaw, be it emotional, physical or mental, also makes good subplot fodder. Heroes with a strong prejudice, an innate fear of commitment, a drinking problem, or an infatuation with a certain type of romantic ideal, are all prime targets for good subplots.

## *Villainy in the Hollow Earth*

Every good story has its villain, and *HEX* is no exception. No pulp adventure tale worth its salt fails to

offer a compelling major villain! Be sure to lavish care and attention on your villainous NPCs. They will have a direct and important effect on not just the characters, but every facet of your adventure. The central villains in the *HEX* milieu usually come in two varieties: those who hail originally from the surface, and those who are native (or nearly so) to the Hollow Earth.

### *Villains from the Surface World*

The classic pulp adventure villain often sports a sinister moniker and colorful costume, but *HEX* departs from these particular conventions. While many *HEX* villains are still mysterious figures worthy of fear and awe, they tend to be more deeply rooted in the factual world of the game setting. You won't find Doctor Zardov or the Scarlet Sorceress roaming about the Hollow Earth, but you may well find Major Klaus von Barlow, commander of a Thule Society expedition, or Doctor Otto Thorvald, a Swiss scientist bent on proving his theories of geo-magnetism no matter what the cost to civilization as we know it. In *HEX*, villains should be men and women who might have existed in the world as it was in the 1930s.

The key to creating a believable *HEX* villain is a combination of background and motivation. Perhaps your major villain is an ambitious member of a secret society on the surface, or a Great War veteran unhappy with how that conflict's victors treated his homeland. Vowing to help restore his country to its former glory, he joined a fascist political movement, using his high intellect and thirst for advancement to secure a position in one of that organization's budding secret societies. Or perhaps the villain is a princess from some exotic land who heard of the Hollow Earth through the cracked lips of tortured prisoners, and makes it her goal to conquer this hidden realm and add it to her growing empire. The villain could be a power-hungry and cruel tycoon who wants to plunder the natural resources of the hidden world, or maybe even a turncoat government agent who sold out to a foreign power, and plans to hand the secrets of Atlantean science over to the enemy in exchange for money and power.

Give your major villain characteristics worthy of his or her role in the story. Perhaps he possesses fabulous wealth coupled with a sinister but inescapable animal magnetism, and behaves like a cultured nobleman even in the midst of barbaric turmoil. She could be a heart-stopping beauty with a heart as icy as her blue eyes, and an ego as immense as her lusts: spurn her at your peril! Little quirks and small idiosyncrasies can make an encounter with your chief antagonist memorable. Try imbuing the villain with a distinct and grating cackle of a laugh, a



## Chapter Six

pronounced hatred of redheaded men, a hidden drinking problem, or a fondness for classical music.

Don't show the face of your villain too soon. Save him for a dramatically appropriate moment—possibly after the heroes believe they've identified and vanquished their enemy. Then have their true foe take the stage, showing the characters what it means to go from frying pan to fire. Once you allow your villain to show his face, don't be afraid to transform him into a recurring villain (especially if your *HEX* campaign is intended to run for at least several game sessions). The number of ways in which a clever major villain can torment the heroes is nearly endless! Include hidden escape routes prepared in advance, physical anomalies that allow them to survive otherwise certain death, an unexpected resistance to a particular type of harmful substance, or an array of ingenious gadgets and mechanisms. Refer to the section on Cliffhangers, p. 161, for additional ideas.

### *Villainous Henchmen*

No self-respecting pulp arch-villain would be caught dead without his trusted henchman. These minor NPCs are generally part of the supporting cast, intended to act as their master's right arm, oversee their employer's schemes, and give the heroes a hard time. Typically of a physical nature, the villainous henchman ought to be able to hold his own against a few of the characters in a straight-up fight—though who ever heard of a henchman who didn't fight dirty? These personas usually, like their masters, are from the surface-world originally, but they should possess a practical knowledge of the Hollow Earth that makes them doubly formidable (after all, they've had the chance to get to know some of the native flora, fauna and intelligent inhabitants on terms that their bosses are far too busy to be concerned with). Their backgrounds are frequently less colorful than those they serve, though there are exceptions: the mysterious bodyguard who mastered the martial arts at a monastery in the Far East, the once-noble heiress who now lures men into ruin on her employer's behalf, and the brilliant but misguided young chemist who only wants to protect his family from the wrath of Herr Blucher.

### *Concluding Campaigns*

Even the shortest *HEX* adventure deserves a pulse-pounding climax! The best conclusions—those that give your players the most pulp adventure thrills per minute—include similar elements:

- *Any unresolved main plot elements get resolved.*

The heroes and villain should have an opportunity to thwart one another in a final, no-holds-barred confrontation. If the player characters have been stranded in the Hollow Earth for the duration of the campaign, they should have the opportunity to return home to the surface world—if they want to. The heroes don't necessarily need to win, *per se*, but the action of the main plot should be concluded.

- *All the characters are involved in, and contribute to, the grand finale.*

A good climax gathers all the player characters in the same place for the big finish, but even if they aren't all gathered in the same place at the same time (see *Separated!*, p. 165), all characters should have a chance to contribute meaningfully to the story's climactic events.

- *The conclusion incorporates at least one significant event.*

This occurrence is preferably on a grand scale. This might be a climactic battle between Nazi forces and the heroes' native allies, the activation of an Atlantean artifact with explosive results, or a natural catastrophe such as a volcanic eruption, earthquake or tidal wave.

- *Unresolved subplots become springboards for the next adventure or campaign.*

Was one of the heroes involved in a romantic flirtation with an NPC? Their relationship could become the basis for further *HEX* adventures. The player character, for instance, might choose to return to the surface world for now, but plan to return to the Hollow Earth and his lover in the near future. Did the villainous henchman manage to escape the final battle? Have him turn up again as the major villain, possibly with better equipment and advantages, in the next campaign.

- *The characters return to the surface world (or don't).*

After the above concluding events have been observed, it's time for the characters to go home. Now is the time for them to discover the means to fabricate a broken part, synthesize needed fuel for their conveyance, learn the secret of using Atlantean transportation, or simply locate the long-sought passage back to the surface. To make your conclusion even stronger, present the heroes with a choice: stay or go? There may be good reasons for them to remain behind, so leave the decision in their hands. It's a great opportunity for some final drama, especially if any of the characters decide to leave or remain reluctantly (because they will be separated from family, friends or lovers, or because their main goal is still unful-



filled). This is perhaps the most significant moment of the campaign because it will be the final impression left on your players. Think of it as the final word on the subject. The story isn't over if the heroes remain in the Hollow Earth because they never had the opportunity to escape. The current chapter has merely come to an end.

## Story Seeds

There are innumerable stories suitable to *Hollow Earth Expedition*, but sometimes you need only the seed of an idea to launch an entire campaign. Here are a few examples of campaign concepts that can be developed and fleshed out to create memorable adventures.

- A small civilian vessel, such as a private plane or yacht, disappears. The characters are members of a search party; in the course of their efforts they accidentally discover a route into the Hollow Earth. The missing vessel also entered the Hollow Earth via this route, and its passengers are stranded there.
- The characters are kidnapped by the Thule Society and delivered, unconscious, to a Nazi outpost in the Hollow Earth. Their capture may be part of a larger scheme connected with international intrigue (the characters might be important government, military or scientific figures, for instance), or it may just be random. Either way, the characters must come to grips with their dilemma and locate a means of escape.
- A wealthy industrialist hires the characters to accompany him on a secret expedition into the Hollow Earth. The industrialist could be motivated by a personal agenda, or working on behalf of a government agency.
- The characters are members of a well-equipped and amply funded government expedition to the Hollow Earth. Their mandate is to create a complete, accurate map and gazetteer of the region, and return with it.
- A visionary but slightly disreputable film producer cons the characters into accompanying him to the Hollow Earth as part of his production crew. He intends to film his latest masterpiece on location, using the exotic landscape and terrible creatures as visual elements in his film.
- Two rival explorers, each working for opposing governments, assemble and lead independent expeditions into the Hollow Earth. They are eager to convince their teams that they are racing against time for an important cause—national security, for instance—but they're actually engaged in nothing more important than a private wager. The scientist who reaches a specified point in the Hollow Earth and returns first, wins.
- The characters are military personnel who stumble

onto an entrance in to the Hollow Earth in the midst of a training exercise or covert operation. Alternately, the characters are prisoners of war who escape from their captivity only to find themselves in an even more dangerous position within the Hollow Earth!

- While exploring an appropriate region on the Earth's surface, the characters stumble across a group of walking anachronisms—Civil War soldiers, members of an expedition lost since before the Great War, a hunting party of Neanderthals—who have escaped from the Hollow Earth.
- A private employer engages the services of the characters to mount an expedition with the goal of obtaining a rare plant that offers the only hope of a cure for his ailing daughter.
- The characters are mercenaries (perhaps they were soldiers in the Great War and are no longer in the service) led into the Hollow Earth by an ex-military officer who is convinced the fabled City of Gold waits somewhere beneath the Earth's crust.
- The heroes encounter a Hollow Earth civilization founded by Jesuit missionaries who were stranded there during the 17th century. Their descendants believe the Hollow Earth is none other than the Garden of Eden, and they will stop at nothing to prevent word of their idyllic existence from reaching the outside world.
- A scientist assembles an expedition in utter secrecy and pays her team well, but refuses to discuss or reveal the nature of their mission. She ushers them into her custom-built drilling machine under false pretenses and leads them into the Hollow Earth. Only after arriving does she reveal where the characters are, and that she intends for them to help her find and retrieve a rare ore she has detected deep inside the Earth.
- The characters are all members of an expedition assembled to locate a missing explorer who vanished on a previous expedition. They find him, all right, but discover that he's "gone native" and is living like a god amongst beastmen. He's also quite mad, and won't take kindly to interference from the characters.

## Inspirations & Resources

One way to become a better *HEX* Gamemaster is to actively and consciously fuel your love for the pulp adventure genre. What follows is a lengthy, but still incomplete, listing of inspirational sources on which you can draw for plot ideas, character concepts, NPC motivations, and period atmosphere. (See the Appendix, p. 244).



## ⊕ CHAPTER 7: **THE HOLLOW EARTH**



The Hollow Earth is a savage and dangerous place. Prehistoric creatures still roam the land, and fear neither man nor technology. All forms of life thrive in the Hollow Earth, resulting in fierce competition. Each and every species has had to grow bigger, stronger, and tougher in order to survive. Even the most innocuous looking plant may turn out to be deadly. Great care must be taken when an outsider first enters the Hollow Earth. The paradigm shift from human supremacy to brutal competition is often a fatal one.

There is more to the Hollow Earth than dinosaurs and ferocious beasts, however. Near-human beastmen and tribes of natives—including vicious cannibals, noble savages, and Amazon warriors—may be found there. These people may be either friend or foe to a surface explorer, but there is little way to know how one will be welcomed. In addition, there are remnants (or descendants) of other outsiders in the Hollow Earth. Pirates roam the Central Sea, raiding newcomers, native villages, and even each other. Other people may be encountered here as well, including Spanish conquistadors and lost travelers.

Ruins of an ancient civilization may be found throughout the Hollow Earth. This ancient culture has had many names: Atlantis, Hyperborea, Ultima Thule, Ur, and Babylon... the list goes on and on. No one knows for sure which (if any) of the names is accurate. Regardless, all that remains of this advanced civilization is ruins. No one knows why they left or how long

### **Mystery and Discovery**

The Hollow Earth is a strange and mysterious place. No one knows much about its true nature, including its inhabitants. There are no detailed maps of its interior and even those who have been inside can only shed light on one small part of the mystery.

The secrets revealed in this chapter barely begin to scratch the surface of the Hollow Earth. While the content of this chapter is intended for the Gamemaster's eyes only, anyone who reads it will likely come away with more questions than answers. Who created the Hollow Earth and why? Did the Atlanteans (or some other all-powerful race) create it to suit their purposes or did they just exploit it? Was this their true home and, if so, why did they abandon it? These questions may go unanswered forever.

HEX is a game about exploration and discovery, and to define the Hollow Earth too extensively would detract from that. The general information provided here is intended to be a framework upon which to customize and build. Gamemasters are encouraged to put their own stamp on the Hollow Earth and populate it however they please. Don't worry if something seems contradictory. It's entirely possible that different parts of the Hollow Earth operate under very different rules. It's your world—have fun with it!

they've been gone. Where they went and what became of them remains a mystery that may never be solved. Still, they left scraps of their society behind: bits of technology deemed too unimportant or too large to



take with them. These artifacts—even the ancient language—wield amazing power. Men and women from the surface world would go to extremes to possess even the lowliest relic from this advanced race.

## Getting In

Most people believe that getting into the Hollow Earth is a difficult if not impossible thing to do. After all, if it were easy, someone would have already been there and returned with definitive proof of its existence. As far as anyone knows, no expedition has ever found an entrance to the inner world.

In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Entrances to the Hollow Earth abound. They aren't even that hard to find—people stumble onto them all the time without even realizing it. The problem, however, is that most entrances appear mundane to the casual observer. Caves, volcanic vents, and deep-sea fissures can extend far deeper than anyone realizes. The ruins of ancient civilizations, particularly temples, are often built near or atop Hollow Earth access points, but the decay of ages has concealed the portals or filled them with so much debris that their purpose is unknown or hidden completely.

The other problem is that getting in is much easier than getting out. The Hollow Earth is a perilous place filled with countless threats to life and limb. Few people who enter make it out alive. Those individuals who do manage to return home are often accused of telling wild tales or faking evidence. Thus the existence of the Hollow Earth remains a secret.

In spite of this, explorers continue to search for the Hollow Earth. And for those who find it, one of the greatest adventures on—or inside—Earth awaits!

## Polar Openings

Perhaps the most famous (and most sought after) entrances to the Hollow Earth are at the North and South Poles. These entrances are massive, miles-wide holes through Earth's crust. A constant mist shrouds the polar openings where moist, heated air from inside the planet meets the cold air above. Visibility in this region is no more than a half-mile, and often as little as a hundred yards. The effect is exacerbated by unpredictable magnetic fields that make compasses spin wildly and gyros oscillate uselessly. To make things even worse, explorers are plagued by polar mirages. The cause of these illusions is unknown; they could arise from powdery snow and ice driven by the fierce arctic wind, from sunlight reflected off the bright landscape

## A Brief History of Hollow Earth Theory

Since the dawn of time, mankind has imagined secret worlds reachable only through long and dangerous journeys. Often those journeys are spiritual, taking the human soul or consciousness into an immaterial realm. Sometimes, however, they are actual, physical voyages to extraordinary places hidden from the light of day and concealed deep inside the earth.

Countless primitive theologies were based on the idea that mankind emerged from the depths of the Earth itself. Cave drawings in India depict people climbing from a hollow void within the world, and many religions hold that the interior of Earth is the dwelling place of the gods. Other religions assert that the dead are cast down into the earth, either for eternal torment or a gray, listless existence. So powerful is this belief that most cultures bury their dead in the ground to speed their journey to the underworld.

Other cultures assumed a more mundane view. In Greek tradition, Orpheus entered the Hollow Earth in search of Eurydice. The Romans maintained that Apollo lived inside Earth with a race called the Hyperboreans. The Valkyries had the power to enter and exit subterranean realms. Tibetan monks teach of two great underground areas, Shambala and Agatha, where those who achieve spiritual mastery on the surface are allowed to live forever in peace.

Can such a place really exist? Is there a world inside our own, teeming with exotic plant and animal life, populated by unknown races? Many have believed so. Even educated, "rational" men have theorized about the existence of the Hollow Earth.

Sir Edmund Halley, English mathematician and astronomer (of Halley's Comet fame) published an essay on the Hollow Earth in 1692. This was no mere collection of musings, but a scientific theory based on fluctuations in Earth's magnetic fields and worked out in collaboration with Sir Isaac Newton.

John Symmes, a decorated veteran of the War of 1812, devoted his life to investigating and popularizing his theory of the Hollow Earth and the civilizations it held. In 1838, the United States government backed a scientific expedition to the far southern latitudes and Antarctica led by Charles Wilkes. This expedition was the first to establish the existence of an Antarctic landmass beyond the pack ice, confirming at least the possibility of openings into the earth's interior.

Perhaps the most famous explorer of all was Admiral Richard Byrd, who flew over both poles numerous times and mapped the Antarctic. His polar flights have created considerable controversy, however. Many people believe that Byrd never reached the North Pole, and merely circled his plane for hours before returning to his base camp. On his second Antarctic flight, he was said to have encountered and filmed something remarkable. Exactly what he found and filmed is



unknown because the film was never released to the public. The footage disappeared, and the US government denies it ever existed. No mention of it is made in official histories of the expedition. Was Byrd's film the first real evidence of a new frontier not on the Earth, but *within* it?

What is real and what is true? We know now that the Earth is solid and in all likelihood the conspiracy theories and wild tales are nothing more than stories. Still, our desire to believe in something mysterious and fantastic buried beneath our feet is as strong today as it ever was. *Hollow Earth Expedition* is your invitation to suspend your disbelief and let your imagination run wild. Follow in the footsteps of Jules Verne and Edgar Rice Burroughs and tell your own Hollow Earth stories. Jump right in and have fun! You'll be in good company.

and airborne ice crystals, or from shimmering waves of warmth rising from the unnaturally warm, open sea at the pole itself. Many explorers have reported seeing distant mountain ranges and sheer walls of ice where, in fact, no such features exist.

The polar openings themselves are funnel-shaped shafts that extend from the earth's surface to the interior in one straight shot. The curvature of the lip is so gradual that an aircraft or ground vehicle can enter the shaft without realizing it. The curvature of the lip and the shift in the plane of gravity occur so gradually that they are barely noticed. At no point in the tunnel can opposite sides be seen at one time, and because of the shifting gravity plane, it's not possible to fly across the shaft.

As one passes through the tunnel, the wind picks up steadily. A hot-air or helium balloon can make little progress; a zeppelin can proceed slowly if it has powerful engines; and an airplane can make good progress, though the pilot will certainly notice the strong headwind. It's possible to make the passage by ground vehicle as well, or even on foot.

The great challenge in any of these methods is reaching the Pole at all. The South Pole lies roughly 800 miles from the Antarctic coast, while the North Pole is surrounded by water and pack ice. The ice around the shaft builds into tremendous, crystalline mounds. Though this open-air "reef" reaches heights of only a few hundred feet, it is so jagged and treacherous as to be completely impassable by sled and nearly so on foot. It is not, however, always this way. Warm water currents from the core melt the ice during the light summer months, making it possible for a ship to pass by. It refreezes again during the unbroken darkness of the

polar winter, but even then, the ice may be flown over or sailed under with the right vehicle.

### Drilling

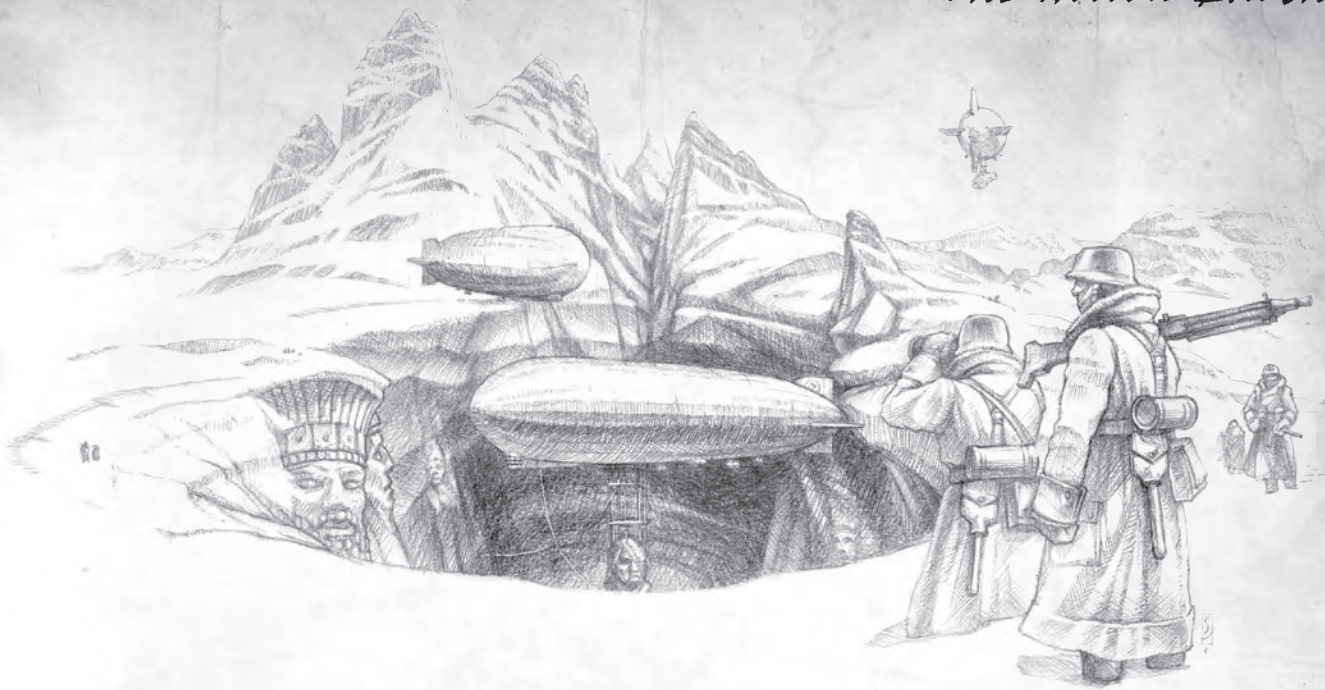
If you accept that the Earth is a hollow ball with a rocky shell, it is theoretically possible to drill from the surface to the inside. Drilling through possibly hundreds of miles of bedrock is no easy feat, but just because it's never been done doesn't mean it couldn't be achieved with the right machine. A stationary drilling platform could never drill deep enough. A drilling machine, on the other hand, that can chew through rock and spit out the debris behind itself is perfectly suited to lengthy underground explorations.

The key factor is speed. A drilling machine that can muster a speed of five miles per hour can pass through 500 miles of crust in only 100 hours: just over four days, which is a manageable trip with sufficient oxygen. A scientist smart and bold enough to attempt this trip might be able to build a machine that could tunnel even faster. However, miscalculating speed and distance could have tragic consequences.

Once you have a drilling machine, choosing where to start drilling is less important. Selecting a place where the crust is thin will only cut a mile or two off the trip. Besides, one can assume that the interior surface of the Hollow Earth has the same types of geological high and low points as the outside surface. Therefore, the thickness can vary by hundreds of miles from one place to another, and there's no way of knowing whether a low spot on the outside surface actually corresponds to a thin point in the shell.

While drilling is the most direct method for reaching the Hollow Earth, it has several significant drawbacks (besides the obvious one of building a machine capable of making the trip). First, there's no way to tell where you're going. Unless the craft has sophisticated sensing equipment, it can unexpectedly break through into a subterranean river, huge chamber, or magma pool. Turning around or backing up to avoid an obstacle are both poor options, if they are options at all given the physical limitations of the vehicle. Second, the crust could hide unknown and unexpected dangers: extreme heat or cold, toxic or explosive gases, deep layers of material that are far harder than anything near the surface, or even bizarre and dangerous forms of life. Finally, there's no telling where you'll emerge. Unless the pilot of a drilling craft knows the geography of inner Earth, he could emerge beneath an ocean, at the top of a mountain range, or in the midst of an emperor's palace. This risk is largely unavoidable





unless someone can act as a guide or has access to an ancient, faded map of the interior.

## Caves

Spelunking is the poor man's route into the Hollow Earth. In 1936, many of the Earth's deepest caves were only partially explored, if at all. Spelunking was a little-known activity; in fact, the word spelunking did not even come into use until the 1940s. Ironically, it was the dramatic death of cave explorer Floyd Collins, who was trapped in Mammoth Cave (Kentucky) in 1925 and died during a much-publicized rescue attempt, that drew attention to cave exploration.

Many of the Earth's caverns extend much deeper than anyone realizes. Some extend all the way through the shell to the Hollow Earth. These deep passages are generally unknown to modern scientists and geologists; however, clues may be found in the depictions of underworld journeys by certain ancient authors such as Plato's *Phaedo*, Aristophanes's *Frogs*, the Orphic gold tablets, or in the field notes of a few intrepid (and usually discredited) explorers.

The deepest cave system in the U.S., Carlsbad Cavern (New Mexico), was partially mapped in 1923. Later that year it was declared a national monument. By 1936 the site was a popular tourist destination with guided tours and easy access to the upper chambers. The caves' deepest spots, however, remained unexplored and no one knows just how deep they really go.

The region around Carlsbad, New Mexico, is a bewildering, subterranean maze of enormous chambers and snaking passages. It is not a single cavern, but 83 dif-

## Polar Exploration

The existence of polar openings was suspected as far back as the 1700s, long before anyone really knew anything about them. Leonhard Euler, a Swiss mathematician familiar with Hollow Earth theory, postulated that the Earth is a hollow sphere with a sun at its center and openings at both poles. Although his "educated guess" was based on much speculation and a fair amount of faulty data, it wasn't far from the truth.

John Symmes proposed much the same idea in the early 19th century. Symmes devoted most of his adult life to promoting his ideas, and trying to raise enough money to finance an expedition to the North Pole. His goal was nothing less than to locate the opening and explore the world within. Symmes never succeeded but one of his disciples—a newspaper editor named Jeremiah Reynolds—helped to win congressional support for the Wilkes expedition to Antarctica in 1838. Wilkes was only able to skirt around the edges of the ice shelf but he was the first to verify that Antarctica is a continent and not just a frozen sea. Instead of disproving Symmes's hypothesis, Wilkes demonstrated that such a thing was possible.

All of these crackpot theories were supposedly put to rest when Admiral Richard Byrd flew over the North Pole in 1926 and the South Pole in 1929. Officially, he found no evidence of polar openings. Other explorers, such as Roald Amundsen, Lincoln Ellsworth and Umberto Nobile, also claimed to have found no evidence of polar openings. Whether these explorers actually discovered the openings is unknown. Perhaps they were led astray by their malfunctioning compasses and only believed they found the pole. Or perhaps they discovered the polar openings but were sworn to secrecy.

It is known that Byrd was redirected to the Antarctic



after a brief investigation of the North Pole. Could he have seen something at the North Pole that triggered suspicions about the South Pole? Amundsen disappeared in 1928 while flying to rescue Nobile, whose airship crashed in the Arctic. No one knows for sure why Nobile was going back to the pole or what became of Amundsen. Perhaps both men knew more than they were letting on...

ferent caves. Carlsbad Cavern itself contains the largest chambers, but the deepest is Lechuguilla Cave. In 1936, Lechuguilla was believed to extend only a few hundred feet and people never suspected that beyond a wall of rubble lay the deepest cavern in North America.

The overwhelming beauty and majesty of these caverns masks their mystery. No one knows how far they extend beneath the surface. Millions of bats live in the caves, but what other creatures might exist at less accessible depths? And is the rubble that's blocking Lechuguilla Cave the result of a natural rock-fall or something more sinister?

Although the Earth's crust is hundreds of miles thick, the trip through a twisting, turning cavern is much longer—at least 50 percent longer, and possibly double if wrong turns are made. An average group of explorers could expect the trip to take two months or more. Certain features, such as a navigable underground river or lake, can shave off considerable time.

Water is generally available to the cave traveler, but the supply is unpredictable and it may be contaminated with minerals. Food is also available from pockets of fungi, plants, and subterranean creatures. Where caverns widen out into enormous, underground chambers, they may be miles across and contain underground seas, plentiful plant and animal life of unknown types, even intelligent cave dwellers.

One of the benefits to entering the Hollow Earth through a cavern or cave is that explorers needn't worry about popping up in the middle of a city. Such caverns may, however, be considered holy sites by the local population.

Not all caverns are natural. Molemen, in particular, make extensive secret excavations. Most of these are located beneath surface cities where the Molemen's tunnels can link to human sewers, subways, and utility tunnels. Molemen disguise their tunnel entrances well but guard them lightly, if at all. Occasionally a human worker or lost cave explorer stumbles upon one of these entrances. Unless they take great pains to cover

their trail, the Molemen will track them down and do whatever is required to protect their secret. Failing that, they will seal that entrance and remove all evidence of its existence.

Utmost caution is advised for the explorer who discovers a Moleman tunnel, let alone travels through one.

### Volcanoes

Volcanoes represent one of the most dramatic and compelling avenues into the Hollow Earth. In his novel, *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, Jules Verne tells of Professor Hardwigg and his nephew Harry entering the Hollow Earth through Mt. Snæfells in Iceland. Since the book's publication in 1864, volcanoes have been popular entrances to the Hollow Earth.

When a volcano erupts, magma is forced upward from the magma chamber, which can lie many miles underground. The subterranean vents, if they remain passable, become highways leading to unplumbed depths. They are generally impassable, being clogged with solidified magma. But some, as in the case of Mt. Snæfells, maintain passages leading to chambers at incredible depths.

Exploring inside an extinct volcano is as safe as exploring any cavern. A dormant volcano is relatively safe as long as one avoids obvious hot spots.

An active volcano, on the other hand, is quite a treacherous place. Finding breathable air can be a problem. Sulfur fumes, smoke, and ash are easily detectable, but carbon monoxide is odorless and deadly. And then there's heat; it's a simple matter to notice that the temperature of the air and surrounding rock is rising, but there's no way to know if the path ahead is impassable. Most of the vents and passages in the volcano lead toward the magma chamber. If that can be bypassed, and carbon monoxide-choked passages avoided, a careful party might make good progress through an active volcano. A vehicle specially built to withstand the heat and pressure of a volcano could safely transport an entire group of explorers to the Hollow Earth.

A fourth type of volcano that bears examination is the massively devastated volcano. Active or inactive, these are volcanoes that erupted cataclysmically. The force of the explosion causes magma vents to be blasted wide open to extreme depths. Krakatau, which erupted in 1883, and Santorini, which erupted in antiquity, are two prime examples.



## Deep Sea Fissures

The thinnest sections of Earth's crust are at the deepest parts of the ocean, which can be miles below sea level. (Challenger Deep—not yet discovered in 1936—in the Mariana Trench lies nearly seven miles below sea level. Diamantina Deep in the Indian Ocean and Milwaukee Deep in the Puerto Rico Trench are both over five miles below sea level.)

Great cracks in the sea floor, called fissures, plunge even further into unknown depths. A submarine capable of operating under the tremendous pressure generated by miles of water can dive down through those fissures and keep on going. The fissures are straight for the most part, but occasional twists and turns make floodlights and viewing ports necessary. Similar to the polar openings, it's possible (indeed, almost unavoidable in the gloom at that depth) that a submarine could unknowingly enter a fissure and find itself surfacing in the Hollow Earth.

No comprehensive maps of the fissures exist. Most of the ocean floor is unknown because of the mechanical difficulties of reaching it. Where science is stymied, however, super-science may find a way! Someone with the right mix of ambition, genius, and materials could build a deep-diving submersible capable of surviving at those depths.

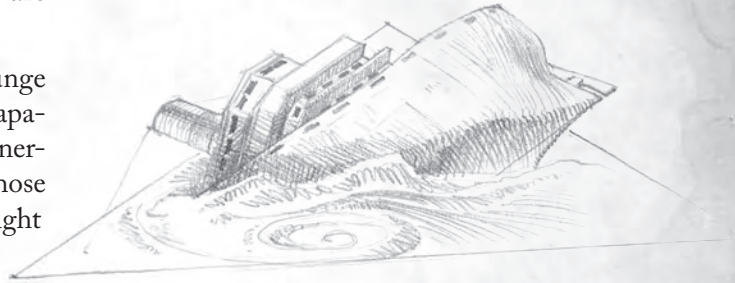
## The Bermuda Triangle

No one knows how long the Bermuda Triangle has been acting as a gateway between the outer and inner worlds. Although it would not be called "the Bermuda Triangle" until 1964, it was noted as a region of strange occurrences as far back as Columbus's first voyage to America. His ships passed through the haunting Sargasso Sea, where he noted in his log that his compass behaved oddly in that region, pointing more westerly than it should. His sailors reported seeing a ball of flame plunge into the sea, and odd lights on the horizon.

What could account for all the unexplained events in this region? In 1933, world-famous psychic Edgar Cayce created a stir of public interest by suggesting that the sunken ruins of lost Atlantis lay in this region. The "Terrible Crystals" that powered Atlantis's technology could still be active beneath the sea, charging the entire area with unknown energies.

The secret of the Bermuda Triangle is hidden beneath layers of mythology, superstition, and conjecture. Did the Atlanteans build the gateway to transport themselves to the Hollow Earth when they left

the surface? If so, why did they not seal the gateway permanently? Did they still wish to trade with the surface? Perhaps the Atlantean technology controlling the gateway is damaged and malfunctioning, transporting travelers randomly into the Hollow Earth.



## Famous Disappearances

By 1936, the Triangle had racked up an impressive list of disappearances:

- 1872—A sailing ship called *Mary Celeste* was found slicing through the waters between Portugal and the Azores, its sails flying, food and water supplies high, cargo intact, with cooking fires lit. But there was no one aboard. The ship's papers and navigation instruments were missing, though the log remained and with no mention of any trouble. Although *Mary Celeste* was found well outside the Triangle, it had passed through that area, and the last entry in the log was dated 10 days before the ship's discovery. No adequate explanation for the vessel's apparent abandonment was ever found.
- 1909—Joshua Slocum, a world-famous sailor who sailed solo around the world, disappeared in the Triangle.
- 1918—USS *Cyclops*, one of the largest ships in the US Navy, disappeared while en route from Barbados to Norfolk, Virginia. No radio distress call was sent.
- 1920s—Several American ships smuggling goods between Cuba and the US disappeared without a trace.
- 1932—The crew of a fishing boat called *John and Mary* was rescued off the coast of New Jersey. The vessel itself was found south of Bermuda (almost 800 miles away) with sails furled. The frightened crew offered no explanation for why they abandoned the undamaged vessel or how they had crossed 800 miles of ocean.
- 1935—The crew of the yacht *La Dahama* was rescued in the Triangle, where survivors and rescuers watched together as the yacht sank. Days later, *La Dahama*, now evidently completely undamaged, was found adrift 700 miles northeast of Bermuda.





In any case, there's no known way to "activate" the gateway. Characters could sail or fly deliberately over the region for years without experiencing anything strange and then, on a routine trip, be suddenly transported to a strange new world. If someone were able to find a reliable way to activate the gateway, the Bermuda Triangle would certainly be the fastest and most reliable means of entering the Hollow Earth.

## Shangri-La

James Hilton first brought the mythical city of Shangri-La to the world's attention in his 1933 novel *Lost Horizon*. Shangri-La is actually much older than that. The Kalachakra Tantra, or Wheel of Time, recorded in India in AD 966, describes Shambhala (another name for Shangri-La) as a place of great enlightenment, where the holiest of holy men reside. All the wisdom of the ages is supposedly collected in this idyllic, green, mountain monastery located in the frigid Himalaya Mountains, isolated from the outside world and from time itself. In 1936, Tibet was one of the most exotic and least known regions to the Western world. It was not unbelievable that such a place could be found there.

Unbeknownst to most people, Shangri-La is not hidden in the Himalayan Mountains at all—it resides inside the Hollow Earth. As a result, time *does* pass more slowly there. A mystical portal connects it to the surface world, and people that stumble upon the open portal see a shining city nestled in a lush green valley

surrounded by the snow-covered Himalayas. People (and creatures such as the yeti) can move through the portal in either direction while it is open, but it does not open very often. As a result, the city is very difficult to find, but it is rumored that people in trouble will cause the portal to open. Failing that, great scholars may be able to puzzle out the city's location from cryptic clues in the Wheel of Time manuscript.

Unlike most places in the Hollow Earth, Shangri-La is reputed to be a peaceful, friendly, and benevolent place. The people who live there are generous and wise, but they also have a habit of preventing visitors from ever leaving, in order to keep the city's location a secret.

## Surface Locations

There were still many blank spots on the map in 1936. Some of these places were linked directly to the Hollow Earth or greatly influenced by it. Inaccessible plateaus, uncharted islands, and lost valleys abound in the world's remote corners. Dinosaurs, cavemen, or mysterious civilizations from the past could inhabit these places, carrying on in complete ignorance of the outside world. Alternatively, they could be colonies of advanced civilizations established to observe and study the surface world, interfere in its affairs, or capture humans for research or slave labor. It's possible to have



an entire Hollow Earth adventure without ever leaving the surface!

## Cosmology

The Hollow Earth looks much like the surface to outsiders; at first glance, they may not even know they are in another world. To the casual observer, a mountain looks pretty much like a mountain, and a lake looks pretty much like a lake. To the trained observer, however, the differences between the inner and outer worlds will be startling.

## Extremes

Everything in the Hollow Earth is more extreme than on the surface. This applies to plants and animals, as well as geology and geography. Mountains are taller, rivers deeper and faster, forests thicker and greener, jungles more varied and bewildering, swamps steamier and more tangled, deserts hotter and drier, wastelands rougher and more foreboding, etc. Likewise, animals are bigger, stronger, and more aggressive, birds are brighter and more flamboyant, and insects are more annoying. (And, by extension, villains are crueler, minions more loyal, heroes more daring, and princes and princesses are more beautiful.)

Everything grows more abundantly inside the Earth. This is partly because the growing season is year-round (indeed, the Hollow Earth has no concept of seasons as we know them). It's also because of the general restorative nature of Earth's interior. The air, water, and light—the whole environment—is conducive to growth, health, longevity, and fertility.

## Day and Night

Gamemasters who don't care for the noonday sun may include one or more moons that orbit the inner sun. Moons create brief periods of artificial night where they cast their shadows. Night may last anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours, depending on the moon's size and orbital speed.

Another benefit to including moons in your game is that they provide other, less accessible, places for strange creatures and civilizations to develop. They could even be the homes of "angels", "devils", or raiders possessing flying boats!

Another idea, as proposed by Cyrus Reed Teed in the 1860s, is that the central sun is half light and half dark, making it night on half of the inner globe at a time. Teed's ideas were radical but they gained a certain traction within the Thule Society which, by 1936, was already well steeped in Hollow Earth theory.

## The Sun

The Hollow Earth is lit and warmed by its own sun, suspended at the geometrical center of the planet. Because it does not move—or, more correctly, because the rotating inner surface of Earth never turns a face away from it—the interior surface is subjected to perpetual noon. No matter where you are, the sun is always directly overhead. This makes it impossible to determine either direction or time from its unchanging position.

## Geography

The Hollow Earth contains the same basic terrain types as the surface world, plus some that are unique.

- **Farm/Forest:** Much of the Hollow Earth is arable land with moderate temperatures and adequate rainfall. It would be excellent for farming, and some of it actually is farmed, but the vast majority of it is "arable" only in the broadest sense. Most of it is covered with towering forests, steaming jungles, fetid swamps, and rolling grasslands.
- **Arid:** Both hot and cold deserts exist in the Hollow Earth. They tend to be less extensive than on the surface because of the terrarium-like, enclosed hydrosphere of the interior. Although these deserts are smaller, they are every bit as hostile, if not more so, than their surface counterparts.
- **Mountain:** Mountains make up a greater proportion of the Hollow Earth than they do on the surface. Seismic forces are more powerful, producing more violent earthquakes and more dramatic tectonic effects on

## Size Matters

The Earth's surface is roughly 200 million square miles in area, split between land and sea, resulting in about 60 million square miles of land area. The Hollow Earth is smaller than the surface world, and is approximately 150 million square miles in area. It has a ratio of 40% land to 60% water, giving it roughly the same amount of land as the surface and two thirds as much water.

The exact ratio of land to water, however, is largely up to the GM. The land area of the interior may be less than, equal to, or even greater than the surface world. Upping the ratio of land to water to 50/50, for example, would yield a Hollow Earth with more land and less water. If the GM wants an even more extensive Hollow Earth, he could easily make the amount of dry land inside greater than the surface world. Alternatively, increasing the amount of sea and sprinkling it with hundreds of islands of varying sizes would create a Hollow Earth where extensive boat travel would be the norm and isolated cultures could be wildly divergent.



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inner geography, resulting in many dramatic mountain ranges.

- **Frozen:** As surprising as it may seem, the Hollow Earth also has frozen terrain. These areas are concentrated mainly around the Earth's North and South Poles, where temperatures are much colder, or on very high, steep mountaintops. For some reason, temperatures drop as you gain altitude in the Hollow Earth, just like they do on the surface, despite the fact that it is a closed environment.
- **Barren:** This refers to regions that are largely devoid of topsoil—bare bedrock where very little lives or grows. Some of this is true desert, but in other areas plant life would flourish if only there were soil.
- **Exotic:** Besides more familiar terrain, the Hollow Earth is home to features that don't exist on the surface. Some are relics of time, such as tar pits, prehistoric woods of giant ferns and primitive conifers, and towering mushroom forests. Others are even more exotic: burning lakes of oil, fields of diamonds and other precious gems, miles-high cliffs, sheer-sided valleys carpeted with animal bones, deserts of fused glass, and rivers of boiling water.

**Note:** Naturally, outsiders know none of this. Even natives of the Hollow Earth are largely ignorant of it. They are mostly familiar with their immediate surroundings. Because of the difficulty in determining time and distance, maps are crude, and limited in scope and reliability.

### *Metaphysics*

The Hollow Earth operates by its own rules. Natural laws that we take for granted don't always apply there, or they apply in strange and unfamiliar ways.

### **Magnetic Fields**

Some unknown force completely disrupts the Earth's magnetic field inside the planet. Compasses spin wildly or point in random directions. In other words, they are useless for navigation (or worse than useless if they oscillate slowly, leading newly-arrived explorers off-course without any hint of the deviation).

### **Navigation**

The magnetic disruption, combined with the unmoving sun, makes navigation inside the Earth a tricky prospect. The normal methods

used on the surface are not available, with the exceptions of dead reckoning (picking a course and trying to stay on it by instinct) and navigating by landmarks.

A traveler is not entirely without signposts, however. One benefit to the Hollow Earth is the upward-curving horizon. Unlike the surface world, where the horizon curves landmarks out of view, the interior horizon brings landmarks into view sooner.

This has a subtle effect on what travelers can see. Haze obscures distant objects more than on the surface, so the horizon does disappear. Straight ahead in any direction the impression is similar to looking at rising ground leading to mountains. A casual observer may not even notice, but a trained observer will notice the difference.

An explorer wishing to find his way to a particular location in the Hollow Earth without a reliable compass, timepiece, or map must make a successful Survival roll (Difficulty 4).

### **Radio Signals**

Possibly for the same reason that magnetic compasses don't work, two-way radios are rendered useless inside the Hollow Earth. They will only pick up crackling static.

One primitive piece of communication equipment, however, can prove very useful if someone thinks to bring it along: a heliograph. It uses a mirror to reflect sunlight and flash signals in Morse code. Sophisticated sighting equipment allows it to be aimed accurately at a recipient's known location.

A heliograph's usefulness depends largely on visual conditions. As long as sunlight is available (almost a given in the Hollow Earth) and the two stations have





line of sight, chances are good that they can communicate.

A heliograph flash can be seen up to 30 miles away with the naked eye, and much further with a telescope. An advantage of using a heliograph in the Hollow Earth over using one on the outside surface is that the inner surface is convex—stations don't need to seek out high elevations in order to thwart Earth's curvature.

Mist and fog are the only real obstacles to the use of a heliograph in the Hollow Earth. Because the interior is generally tropical, suspended moisture can impede lines of sight and reduce the heliograph's range considerably. Plus, the signal will be useless if nobody is looking for it.

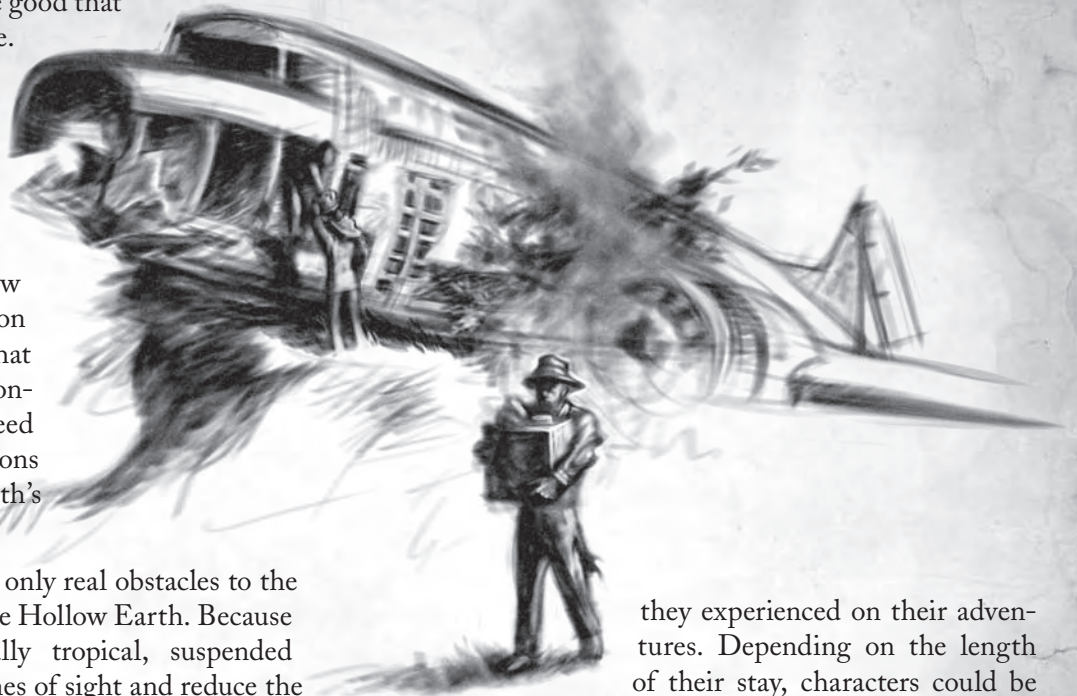
Although the heliograph saw its greatest use in the pre-radio age of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was still in general use among surveyors and engineers in 1936. Weighing less than 10 pounds and easily operated by a single person, it can be a highly useful tool in trained hands. Using a heliograph requires a Survival or Linguistics roll (Difficulty 3).

## Time Dilation

One of the strangest and most unexplainable properties of the Hollow Earth is the way time passes. Simply put, time moves more slowly inside the planet. The degree of change is significant but unknown. How significant? Consider that dinosaurs and prehistoric mammals still roam the Hollow Earth, mingling with Neanderthals and cave-dwelling Homo sapiens.

Because of this effect and the random way in which surface dwellers are drawn into the Hollow Earth, it is possible to meet people from almost any historical culture. There may be no actual, ancient Egyptians or Hittites there, but their descendants certainly are, and they have lived in that world for only a few dozen generations at most. It's possible for recent explorers to encounter the descendants of Romans, great-grandchildren of Crusaders, grandchildren of Spanish conquistadors, or children of English pirates.

Perhaps more alarmingly, if explorers eventually find their way back to the surface world, they must deal with the fact that more time has passed outside than



they experienced on their adventures. Depending on the length of their stay, characters could be startled by what they find when they emerge.

## Daily Rhythms

A more practical concern is how to tell time. With no day and night cycle, no lunar cycle, no procession of stars, and no seasons, all the usual indicators are missing. If the passage of time were a landscape, the Hollow Earth would be a featureless plain.

Inhabitants deal with this problem in different ways. Some simply have no concept of time beyond their daily biological cycles of eating and sleeping. These events occur regularly, but are not reliable over the long term. To a society with only primitive time-telling needs, however, being able to distinguish today from yesterday and tomorrow is all that's needed.

Communities settled near large bodies of water have access to one of the few effective measurements of time in the Hollow Earth—tides. Although gravity is turned inside out and the moon is never seen in the interior, its gravitational tug is still felt. The phases of strong and weak high tides establish a somewhat reliable 25-hour cycle.

The Hollow Earth is more geologically active than the outer surface. In places, geysers erupt on a regular schedule (similar to Yellowstone's Old Faithful) and mark out periods of time reliably.

Certain plants and animals also have regular, predictable cycles. Although the sun shines round the clock, some plants still have alternating periods dur-



ing which their light-gathering surfaces are open and closed. These are cultivated in many areas for that useful property. Likewise, some species of animals have more reliable (or shorter) circadian rhythms than humans. Despite the lack of noticeable seasons, some species still migrate and/or hibernate according to unknown triggers. These give rise to local "seasons" marked by the presence or absence of such creatures.

### Healing

Some property of the Hollow Earth endows it with remarkable restorative power. There may be an unknown mineral in the water, a strange gas in the atmosphere, or enhanced vitamins in the food chain. Whatever the reason, life flourishes in astounding ways.

Certain differences are immediately obvious. Plants grow to enormous sizes so that forests and swamps resemble the prehistoric world. Animals grow much larger than their surface-world counterparts. Gigantic insects, spiders, arthropods, butterflies, beetles, caterpillars, and leeches abound. Some are a nuisance; most are dangerous; all are alarming when first encountered.

A positive side effect is that all living things heal at twice the normal rate (see Healing, p. 131).

## The Atlanteans

Throughout history, mankind has spoken of a precursor race: beings who exhibited great power, with culture and technology that far surpassed our own. This was especially prevalent in ancient times, when little was known about the distant past. In the enlightened, rational, scientific age of 1936, man knew more about the past than ever before.

Little evidence of any great precursor race has ever been found on the surface, so these ancient tales were largely dismissed as myths by all but a few diehard occultists, mystics, and crackpots. Still, the stories continued to be repeated. Perhaps historians and anthropologists shouldn't have been so quick to dismiss those wild tales.

Among these stories are accounts of serpent people, bird people, giants, visitors who traveled from the stars, and even visitors from beneath the Earth.

Like all myths, this one contains a kernel of truth. More than a kernel, in fact, because a great race did occupy Earth before the ascendancy of man: the Atlanteans.

In an age so long forgotten that it is lost to all but

the most ancient oral traditions, the Atlanteans were masters of Earth. They built great cities and raised towering monuments. Their engineering re-shaped the world on a massive scale. They achieved a level of science and technology so advanced as to seem completely alien (or supernatural) to someone from 1936.

Then they disappeared, leaving behind only abandoned cities, ruins, and legends. What happened?

### Atlantean History

The Atlanteans were real. What we know of them comes to us in a brief and confusing fragment of Plato's dialogues, where he discussed their ideal society and its heart, Atlantis. Great as it was—and nothing before or since has rivaled it—Atlantis was only one city, and possibly only one name for the great precursor race. Plato knew only one tiny part of the story.

Equally true is the Biblical flood that wiped clean the face of Earth, although most of the details in the account are wrong. This is not simply a Biblical story. It reappears in many cultures and many forms: Mesopotamia, Israel, Greece, Germany, Ireland, and others all tell of a flood that devastated the world in a time before memory. The wide acceptance of this story, if nothing else, carries some historical weight. Yet most dismiss it as apocryphal.

What brought about this flood is unknown. It may have been triggered by tsunamis from underwater earthquakes, a sudden melting of the polar ice caps, continental subsidence, or some catastrophic mishap of Atlantean technology. It's even possible that the Atlanteans themselves engineered it to cover their tracks when they withdrew to the Hollow Earth. The true reason is impossible to know and ultimately unimportant. What really matters is that the most advanced civilization to ever exist was wiped clean from the surface world.

But the Atlantean influence wasn't finished. The cities and technology were gone, but fragments of what made them great survived. Over the centuries, these were rediscovered by more primitive, human societies and developed into the ancient cultures of Egypt, Babylon, Greece, the Mayans, the Aztecs, and others.

All of these empires and civilizations contained elements of Atlantis in their culture, government, engineering, and architecture, yet none of them was truly Atlantean. Each fragment followed its own path and developed its own character.

In all of them, however, a seeded memory of the past lived on until it was eradicated by time, distance, and science.



## Atlantean Legacy

Bits and pieces of Atlantean culture have been passed down to modern man by their successors. Scattered and diluted as they are, no scholar has ever assembled them into a coherent picture of that great precursor civilization.

This isn't so surprising; the clues are subtle, and no key exists to unlock them. The chief relics of the Atlanteans are the ruins of their monuments, many of which are far older than archaeologists suspect: Teotihuacan, Uruk, Nippur, Knossos, the Thousand Sphinxes lining the Nile (only one of which survives), and the Kali Ghandaki bridge are but a few of these that have been discovered. Many more lie choked in dense jungles, sheltered in high mountain valleys, frozen in ice, buried in sand, or drowned beneath ocean waves. Hidden within at least some of them are scraps of Atlantean technology that could mystify modern science and power a super-science revolution.

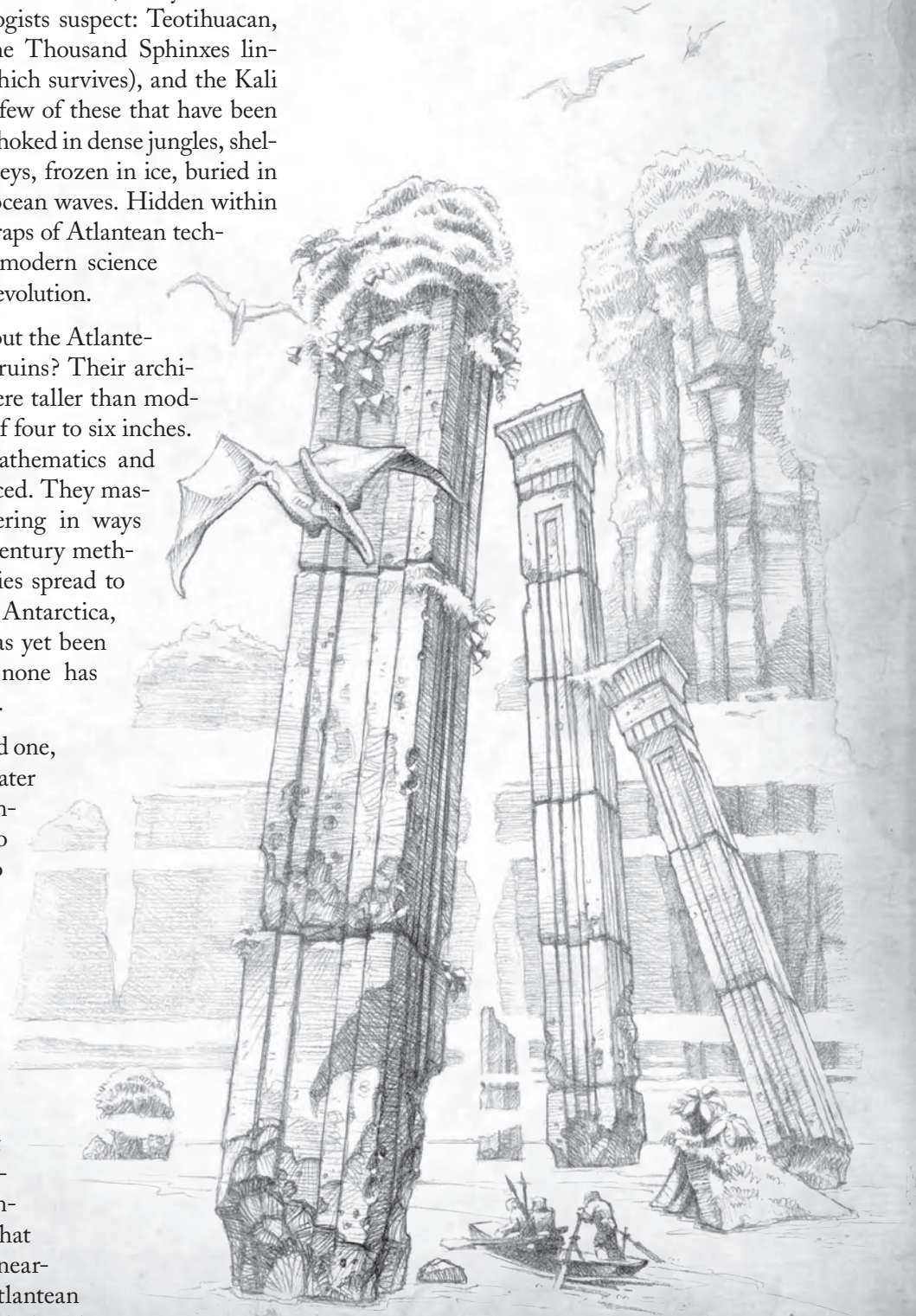
What can be learned about the Atlanteans themselves from these ruins? Their architecture implies that they were taller than modern humans by an average of four to six inches. Their understanding of mathematics and astronomy was quite advanced. They mastered architectural engineering in ways that would challenge 20<sup>th</sup> century methods. Their cities and colonies spread to every continent, including Antarctica, though no trace of them has yet been found there—or at least, none has been reported or publicized.

Their religion, if they had one, is a complete mystery. Later temples such as the Olympion, Tikal, or Kom Ombo are most likely dedicated to the Atlanteans themselves, who would have taken on aspects of godhood to their human servants, rather than to Atlantean gods proper. The most tragic loss of all was Atlantean technology, which is barely hinted at in bas reliefs that are almost universally misunderstood as religious symbols. The only conclusion that can be drawn from this near-complete absence is that Atlantean technology didn't merit depiction; it was

so thoroughly integrated into daily life that artists took it for granted.

## Atlantean Ruins

Atlantean ruins in the Hollow Earth are surprisingly well preserved. Whether this is because of the unusual time dilation of the inner world or because the Atlanteans only left a relatively short time ago is unknown.





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Regardless, the ruins are clearly abandoned and overgrown, but they have not yet been reduced to rubble. Streets and roads are cracked and uneven, but still navigable. Walls, and in some cases whole buildings, are still standing. Unfortunately, the great Atlantean cities have fallen, their statues have been toppled, and all an explorer can get is a shadow of their previous splendor.

Atlantean architecture appears to be a mixture of several ancient cultures: Egyptian, Sumerian, Greek, Babylonian, and others. The truth, of course, is that these cultures were inspired by Atlantean architecture and not the other way around. Still, Atlantean ruins may seem strangely familiar to an explorer, while still appearing more finely crafted and expertly done. Even in their ruined state, it is clear that other cultures' towers, pyramids, and statuary are but crude imitations of the great Atlantean civilization.

### *Atlantean Language*

Only traces of the Atlantean language remain, etched into crumbling walls and tablets. What is clear from these small scraps of writing is that Atlantean was a very complex language but its meaning was abundantly clear to anyone who heard it. Some ancient records even indicate that it was the official language of Babylon before its fall. Other stories say that commands issued in Atlantean could not be disobeyed, or that speaking it could make or unmake the world. While there is some evidence to suggest that different languages share the same root, most linguists and anthropologists dismiss the rest of these stories as pure mythology.

### *Atlantean Technology*

What little is known about Atlantean technology makes it seem alien, almost supernatural, to modern man. It must have operated based on physical laws that mankind does not yet fully understand. The few pictures and descriptions that remain seem to indicate that crystal batteries and orichalcum—a mystical gold and copper alloy—were used extensively in Atlantean devices. One theory suggests that the crystals were used to collect, store, and focus energy while the orichalcum was used to connect and channel this power. Regardless of how a device actually worked, Atlantean technology was nothing short of amazing to anyone who witnessed it being used.

Below are some sample Atlantean Artifacts for use in *HEX*.

#### **Lodestone**

##### **Artifact 1**

A lodestone is a piece of orichalcum that has been attuned to point in the direction of the nearest concen-

tration of that mystical metal. When used inside the Hollow Earth, it may be used as a primitive compass or even as a treasure-hunting tool, because many Atlantean devices contain orichalcum. When used on the surface world, where very little orichalcum is present, the Lodestone will always point in the direction of the nearest entrance to the Hollow Earth.

#### **Sentinel**

##### **Artifact 1**

This highly sensitive device alerts the user to danger. When it senses that someone intends to harm the person holding it (even if the attacker is hidden), it turns red and vibrates. The stronger it vibrates, the more immediate the danger. The character in possession of this device may retain his full Defense bonus when surprised. It also forewarns of unseen traps and enemies. It can be configured to sound a warning if such a person or creature were to come within 25 feet of its owner, awakening him (and his companions) from sleep if they are in danger.

#### **Telepathic Communicator**

##### **Artifact 2**

This hand-held device allows the user to make telepathic contact with the person of their choice. The character simply places her fingers on the orichalcum contact pads and concentrates on the person she wishes to make contact with. Make a Willpower roll with a Difficulty equal to the target's Willpower rating. If the roll is successful, then your character has made telepathic contact with her target and may converse with him as if they were having a normal conversation (no deeper scanning or digging into the target's psyche is possible). If the target knows your character, he recognizes her "voice" and will know who has contacted him. The exact range of this device is unknown, but the farther away the target is, the more difficult it is to make contact.

#### **Healing Crystal (Lesser)**

##### **Artifact 1**

This most common type of healing crystal is four to six inches long and is covered in finely wrought lines of orichalcum. It glows with a slightly greenish light. When touched to a wound, it glows brighter and immediately heals one lethal or up to two nonlethal wounds. This healing may be done in addition to any normal medical care (see Healing, p. 131). After five uses, the crystal goes dark and cannot be used again until it has a chance to recharge. It recharges one use per day (or equivalent amount of time).



## Healing Crystal (Major)

### Artifact 2

These are larger and more powerful healing crystals, and less common. Like lesser healing crystals, they are ornamented with orichalcum, but these glow with a blue light instead. When touched to a wound, it glows brighter and immediately heals two lethal wounds or up to four nonlethal wounds. In addition, it also immediately cures one disease or illness, or completely removes all poisons and toxins from the person touched with it. This healing may be done in addition to any normal medical care. After five uses, the crystal goes dark and cannot be used again until it has a chance to recharge. It recharges one use per day (or equivalent amount of time).

## Energy Shield

### Artifact 3

This device surrounds the user in a field of energy that protects him from deadly blows. Any wound that would normally inflict five or more points of damage on the user triggers the energy shield, which will absorb up to ten points of damage. If more than ten points of damage are inflicted, the user takes the surplus damage. The energy shield may protect the user up to five times before it needs to be recharged. It recharges one use per day (or equivalent amount of time).

## Soul Crystal

### Artifact 5

The soul crystal is a huge crystal that contains the mental imprint of a wise and powerful Atlantean. It is capable of answering questions or displaying images from the memories that it contains, but sadly, it seems to know nothing about the fate of the Atlantean race. Convincing the soul crystal to answer a direct question may be difficult, however, as the alien intelligence inside is far more likely to respond with a cryptic riddle or another question. In addition, it has a variety of other powers including the ability to protect itself if need

be. The soul crystal is an incredibly powerful artifact and one that should not be used for evil.

**Note:** Some Atlantean devices, such as healing crystals, will only operate inside the Hollow Earth. When taken to the surface world, they will only function for a day or two before becoming completely inert.

## The Last Atlanteans

The flood destroyed their mighty surface empire, but the Atlanteans themselves were not wiped out. In fact, most of them survived. They simply withdrew from the surface and retired to the Hollow Earth. It's possible that they originated from Earth's interior, or perhaps they came down from the stars and hollowed out the planet for their own inscrutable purposes.

A few Atlanteans stayed behind, however, and continued to live on the surface. These few were either somehow cut off from the great withdrawal, or refused to leave their surface homes. They passed on much of their knowledge and culture to their human servants and may even have bred with them, passing their remarkable powers down to their descendants.

When the Atlanteans retreated to Earth's interior space, their accomplishments on the surface were dwarfed by what they achieved in their new home. There, gleaming towers soared high above urban landscapes laid out in perfect geometric patterns—grids, spirals, graceful curves, and decorated with gigantic human and animal shapes. Entire cities were created as works of art and connected by roads that stretched arrow-straight across thousands of miles.

For whatever reason, the Atlanteans never returned to the surface. Those who stayed behind and assimilated into human society slowly died off. Those who retreated to the interior thrived—for a time.

Now they are all gone. When they left and where they went (or when the last one died) is a mystery. As on the surface, their cities, monuments, and engineering marvels remain. In the Hollow Earth, however, these relics are in better repair. They are ruins, it's true, but because





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time passes so slowly in the Hollow Earth, these ruins are much younger than those on the surface. Their original shapes are easily seen. Most appear to have been abandoned for only a few centuries. The rest show varying degrees of decay, from structural collapse to heaps of debris to wreckage. A small number seem to have been flattened utterly through either purposeful demolition or warfare. Untold riches of knowledge await the researcher bold enough to explore these remains.

### *Terra Arcanum*

Besides the ruins and fragments of culture, the Atlanteans left one more thing behind after the deluge: the Terra Arcanum.

It's likely that the first leaders of the Terra Arcanum were themselves Atlanteans, because its mission was too important to entrust to early humans. Their task was nothing less than protecting the Hollow Earth from discovery and intrusion by outsiders.

Over the millennia, leadership positions were gradually turned over to humans; the entire organization became human and no Atlanteans now remain. The

mission, however, is unchanged: prevent mankind at large from entering the Hollow Earth or even learning of its existence.

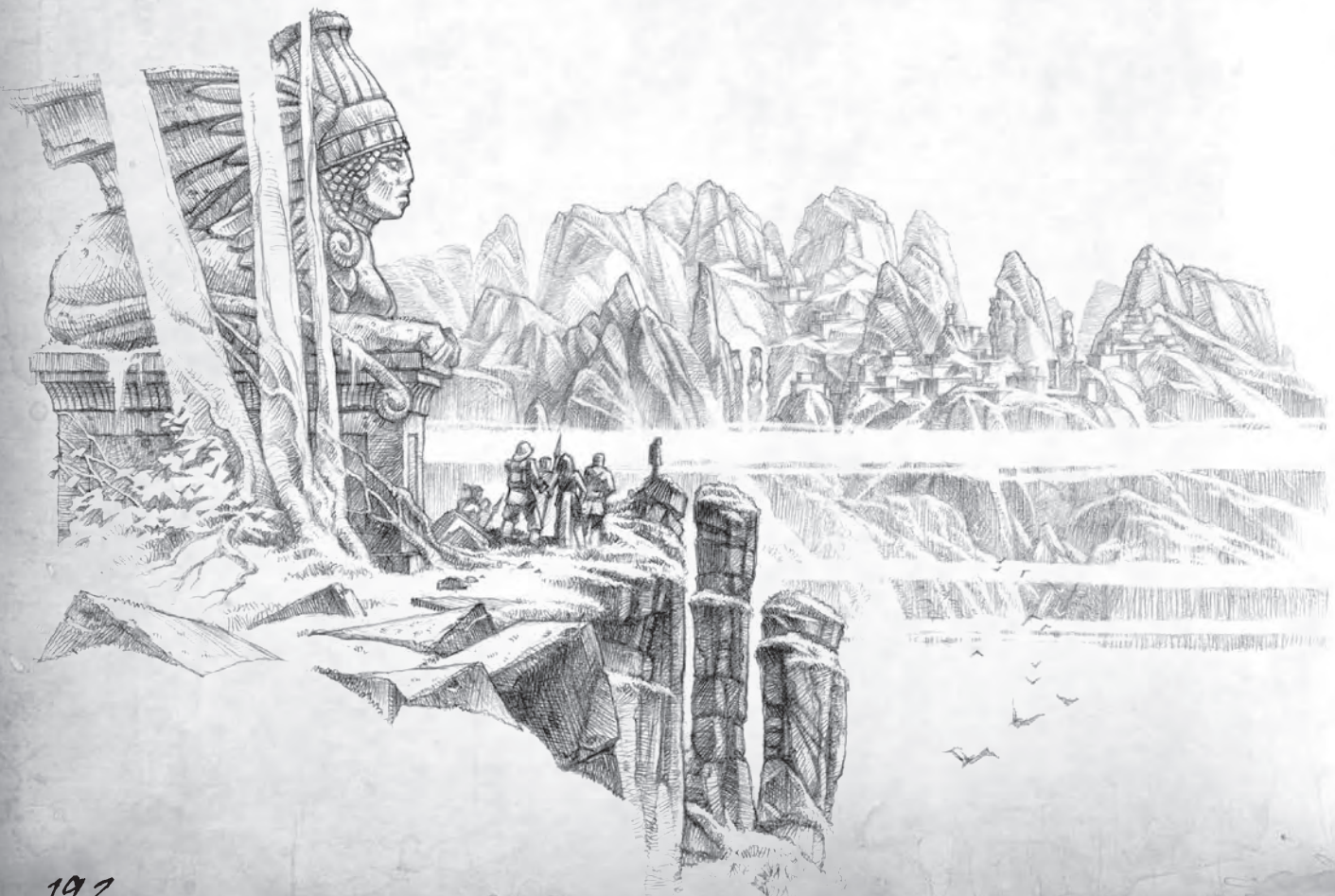
### *The unknown*

Pulp stories are filled with the unknown and unexplained. Many of these have nothing at all to do with the Hollow Earth, though they would be easy enough to tie into it. Connecting these elements with the Hollow Earth gives the GM a wide range of geographical, natural, supernatural, and occult mysteries with which to bedevil player characters.

### *Mysterious Places*

Plenty of mysterious places exist outside the Hollow Earth. These just beg to be investigated. Besides the simple thrill of being the first explorers in uncharted territory, intrepid adventurers may find dinosaurs, Neanderthals, lost civilizations, or unearthly monsters.

- The Bermuda Triangle is one of the most bizarre entrances to the Hollow Earth, but it has many other disturbing properties. Numerous people have had





inexplicable experiences within the Triangle that don't involve being drawn into the Hollow Earth. Whether it's a relic of Atlantis, a manifestation of Atlantean technology out of control, a crossing point of dimensions, or just a giant, intermittent whirlpool, it's a perfect spot for research and adventure both above and below the ocean.

- The Hollow Earth interacts with the surface in many places. Surface-to-interior nodes can exist by chance or by design. Those that occur by chance are sometimes intermittent. They can take the form of a portal that opens and closes randomly or some aspect of the interior that manifests itself on the surface unexpectedly, á la Shangri-La.
- Ancient sites may still retain mystical power imbued in them by builders. Atlantean ruins certainly contain mystical (or invisible technology) 'hot spots'. Stonehenge, Karnak, Teotihuacan, the Nazca Plain, Uxmal, the Ajanta caves, and Angkor may or may not harbor mystic energies, but they definitely have undiscovered secrets.

## Strange Creatures

Although mysteries such as Bigfoot, UFOs, alien abductions, cattle mutilations, crop circles, and the Philadelphia experiment hadn't yet grabbed the spotlight in 1936, there's no reason why they can't exist in a Hollow Earth campaign. The abominable snowman, for example, had been in circulation for centuries. Doppelgangers, El Chupacabra, the Mongolian death worm, the Loch Ness monster, and the Jersey Devil were all reported before 1936. Any of these can be tied to the Hollow Earth with only the smallest bit of imagination.

- Loch Ness is a tremendously deep lake and its bottom features were entirely unknown in 1936. It could easily contain a fissure that, while small, allowed a prehistoric creature or family of creatures to snake through to a new world where they had no natural enemies.
- In 1846, a woolly mammoth was found frozen in Siberian ice. Other mammoths had been found previously, but the pristine condition of this animal led some observers to conclude that it had died relatively recently. This one must have wandered out through an opening and been frozen in ice to be discovered centuries—or perhaps only a few years—later.
- El Chupacabra is always associated with mountainous regions of South and Central America where caves abound. What would be more natural, after a journey of hundreds of miles through Earth's crust, to emerge ravenously hungry for live meat and warm blood?

## Spiritualism and Psychic Phenomena

Belief in the supernatural was widespread during the 1930s. Although spiritualism (belief that the spirits of the dead interact with the living) was on the wane, it still claimed many adherents. Spirit mediums held séances to commune with the dead and summon ectoplasmic entities, Edgar Cayce published books describing his trance-induced visions of the past and future, ghost hunters published accounts of their research in "scholarly" journals. It's not hard to imagine a character having visions or receiving psychic messages sent from an entity within the Hollow Earth.

## Magic, Sorcery, and Otherworldly Evil

Along with spiritualism and psychic phenomena goes belief in magic and sorcery.

The most famous sorcerer of the time (and perhaps of all time) was Aleister Crowley. Many people viewed him as "the wickedest man in the world" because of his magickal practices, hedonism, sexual promiscuity, experimentation with drugs, and general zeal when it came to flouting contemporary moral standards.

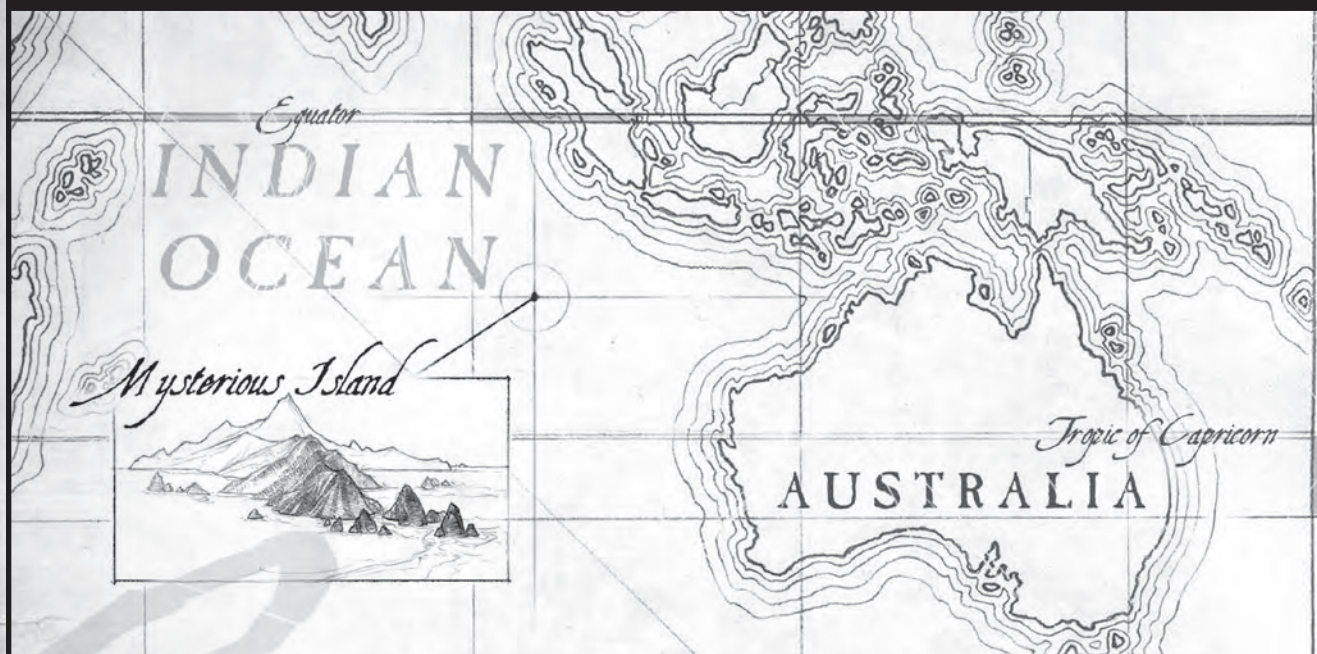
Unlike Crowley, however, most so-called sorcerers would shun the limelight. Magic was not something that society tolerated, and its practitioners were generally reviled. Hermetic societies such as the Ordo Templi Orientis or Golden Dawn kept their rituals, practices, and membership lists secret.

Within the hidden, general community of mystics, occult researchers, and self-styled wizards, any number of sorcerers could practice their dark arts. Contact with spirits and other creatures through blood rituals was believed to bring fabulous wealth and power to those who know the magical keys. Blood magic is the mainstay of truly evil villains.

There are things even older and more sinister than dark spirits, however. Ancient gods were believed to sleep in the Earth or beneath the oceans, waiting for minions to discover the rituals to awaken them. Otherworldly entities bide their time or writhe impatiently beyond the limits of our galaxy, or even our dimension, until the locks barring their entrance to the world are shattered. In both cases, cults of crazed followers work in secret for the long-awaited return of their particular god and the end of the world as we know it. Any character who uncovers one of these plots to bring about worldly oblivion is in for a fight for her life and sanity.



## ⊕ CHAPTER 8: *FRIENDS AND ENEMIES*



Explorers expect to encounter dangerous wildlife, but human beings prove to be the most unpredictable animals of them all. This chapter outlines some of the many individuals and organizations—both above and below the surface—that might assist a Hollow Earth expedition or possibly stand in its way.

The individuals described here may be imported directly into your game or taken as inspiration for your own characters. Or, feel free to create your own versions of these characters. In any case, where appropriate, the Resource level of the character is listed in case a player character (or party) wishes to connect themselves to one of these NPCs.

### *PEOPLE OF THE SURFACE WORLD*

#### *The Terra Arcanum*

Besides the ruins and fragments of their culture, the Atlanteans left one more thing behind when they disappeared: the Terra Arcanum. Originally dedicated to safeguarding Atlantean secrets and shepherding humanity, this organization has developed into a hidden network of power brokers who pull the strings of the world's institutions and leaders. They are the keepers of secrets, the decriers of truth, and the spinners of lies. They control more than anyone knows—and they aim to keep it that way.

#### *History: The Invisible Legacy*

Much of the history of the Terra Arcanum remains obfuscated or lost, even to its own members. It's rumored that the roots of this organization stretch back to the dawn of human civilization, when the first leaders of the Terra Arcanum were themselves Atlanteans, tasked with no less than protecting the Hollow Earth from discovery and intrusion. Over the ages, leadership positions were gradually turned over to humans, and the entire organization is human with no remaining Atlanteans. The mission, however, remains unchanged: prevent mankind from entering the Hollow Earth or even learning of its existence.

Throughout the centuries, the actions of the Terra Arcanum have shaped events and the direction of human advancement, allowing pieces of knowledge to be “discovered” only by minds ready to accept their world view. Terra Arcanum agents have destroyed work, stolen notes, sabotaged expeditions, and even committed murder to keep their secrets. No one was safe from their grasp: Leonardo da Vinci's notebooks were taken from his home as he lay dying; Italian agents within the church built support to ban Galileo's work and designate him a heretic; and during the Renaissance, the Terra Arcanum repressed the knowledge of a spherical world. They continue their work today by ridiculing, debunking, and sabotaging anyone who gets too close to the truth.



## *Beliefs: Power Begets Power*

Originally, those initiated into this society believed in their own altruism while following the dictum that the ends justified the means: should humanity discover the secrets of the Hollow Earth it would surely destroy itself, and that scenario must be prevented at all costs. Yet, while the members of the Terra Arcanum moved to keep the secrets from the “unwashed masses,” many also saw opportunity to mold the world to their liking and use the society to further their own agendas. In the early portion of the twentieth century, the mission to hide the Hollow Earth remains unchanged, but the motivations of many of its members are no longer altruistic.

Every member of the Terra Arcanum pays lip service to the benevolent aspirations of the society, and most feel sincere in their words. But the seemingly absolute power available lures them down the slippery slope of using what they claim to protect for their own selfish purposes. In more idealistic times, the Terra Arcanum used its power to achieve its mission; now, it tends to use its mission to achieve power.

## *Organization: The Network*

Much of the Terra Arcanum is unaware of just how extensive the organization is. Most individuals operate alone as observers and informants, reporting to only one

or two contacts. Some function in larger cells of up to a dozen operatives, manipulating information behind the scenes.

The Terra Arcanum is divided into three tiers, with the inner circle being the top tier. The seven members of the inner circle each possess unique knowledge, resources, and power. The Grand Master, it is whispered, has held the office for more than a century. It is unknown whether he has extended his life through Atlantean technology or some other means. It's all guesswork to those who are not in the inner circle, and perhaps even to those who are.

The inner circle meets irregularly and always in a different place. They are rumored to be in constant contact with one another and even to make journeys to secret locations inside the Hollow Earth where they can use Atlantean technology to track and influence surface events.

The second tier of the society consists of many different specialists of history, the occult, and various sciences. These people record the activities of the Terra Arcanum and catalog every phenomenon and artifact. They usually have a dim understanding of the organization and most are also aware of the Hollow Earth, although their information is usually carefully limited or falsified by the inner circle.





# Chapter Eight

Agents of the Terra Arcanum make up the final tier. These men and women do the “dirty work” for the society. Spread throughout the world, they may be called upon at any time to collect, destroy, or repress artifacts or events deemed unsuitable for humankind. Many agents are aware of the Terra Arcanum and believe in its mission (sometimes to the point of fanaticism), but even more are not allowed to see the greater picture—they perform their duties because they are paid, cajoled, misled, or threatened.

Because low-placed operatives are the most likely to slip up or be forced to reveal sensitive information, a significant number of them don’t even know what secret they are protecting. They believe they are keeping tabs on the Nazi party, Bolsheviks, anarchists, crooked labor organizers, the subversive press, or researchers trying to bilk the government out of scarce grant money. In some cases, members believe that they *are* the Bolsheviks or subversive press keeping watch on established authority. Subterfuge is the Terra Arcanum’s greatest tool.

To this end, the Terra Arcanum makes extensive use of riddles, languages, and secret codes. Every message between operatives is encrypted in some way (whether by use of code words or secret ciphers) and members of the society are sometimes selected for their proficiency in cryptology.

## Members: Puppets and Puppet Masters

Like the Hollow Earth itself, the Terra Arcanum is one of the most closely guarded secrets of all time. Its membership is exclusive and surprisingly small in number, considering that its reach extends to every corner of the globe. As an information-gathering network, it extends fingers into every government and research institute. Most military organizations are infiltrated to some extent, while news syndicates are monitored closely for stories concerning the Hollow Earth or exploration near one of its entrances. No grant can be made for geological research without the Terra Arcanum knowing about it and approving it. No exploratory mission can be sent to a sensitive area without the Terra Arcanum infiltrating its ranks.

## Edwin Morrissey

A wealthy oil tycoon and member of the second tier, Edwin Morrissey covets the intangible profits that membership in the Terra Arcanum can bring. As a captain of industry, he uses his wealth and influence to support the mission of the society, and schemes to gain a seat with the inner circle. Morrissey believes the rumors that the society has knowledge of unimaginably powerful Atlantean artifacts, and he believes that

the inner circle withholds this knowledge as a way of maintaining control over the other members. He plots and schemes to gain control of these devices, even if it means disposing of those who get in his way. He would make a powerful nemesis to a group of explorers, or an insightful—if duplicitous—advisor to anyone in the Terra Arcanum.

## Edwin Morrissey

Mentor 3

Archetype: *Moneyman*

Motivation: *Power*

Style: 3

Health: 7

### Primary Attributes

Body: 3

Charisma: 4

Dexterity: 3

Intelligence: 5

Strength: 2

Willpower: 4

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 8

Move: 5

Defense: 6

Perception: 9

Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
<b>Bureaucracy</b>	5	4	9	(4+)
<i>Business</i>			10	(5)
<b>Con</b>	4	3	7	(3+)
<i>Lies</i>			8	(4)
<b>Diplomacy</b>	4	3	7	(3+)
<i>Leadership</i>			8	(4)
<b>Empathy</b>	5	1	6	(3)
<b>Firearms</b>	3	3	6	(3)
<b>History</b>	5	3	8	(4)
<b>Intimidation</b>	4	3	7	(3+)
<i>Orders</i>			8	(4)
<b>Linguistics</b>	5	3	8	(4)

### Talents

None

### Resources

Rank 2 (Terra Arcanum: +4 social bonus and ability to requisition resources)

Wealth 2 (\$500 monthly income and ability to make an investment)

### Flaw

Condescending (+1 Style point whenever he proves his superiority)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
.38 special	2 L	0	8 L	(4) L
Punch	0 N	0	0 N	(0) N

## Terra Arcanum Agent

When the Terra Arcanum learns about an expedition going to the Hollow Earth, they ensure that a trusted agent goes along with the explorers. The agent’s mission is to detour the group or, if necessary, make sure the expedition never returns. He or she will take every measure to sabotage the expedition (impair vehicles, poison or destroy food supplies, or murder key mem-



bers of the expedition). Despite the danger, there is no shortage of agent volunteers. The chance to become a martyr for the cause might motivate some, while others might take a more mercenary attitude by asking compensation for themselves (or for their surviving family members).

Playing a Terra Arcanum saboteur could provide a great roleplaying opportunity. Of course, this would require the GM and the player to be in collusion, and once the other players discover the agent's true mission, the player will have to come up with a good reason to be allowed to remain with the party—and to remain alive.

## Terra Arcanum Agent

Ally 2

**Archetype:** *Academic*

**Motivation:** *Power*

**Style:** 0

**Health:** 5

### Primary Attributes

**Body:** 2

**Charisma:** 2

**Dexterity:** 3

**Intelligence:** 3

**Strength:** 2

**Willpower:** 3

### Secondary Attributes

**Size:** 0

**Initiative:** 6

**Move:** 5

**Defense:** 5

**Perception:** 6

**Stun:** 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Con	2	4	6	(3)
Firearms	3	3	6	(3)
History	3	1	6	(3)
Larceny	3	3	6	(3)
Linguistics	3	1	4	(3)
Stealth	3	3	6	(3)

### Talents

**Skill Aptitude (+2 History rating)**

### Resources

**Rank 1 (Terra Arcanum: +2 social bonus)**

### Flaw

**Paranoia (+1 Style point whenever his paranoia gets the better of him)**

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
.38 special	2 L	0	8 L	(4) L
Punch	0 N	0	0 N	(0) N

## Current Activities: Secrets Within Secrets

On the rare occasion that someone uncovers real evidence about the Hollow Earth, the Terra Arcanum takes several steps to contain the situation.

First, the Terra Arcanum seeks to discredit the idea by circulating its own misleading stories about the Hollow Earth. The most crackpot theories and outlandish hypotheses usually originate from the Terra Arcanum itself. By regularly resurrecting these ideas so they can be shot down by respectable scientists and editorial

writers, the society keeps people believing the Hollow Earth is no more than a fairy tale.

Second, the Terra Arcanum approaches (indirectly, of course) the person responsible for stirring up interest in the Hollow Earth and tries to persuade him that he is on the wrong track. Numerous scientists and explorers—many of whom were pursuing viable theories—have been swayed off course or talked out of exposing themselves to ridicule.

Third, when someone is close to the truth and can't be steered away or shouted down, the Terra Arcanum may approach him directly with the intent of revealing the truth and recruiting that person to their own ranks. This works more often than one might suspect. The prospect of being let in on the biggest secret in history is a powerful inducement to those whose chief motivation is a quest for knowledge. Such people may carry on in their prior professions or disappear from society, either presumed dead (if they are famous) or to change identity if they are unknown.

Finally, when someone is close to the truth and either not interested in joining the ranks or unsuitable for membership, that person may simply disappear. Some are framed for serious crimes and sent to prison; others are committed to mental institutions; still others are abducted and locked away where they can do no harm. Murder is a last resort, but it has been used.

To assist in their efforts, highly-placed members of the Terra Arcanum have access to certain types of Atlantean technology. The Atlanteans were an extremely advanced civilization, and their technology performs far beyond human understanding. They seem to bend the laws of physics to alter reality in startling ways.

Even the inner circle of the Terra Arcanum doesn't fully understand the workings or the purpose of much Atlantean technology. Certain artifacts that are highly useful to them are used occasionally: devices that allow events to be observed from great distances, cause human-built engines and machines to shut down, allow rapid travel across enormous distances, or erase people's memories. Instructions on using these marvels are passed orally from member to member on a strict need-to-know basis.

Small teams of Terra Arcanum researchers pore through existing Atlantean libraries looking for clues, but those are scant. Many researchers believe that Atlanteans took their technology for granted, and the uses came naturally to them, so they felt little need to write down instructions. Other researchers postulate that the Atlanteans purposely destroyed the instructions to keep them from falling into the wrong hands.



## Chapter Eight

### The Thule Society

The Thule Society is exactly the kind of underground organization that the Terra Arcanum sought to prevent: Thules are ruthless, elitist, and on track to discover the truth of the Hollow Earth. Most—but not all—are Germans who believe that the Nazi party represents the force by which they may rediscover the hidden powers needed to usher in a new era of their supremacy.

#### History: The Select Cabal

Author Edward Bulwer-Lytton published *The Coming Race* in 1871. The novel was a work in the growing field of science fiction and included references to “Vril,” a psychokinetic potential possessed by the members of an ancient master race. This book (as well as other writings by Bulwer-Lytton) suggests the author had knowledge of the Hollow Earth and Atlantean secrets, seeding the information into his manuscript as “fiction.” It cannot be substantiated that he ever traveled to the Hollow Earth, but he may have been in possession of documents or first hand accounts that inspired his work, or he may even have been a disgruntled member of the Terra Arcanum.

The novel and its associated literature is notable for having inspired former German General Karl Haushofer—who obviously understood the work’s real roots—to found a secret order in 1918. A very select group of powerful (though not all well-known) occultists formed the core of the cabal, dedicated to making contact with this powerful race of subterranean supermen to learn from them the ancient secrets of Atlantis, whose hidden enclave within the Earth was thought to be accessible through a mysterious northern region called Ultima Thule.

Dr. Wolfram von Wartenburg is a scientist, explorer, and member of this inner circle who once served with Haushofer. He previously staged two expeditions (one to Tibet and one to the Arctic) in hopes of locating the entrance to the Hollow Earth. Neither was successful, due in large part to the interference of the Terra Arcanum, but the Arctic journey netted him various artifacts that proved (to him, at least) that the Hollow Earth does exist.

Around them, the members of the cabal gathered a larger circle of occultists, and called their order *Thule-Gesellschaft*: The Thule Society. The Society took as its symbol a long dagger imposed on a swastika.





## ***Beliefs: The Right of Supremacy***

Atlantis was a highly advanced ancient civilization that was destroyed millennia ago by a cataclysm. Thule cultists believe that the secrets of Atlantis, or even that the Atlanteans themselves, may have survived—hidden in a secluded place, or even inside the Earth itself.

Members of the Society do not all agree on what happened to Atlantis. Some believe it was destroyed, but that the Atlanteans made a new world for themselves within the Earth. Others champion the notion that Atlantis's "sinking" was nothing more than the external interpretation of the Atlantean civilization's migration from the surface world to the Hollow Earth. However, all agree upon the power that the Atlanteans possessed and the amazing secrets that might yet be awaiting discovery.

It is important to recognize that the Thule cultists not only recognize Atlantean science, but also Atlantean magic. When Atlantis was lost, her occult knowledge faded from memory, relegating the surface world to pagan rituals that are but a shadow of the mystic might commanded by Atlantis. Members of the Society are careful to observe rituals and mysticism in their search for lost secrets. Even if they do not respect the beliefs of the Atlanteans, they respect the dangerous powers wielded by the ancients.

In the literature and ritual of the Society, the Atlanteans are held up almost like gods, angels, or demons. This doesn't stop some members of the Thule Society from vowing to someday possess Atlantean power. The principal of attainment is strong in the Society—those who are worthy will someday gain the secrets of the Atlanteans, take on their mantle, and be granted godlike powers and immortality.

The Society's records can place Atlantean influence at all major historical pivots. The scientific achievements of the Babylonians, Sumerians, and Egyptians, for example, were due primarily to Atlantean refugees within those cultures, guiding and elevating them.

It is believed that Atlantean blood flows in the veins of some modern people, and that this heritage grants the ability to wield Atlantean magic and use Atlantean artifacts. Certainly, all members of the Society are convinced that they are the children of Atlantis. Rituals and meditations are constants in the life of the Thules, each hoping to connect with their diluted Atlantean blood and awaken the power within. Sometimes this may require sacrifices, but if awakening the blood of Atlantis requires other blood to be spilled, then so be it.

The Society also believes that there are a chosen few for whom Atlantean blood runs strong. These people, when they are found, will form an army of elite crusaders,

leading the Society to the secrets and power it exists to uncover. The doors of Atlantis will open only for them. Rumors circulate through the Society about the chosen ones who have already been discovered—how beautiful and graceful they are, how charismatic and magnetic. Yet nobody will claim to have met one.

## ***Organization: Militant Cultists***

The Thule Society is a murky organization with an indeterminate number of members and unknown resources. Many of its members are prominent citizens of European society, possessing wealth and influence over government and industry, but these people are typically the least involved in the Society's inner workings.

The inner cabal of the Society consists of at least nine members, but there may be more. Each is a formidable occultist with vast knowledge and resources, characterized by ruthless dedication to the pursuit of Atlantean power and utter disregard of the cost to innocents.

The most visible extension of the Society is its stranglehold over Hitler's occult research agency, *Forschungs und Lehrgemeinschaft Das Ahnenerbe* (translation: ancestral heritage research and teaching society). Thanks to the early involvement of von Wartenburg in the organization, the *Ahnenerbe* is infested with Thule cultists wielding rank as SS officers. Their expeditions and projects enjoy the full support of the Nazi party. On von Wartenburg's advice, the *Ahnenerbe* established headquarters in the 300-year-old Wewelsburg castle—a place von Wartenburg seems to know curiously well.

Overtly, the *Ahnenerbe* is dedicated to the study of the German peoples' hereditary connection to an ancient superior race. In truth, the organization's mandate is to locate the secrets of the ancients, plunder their power, and add it to the arsenal of the Third Reich. As part of this research, they confiscate artifacts and tomes of potential interest, perform extensive research projects, and dispatch expeditions to recover information that might relate to the Atlanteans and their advanced powers.

The Reich preaches that the German people are the direct descendants of these advanced ancient races, and are the only ones suitable to possess their secrets. However, the Thule cultists understand the deeper truth: only a privileged few have the necessary Atlantean blood and when the time comes, all others will be relegated to slavery, regardless of their party affiliation.

## ***Members: Self-Appointed Supermen***

The Thule Society was supposedly formed in 1918, but in fact, the members of the inner cabal had been working together long before that. The Society is merely the latest incarnation of an ancient conspiracy.



## Chapter Eight

The Society has recruited members primarily in Germany, but also throughout Europe. They have little influence in Asia or North America, but a few powerful members reside in South America.

### Dr. Wolfram von Wartenburg

Ostensibly a German academic, von Wartenburg is fluent in more than a dozen languages, and could be from any number of places. His knowledge of the occult is vast and his passion for possessing the lost power of Atlantis is greater still. He appears to be in his late fifties, but is as fit and tough as a man half his age.

Almost nothing is known of von Wartenburg's past, and it's probably best it stay that way. An acolyte was excited to point out a man pictured in a 17th century tome who looked almost exactly like von Wartenburg. Neither the acolyte nor the book was ever seen again.

In 1935, Nazi General Heinrich Himmler asked von Wartenburg to take a prominent position in Hitler's new Ahnenerbe division. While von Wartenburg has no loyalty to the Nazis, his lack of conscience allows him to carry out his work with a brutal efficiency. Commissioned as a *Standartenführer* (Colonel) in the SS, he now has the resources of the Third Reich at his disposal.

*See the sample adventure in the back of the book for character stats on von Wartenburg.*

### Eva Klinsmann

Drawn to occult studies from an early age, Eva discovered that her feminine allure combined with her superior intellect gave her an extremely potent advantage within the male-dominated realm of academics. She was recruited into the Thule Society while working on her undergraduate degree, and was later brought into the rites of the inner cabal by von Wartenburg, who believes she may be the most pure-blooded Atlantean he has discovered to date—though she is as yet unaware of his suspicion.

Now in her late twenties, Klinsmann can speak several languages and has been known to masquerade as a Brit or Yank when the need arises. She is fully aware of her own beauty, comfortable in her sexuality, and not above using both to manipulate people for her own ends. She is employed by the Ahnenerbe as a researcher and field scientist, but is not a member of the SS.

A noted athlete as well as scholar, Klinsmann captained the women's fencing team at the University of Berlin, and claims to be the equal of any man with a blade.

Along with her supposed Atlantean blood, she inherited a sense of superiority and an unwavering dislike for those who can't keep up with her. She is con-

ceited, condescending, demanding, and unforgiving; at the same time, she is brilliant, curious, inexhaustible, and totally dedicated. She would make a fierce and cunning adversary to the enemies of the Thule Society, and could operate as a resourceful ally to those within.

### Eva Klinsmann

Mentor 3

Archetype: Occultist

Motivation: Power

Style: 3

Health: 7

#### Primary Attributes

Body: 3

Charisma: 3 (5)\*

Dexterity: 3

Intelligence: 5

Strength: 3

Willpower: 4

#### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 8

Move: 6

Defense: 6

Perception: 9

Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Con	5*	3	8	(4)
Diplomacy	5*	1	6	(3)
Empathy	5	1	6	(3)
Firearms	3	3	6	(3)
History	5	3	8	(4)
Intimidation	5*	1	6	(3)
Investigation	5	3	8	(4)
Linguistics	5	1	6	(3)
Melee	3	5	8	(4)
Performance	5*	1	6	(3)
Stealth	3	3	6	(3)

#### Talents

\* Attractive 2 (+2 Charisma rating when dealing with people)

#### Resources

Rank 2 (Thule Society: +4 social bonus and ability to requisition resources)

#### Flaw

Condescending (+1 Style point whenever she proves her superiority)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Luger P08	2 L	0	8 L	(4) L
Rapier	2 L	0	10 L	(5) L
Dagger	1 L	0	9 L	(4+) L
Punch	0 N	0	0 N	(0) N

### Nazi Soldier

Although generally not initiated into the ranks of the *Thule-Gesellschaft* and kept on a strict need-to-know basis when they are, German soldiers are regularly used as muscle in Thule Society endeavors. These highly trained soldiers are mass-produced fanatics with a deeply ingrained hatred of the scapegoats provided by their superiors. Those that are exposed to the mystery and the power of the Hollow Earth are re-enforced in their beliefs in the importance of their masters' goals, and they will redouble their efforts to serve their fatherland.



## Nazi Soldier

Ally 1

Archetype: *Soldier*

Motivation: *Duty*

Style: 0

Health: 4

### Primary Attributes

Body: 2

Charisma: 2

Dexterity: 2

Intelligence: 2

Strength: 2

Willpower: 2

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 4

Move: 4

Defense: 4

Perception: 4

Stun: 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Athletics	2	2	4	(2)
Brawl	2	2	4	(2)
Firearms	2	2	4	(2)
Intimidation	2	2	4	(2)
Melee	2	2	4	(2)

### Talents

Autofire 1 (+1 autofire bonus)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Intolerant (+1 Style point whenever he convinces someone else to hate what he does)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
MP38 SMG	2 L	0	6 L	(3) L
Luger P08	2 L	0	6 L	(3) L
Dagger	1 L	0	5 L	(2+) L
Punch	0 N	0	4 N	(2) N

## Current Activities:

### Marching Toward Apotheosis

Atlantean artifacts, and the artifacts of prominent ancient civilizations influenced by the Atlanteans, sometimes hold powerful occult secrets, if only they can be interpreted correctly. The Thule Society keeps itself busy with expeditions, research, plots, and schemes being carried out all over Europe and abroad.

## The Dunhuang Chart

Discovered in caves near Dunhuang in China, a paper scroll penned in the seventh century chronicles the positions of the stars visible to Chinese astronomers. The groupings of the stars differ from western organization, and the chart seems to include several anomalous objects that do not appear in the sky today.

A member of the Thule cabal believes that this ancient Chinese method of grouping stars may be similar to that of the original Atlantean organization. This knowledge could allow the resurrection of certain Atlantean rituals that depend on star positions. The anomalous objects may be part of the puzzle to locating Atlantis itself. This script may hold secrets, and the Thule Society intends to get it.

## The Giza Object

Since Howard Carter's discovery of an intact Egyptian tomb in 1922, the Thule Society has placed increasing effort into seeking intact relics from ancient Egypt. It is thought that Egypt may have harbored refugees or ambassadors from Atlantis, and certain relics may hold significant information.

Last year, a strange cartouche came to the attention of the cabal. Its symbols were different from standard Egyptian hieroglyphs, but bore a striking resemblance to fragments of Atlantean script. The original source of the cartouche was rumored to be near Giza, so the Society covertly investigated. They were surprised to find that the site had been excavated by a German team in 1928, and no records seem to exist. Now the Thule Society wants to know what was found there, why it was covered up, and where it is now.

## The Fountain of Youth

A spring of eternal youth holds special interest for the Thule Society, due to its similarity to records relating to Atlantean powers. If the water really does restore vitality and youth, the Thule Society believes it is because the water flows from whence the Atlanteans vanished. Find the Hollow Earth, and you find the fountain.

Recently, the British Museum came into possession of a map that may lead the way to discovering the source of the fountain. Referring to sites on Easter Island, in Chile, and in Antarctica, the map is less a guide and more an incomplete puzzle that requires visits to specific sites of power.

The Society has managed to obtain the map, but was forced to kill the curator, Sir Wesley. This has brought some unwanted attention to the incident, perhaps from explorer friends of Sir Wesley, perhaps even from the Terra Arcanum. Unfortunately, it appears that Wesley was a cautious man and made a duplicate of the map, so the Thule Society may have some competition after all.

## Explorers

Not everyone seeking to explore new regions belongs to a sinister secret cult. Many organizations are quite openly involved in either assisting or hindering would-be explorers.

## The National Geographic Society

Founded in 1888, the National Geographic Society has encouraged and supported exploration and science across all borders. Famous for its respected monthly publication, the Society also has one of the best collections of maps to be found anywhere, compiled from the



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collections of its many famous members. In just the last few years, the Society has equipped its photographers with new 35mm cameras loaded with the new Kodachrome film, giving them the ability to capture images that would have been lost to them if using bulky tripods and glass plates.

The Society tends to be forward thinking, looking for innovations in technology that support geography and exploration, specifically involving the airplane. Several pioneering pilots have been given awards by the Society.

### Abigail Hall

Abigail Hall was born into one of America's wealthiest families, but never suffered from laziness as a result. Possessed of a voracious intellect, she shunned attempts to marry her off, and fled to Egypt to visit her uncle—a US diplomat serving in Cairo in the aftermath of the Great War. Over the next several years, she traveled the region extensively (against her uncle's wishes) with native tribesmen and foreign explorers. Later, striking out from under her uncle's wing, she joined a National Geographic Society expedition up the Yangtze and Han rivers in China and Korea, which she chronicled in a series of articles and photographs for the Society's magazine, earning herself a place in the organization.

With the support of the Society, she led her first expedition to Tibet, where she unearthed and documented a previously undiscovered ruin. At that site, she found an artifact with inscriptions and a style she did not recognize. Since returning to Chicago, she has been busily working to translate the script and discern the purpose of the artifact. Her best guess is that it may be a primitive compass, but if so, why does it point to the south...? Abigail would be happy to assist fellow explorers who could help her find answers, and she is well positioned to help them recruit personnel and acquire equipment needed for their journey.

### Abigail Hall

Mentor 1

Archetype: Explorer

Motivation: Truth

Style: 1

Health: 5

#### Primary Attributes

Body: 2

Charisma: 3

Dexterity: 2

Intelligence: 3

Strength: 2

Willpower: 3

#### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 5

Move: 4

Defense: 4

Perception: 6

Stun: 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Archeology	3	3	6	(3)
Diplomacy	3	3	6	(3)
Investigation	3	3	6	(3)
Linguistics	3	3	6	(3)
Survival	3	3	6	(3)

#### Talents

None

#### Resources

Artifact 1 (Atlantean Lodestone)

Rank 1 (National Geographic Society: +2 social bonus)

#### Flaw

Pacifist (+1 Style point whenever she resolves a dispute peacefully)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Punch	0 N	0	0 N	(0) N

### Royal Geographic Society

Geography is a very serious business to an empire with far flung colonies and one of the most impressive navies in the world. Transporting supplies and men by the most expeditious route, avoiding hazards, and knowing what sort of people and terrain lay in between make all the difference to the Empire's endeavors. To this end, the British crown takes a healthy interest in exploration and science. This is the 1930s, after all, and Britain is committed to maintaining a leading role in discovery.

Formed in 1830 and granted a Royal charter by Queen Victoria in 1859, the Royal Geographic Society includes many peers of the realm among its members, as well as moneyed industrialists and brilliant scientists. The Society has sponsored or participated in expeditions by some of the world's leading explorers and scientists, including Charles Darwin and David Livingstone. Fellowship in the Society requires five years of service to the Society's works and nomination by two Fellows in good standing. (Fellows of the Society may place "FRGS" after their name.)

The Society has members expert in customs across the globe, skilled in desert, arctic, mountain, tropical, and underwater exploration. The Society is rich in expertise and enthusiasm in a wide variety of fields, from botanists to zoologists, geologists, archaeologists, and anthropologists. Unfortunately, it is also thoroughly infiltrated by the Terra Arcanum. Some of the Society's most influential members are in the service of the Arcanum, suppressing certain information and publicly discrediting theories that might lead to the Hollow Earth.

### Sir Nigel Smith-Stirling, FRGS

Despite his diminutive stature, Sir Nigel has proved himself of great service to king and country. After visiting the Middle East many times in his studies, the Great War saw him sent to a variety of posts on behalf



of military intelligence. He spent time in Egypt, Sudan, Nigeria, British East Africa, and even Tunisia, working with the military to advise on local geography and populations.

It was while traveling with the REA that he fell under attack from a tribe of hostile natives. In escaping the slaughter he became lost in the desert, only stumbling across a British convoy five days later. What happened to him during that time, and what he discovered in the desert has never been revealed, but it changed him forever.

Sir Nigel obtained funding from a few patrons and led an expedition to Angkor Wat in Cambodia, then another to Chichen-Itza in Mexico, and one to Easter Island in the Pacific. He began to form theories regarding connections between these widely separated cultures. It seemed to him that there might have been a progenitor culture that affected development of all of these ancient people; he hesitates to say more without definitive proof, but he's intent on finding it.

A number of people are interested in his research, including the Terra Arcanum and the Thule Society. Sir Nigel does not have enough evidence to publish his theory, and has found his superiors in the RGS to be critical of his evidence. Rumors about his credentials have already started to circulate, but the success of his endeavors has given him the financial means to fund an expedition to gain the evidence he seeks—solid proof of the existence of a progenitor race. Explorers seeking a patron and mentor may find Sir Nigel to be a man who understands their theories, and is willing to advance their efforts.

## Sir Nigel Smith-Stirling, FRGS

Mentor 2

Archetype: Explorer

Motivation: Truth

Style: 2

Health: 6

### Primary Attributes

Body: 3

Charisma: 3

Dexterity: 2

Intelligence: 4

Strength: 2

Willpower: 4

### Secondary Attributes

Size: -1

Initiative: 6

Move: 4

Defense: 6

Perception: 8

Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Diplomacy	3	5	8	(4)
Firearms	2	4	6	(3)
History	4	2	6	(3)
Investigation	4	3	7	(3+)
Enigmas			8	(4)
Linguistics	4	2	6	(3)
Survival	4	3	7	(3+)
Desert			8	(4)

### Talents

None

### Resources

Rank 2 (Royal Geographic Society: +4 social bonus and ability to requisition resources)

Status 1 (Knight: +2 social bonus and \$150 monthly income)

### Flaw

Dwarf (+1 Style point whenever his size causes him ridicule or difficulty)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Webley revolver	3 L	+1	10 L	(5) L
Lee-Enfield rifle	3 L	+1	10 L	(5) L
Punch	-1 N	+1	0 N	(0) N

## Government Agencies

### US Army Intelligence

Ever since the Great War, U.S. Army Intelligence has made tremendous strides in its role of supporting what many believe could become the greatest armed force on the face of the earth. Acquiring intelligence through research, reconnaissance, and even paid informants, Army Intelligence collates data from around the globe to serve as a resource for the president and the top brass. In its efforts, it has encountered many pieces of unusual information that it keeps under strictest classification.

To be sure, nearly all of the "phenomena of interest" reported to the Intelligence Corps turn out to be mere cases of swamp gas, mistaken identity, or hoaxes. Researching all of these wild goose chases with very limited manpower would be an embarrassing waste of resources, yet Army Intelligence display a good track record for discerning important items... if given enough time. Currently, the army's standard procedure is to secure all evidence in a secret location where "top men" carefully pore over each and every case.

The U.S. Army maintains a strict policy of keeping all matters of discovery confidential. However, their reasons for doing so are purely strategic: they don't wish to tip their hand to their enemies. It is much easier to gain an objective—or, at least, to deny the enemy his objective—if your true strength and motivations are unknown.

Understandably, the Army places greatest priority on deciphering those enigmas which might help them keep abreast of their rival powers' activities. For this reason, they have been monitoring the Ahnenerbe since the early '30s and have compiled a file on the Thule Society, as well as dossiers on a small handful of its members and suspected members. Although the Army can only speculate about the current locations or endeavors of the *Thule-Gesellschaft*, one can hardly discount the fre-



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quency with which they have contracted teams of freelance U.S. explorers—surprisingly well armed explorers—who just happen to show up in the right place at the right time to interfere with the exploits of the cult.

Army Intelligence does mount regular expeditionary forces which, depending on Army brass's assessment of the political ramifications, consist of army specialists, civilian experts, or some combination thereof. Although not officially a member of the Intelligence Corps, Admiral Byrd is believed to be a chief field agent or expedition organizer. Many speculate that his knowledge and expertise is deemed highly crucial to the intelligence effort because of the true findings of his polar expedition in 1926.

Even with the mysteries it has in its possession, Army Intelligence has been infiltrated by the Terra Arcanum to a surprisingly small extent. Perhaps this is because the men and women of this corps are extraordinarily patriotic and dedicated to their duty. It is also likely that the Terra Arcanum is confident that the army keeps the valuable clues all in one convenient location that could be tampered with, stolen, or destroyed at some later date. The Terra Arcanum has also been known to deliberately tip off the Army in an effort to use them as a check against the Thule Society.

## Major James Eaton

Born and raised in New York city, James Eaton is the kind of man who believes in excelling at everything. After returning from a highly decorated career in the Great War, he grew listless with the banality of running the family business. He signed on with the FBI and investigated some very strange cases which, he declares, he is duty bound never to divulge. After a decade with the bureau, he was recruited back into the army—this time with the Intelligence Corps—where he is one of the few cleared to work with “phenomena of interest.” As such, he could be of major assistance to anyone investigating strange urban incidents.

## Major James Eaton

Mentor 2

Archetype: *Soldier*

Motivation: *Duty*

Style: 2

Health: 7

### Primary Attributes

Body: 3

Charisma: 3

Dexterity: 3

Intelligence: 3

Strength: 2

Willpower: 4

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 6

Move: 5

Defense: 6

Perception: 7

Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Bureaucracy	3	2	5	(2+)
Government			6	(3)
Brawl	2	4	6	(3)
Firearms	3	3	6	(3)
Intimidation	3	3	6	(3)
Investigation	3	5	8	(4)
Streetwise	3	2	5	(2+)
Rumors			6	(3)

### Talents

None

### Resources

Rank 3 (U.S. Army Intelligence: +6 social bonus and ability to requisition resources)

### Flaw

Impatient (+1 Style point whenever his impatience gets him into trouble)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Colt M1911	3 L	0	9 L	(4+) L
Punch	0 N	0	6 N	(3) N

## Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) and Section Z

The SIS is the United Kingdom's foreign intelligence service, responsible for combating foreign espionage and for gathering intelligence on enemies of the crown. The first Director of MI6, Captain Sir George Mansfield Smith-Cumming (known by the code name “C”), created Section Z (pronounced “Section Zed”): the most secret SIS operational unit, dedicated to researching and countering the threat of foreign occult activity.

Before his death in 1923, Sir George selected Admiral Sir Hugh ‘Quex’ Sinclair as his successor to the post of “C,” based on Sir Hugh's previous experience with the supernatural. In the early 1920s, there was a series of attacks on British subs by what could only be described as a “leviathan” or “sea monster.” Sir Hugh worked closely with British cryptozoologists and determined that the creature was responding to the raising of an ancient obelisk from a wreck off the coast of Ireland. Ultimately, the artifact had to be abandoned to the depths of the sea, but the experience drove Sir Hugh to become a studied occultist.

As the head of SIS, Sir Hugh knows of Nazi efforts to locate ancient artifacts to add to Hitler's growing collection. Fortunately, he understands the significance of these items and, knowing what he does about powers that lay beyond the comprehension of men, he'll be damned if he's going to let Hitler get his hands on something like that leviathan—or worse.

Section Z agents are selected based on a number of qualities. Some are veterans of the military with strong experience in combat and field operations under difficult conditions. Some come from the foreign service, with broad educations and worldly knowledge. They



tend to speak additional languages and have a good grasp of foreign cultures. A few are academics, possessing advanced degrees in ancient cultures, dead languages, and the occult lore that the Section so often needs to understand.

Section Z's current focus is penetrating the Nazi Ahnenerbe and understanding what Hitler hopes to find in the Hollow Earth. If an expedition were to be formed, it's likely the Section would want to insert an agent to track its discoveries. Their suspicion is that the Nazis would do the same.

### Admiral Sir Hugh 'Quex' Sinclair

Known to his agents as "C," the admiral takes great interest in the members of Section Z, many of whom are from highly irregular backgrounds. He expects the most out of their service to the crown, but in return he informs and equips them very well.

### Sir Hugh "Quex" Sinclair

Mentor 3

Archetype: Occultist

Motivation: Duty

Style: 3

Health: 7

#### Primary Attributes

Body: 3

Charisma: 4

Dexterity: 3

Intelligence: 5

Strength: 2

Willpower: 4

#### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 8

Move: 5

Defense: 6

Perception: 9

Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Bureaucracy	5	3	8	(4)
Diplomacy	4	4	8	(4)
Firearms	3	3	6	(4)
Investigation	5	5	10	(5)
Linguistics	5	5	10	(5)
Philosophy	5	5	10	(5)

#### Talents

None

#### Resources

Rank 4 (Section Z: +8 social bonus and the ability to requisition resources)

#### Flaw

Superstitious (+1 Style point whenever his unusual beliefs cause trouble)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Walter PPK	2 L	0	8 L	(4) L
Punch	0 N	0	0 N	(0) N

## DENIZENS OF THE HOLLOW EARTH

### Native Peoples

Over the millennia, many groups of human beings have found their way into the Hollow Earth. Some of those have managed to eke out a niche for themselves and their descendents in the untamed wilds within. One of the greatest mistakes made by modern explorers is to discount the importance of these natives; each tribe has survived and explored its area extensively, and each might potentially provide knowledgeable guides, valuable barter, or swift death depending on the inclinations of their society and how they are approached.

Inexperienced explorers also often make the dangerous mistake of assuming that all natives are the same. Those living in the Hollow Earth hail from a bewildering number of regions on the surface world, and, depending on the tribe, their genetic heritage could be traced to Africa, Asia, Europe, or North America. The diversity of their origins, combined with their geographic isolation from one another, has made for a dizzying variety among the scattered human populations of the Hollow Earth. Adventurers who assume that all natives are like the peaceful and open minded fisher folk they first met are in for a rude shock when they discover that a day's travel downriver brings them into the territory of vicious, xenophobic cannibals.

### Cargo Cultists

Tons of cargo is dumped into the sea from shipwrecks and from floundering vessels that lose their entire holds to the open ocean. Such flotsam—as well as a great many vessels and aircraft in the Bermuda Triangle vicinity—occasionally makes its way into the Hollow Earth. Some natives of the inner world have come to revere these odd influxes as gifts from their deities. Many adopt strange uses for the cargo they receive, or attempt to duplicate the uses they believe the gods intend for it. Some even go to war with other cargo cults who derive different uses for the same items, decrying their blasphemous practices.

To explorers and castaways, cargo cults can be an unexpected boon, since that rare engine part or the critically needed sail canvas might just turn out to be available in the middle of the wilderness after all. Most cargo cults are favorably disposed toward visitors from above and eager to trade what they have found for other foreign marvels, or for the knowledge to properly use what they already have. Some tribes might even wor-



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ship those from the surface, taking their technology as proof of their godhood. However, this is not always the case; even those who are initially friendly may be mortally offended by sunburned, bedraggled outsiders who ask for their holiest relics. Savvy explorers will also keep in mind that even when a tribe at large is inclined toward trade, certain individuals (such as a witch-doctors whose social status hinges on a particular interpretation of an object) may be threatened by the potential change of enlightenment, and may take steps to discredit or dispose of the strangers in their midst.

Depending primarily on their location but also heavily on luck, certain cargo cults become wealthy from regularly scavenged goods, while others may revel for centuries to come over the discovery of a single, inexplicable item. Gamemasters will want to develop quirks and beliefs for various tribes as appropriate. Certain cargo cults might specialize in collecting airplane parts, or center their worship on plastic game pieces, dolls, crates of phonograph records, teddy bears, rubber snakes, assorted hats, etc.

### Cargo Cultist

Ally 1

Archetype: *Native*

Motivation: **Faith**

Style: 0

Health: 4

#### Primary Attributes

Body: 2

Charisma: 3

Dexterity: 2

Intelligence: 2

Strength: 2

Willpower: 2

#### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 4

Move: 4

Defense: 4

Perception: 4

Stun: 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	2	2	4	(2)
Diplomacy	3	1	4	(2)
Melee	2	1	3	(1+)
<i>Swords</i>			4	(2)
Stealth	2	2	4	(2)
Survival	2	3	5	(2+)
<i>Foraging</i>			6	(3)

#### Talents

Charismatic (+1 Charisma rating/maximum rating)

#### Resources

None

#### Flaw

Primitive (-2 penalty on technology related rolls)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Spear	3 L	0	6 L	(3) L
Machete	2 L	0	6 L	(3) L
Punch	0 N	0	4 N	(2) N





## Noble Savages

While certain tribes enjoy outsiders and their trinkets, the noble savages are indifferent. Proud and independent, many—if not most—natives of the Hollow Earth need nothing from surface dwellers and have no interest in affairs above. A band of their strongest warriors may consent to escort travelers by the shortest route to the borders of their territory. It's more likely they will watch from ambush points, all but invisible in the jungle, and let the travelers move on of their own accord, so long as they do not stumble too close to the village or do anything that breaks the tribe's laws of conduct.

Foreigners in need of goods or services from noble savages are in an awkward predicament. Even the tribes willing to open a dialogue may show little respect for outsiders who are foolish, soft, and—to the eyes of the noble savage—very ugly in their strangeness. An outsider might only earn respect by first proving himself worthy, perhaps by successfully hunting a dangerous animal or defeating a warrior in a wrestling match.

## Noble Savage

Ally 1

Archetype: <i>Native</i>		Motivation: <i>Survival</i>		
Style: 0		Health: 4		
Primary Attributes				
Body: 2		Charisma: 2		
Dexterity: 2		Intelligence: 2		
Strength: 3		Willpower: 2		
Secondary Attributes				
Size: 0		Initiative: 4		
Move: 5		Defense: 4		
Perception: 4		Stun: 2		
Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Athletics	3	2	5	(2+)
Brawl	3	1	4	(2)
Melee	3	1	4	(2)
<i>Spears</i>			5	(2+)
Stealth	2	2	4	(2)
Survival	2	3	5	(2+)
<i>Hunting</i>			6	(3)
Talents				
Strong (+1 Strength rating/maximum rating)				
Resources				
None				
Flaw				
Primitive (-2 penalty on technology related rolls)				
Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Spear	3 L	0	8 L	(4) L
Spear (thrown)	3 L	0	8 L	(4) L
Dagger	1 L	0	6 L	(3) L
Punch	0 N	0	4 N	(2) N

## Cannibals

The natives of the Hollow Earth tend to be extremely skilled hunters, and more than a few tribes actively seek human beings as their most prized game. It is nearly impossible to negotiate with cannibals; when the spears start to fly, the targets can only choose between running and fighting. Most cannibals view any tribesman yet to earn a kill as something less than a full member of society, so individual warriors will stop at nothing to bring home the scalp, head, or other preferred portion of a victim.

Travelers will usually know they are passing through cannibal territory before they encounter assailants. Surrounding tribes that are frequently raided will warn others away—unless fresh meat might placate the cannibals' hunger for a time. Even without warnings, natives who specialize in killing humans usually decorate their borders with the rotting remains of impaled victims, pyramids of skulls, or some other unmistakable warning. The cannibals themselves also tend to advertise death through their personal appearance, with trophies such as shrunk heads, necklaces of ears, or body paintings resembling skulls and bones.

The reasons behind cannibalism are as varied as the tribes who practice it. For some, it is a form of extremely aggressive territorial defense. For others, it may simply be the reflection of the kill-or-be-killed environment of the Hollow Earth, the result of religious beliefs, or a conviction that all non-tribesmen are abominations.

If given the opportunity, almost any cannibal would prefer a living captive over a corpse—not that the captive will remain alive for long. Such tribes often have some type of ritual sacrifice such as beheading the victim on a sacred stone, feeding her to the Great Beast, throwing her into a volcano, or simply boiling her in a pot of stew. Whatever the case, the entire tribe revels in the shared experience of the climactic moment, so the warrior who makes it possible will gain a considerable amount of prestige.

## Cannibal

Ally 1

<b>Archetype:</b> <i>Native</i>		<b>Motivation:</b> <i>Survival</i>	
<b>Style:</b> 0		<b>Health:</b> 5	
<b>Primary Attributes</b>			
<b>Body:</b> 2		<b>Charisma:</b> 1	
<b>Dexterity:</b> 2		<b>Intelligence:</b> 2	
<b>Strength:</b> 2		<b>Willpower:</b> 3	
<b>Secondary Attributes</b>			
<b>Size:</b> 0		<b>Initiative:</b> 4	
<b>Move:</b> 4		<b>Defense:</b> 4	
<b>Perception:</b> 5		<b>Stun:</b> 2	



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Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	2	2	4	(2)
Intimidation	1	1	4	(2)
Melee	2	1	3	(1+)
Clubs			4	(2)
Stealth	2	2	4	(2)
Survival	2	3	5	(2+)
Hunting			6	(3)

## Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Intimidation rating)

## Resources

None

## Flaw

Primitive (-2 penalty on technology related rolls)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Spear	3 L	0	6 L	(3) L
Dagger	1 L	0	4 L	(2) L
Club	2 N	0	6 N	(3) N
Punch	0 N	0	4 N	(2) N

## Amazons

One of the most successful and formidable tribes of natives are the Amazons, who are also notable for their matriarchal society and their mythological connections.

According to the legends of their own tribe, they are descended from the Amazon Queen Myrina, who led a powerful conquering army thousands of years ago and came to the Hollow Earth during a terrible storm at sea. In this new land, the Amazons did what they do best: they conquered. Subjugating a number of native tribes, they set about building a city, which they named for their former capital, Themiscyra.

Amazons hunt with long knives, spears, and bows, and dress in loose, light clothing appropriate for the hot, wet weather of the jungle. Though they'll usually wear garments of fur pelt or woven cloth, they only cover their breasts occasionally, and out of a sense of adornment rather than modesty. They also decorate themselves with elaborate body paint depicting vines and leaves, which acts as a fine camouflage. They do not typically wear shoes, but may sometimes don woven fiber sandals when they will be on the ground for an extended period.

The men of this tribe traditionally serve as domestic servants and babysitters, and tend to be meek, passive individuals. The mighty Amazon women look down on male bravado, not because they are threatened by it but simply because it is deemed as unbecoming, much the same way overly aggressive women are disdained in other cultures. Explorers or survivors will find Amazons much more receptive to dealing with a woman, especially if she is a strong woman who can hold her own in a fight.

Due to their ancient victories over other tribes, Amazons have captured many scripts, artifacts, and devices—some of Atlantean origin. Whatever their tribal secrets, they tend to enjoy long lives and robust health, with their champions reportedly capable of performing nearly superhuman feats of prowess.

Not far from the Amazon city are sheer cliffs covered in stranglevine, rising out of the jungle. The Amazons can access secret caves in the cliffs, which lead to interior chambers fashioned into a spectacular palace. In the vaulted Grand Hall is an enormous statue of a warrior-goddess, and it is here that the Amazons' most important rituals are performed. Treasures are set upon pedestals and altars: Grecian columns, fountains, statues, and elaborate carvings accented with precious metals, gems, and rare stones. The Amazons will not part with these reminders of their past glory for any reason. Their functions are unknown to any but the Amazons.

## Amazon

Ally 1

Archetype: Native

Motivation: Duty

Style: 0

Health: 4

## Primary Attributes

Body: 2

Charisma: 2

Dexterity: 3

Intelligence: 2

Strength: 2

Willpower: 2

## Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 5

Move: 5

Defense: 5

Perception: 4

Stun: 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Archery	3	1	4	(2)
Brawl	2	2	4	(2)
Melee	2	2	4	(2)
Spears			5	(2+)
Stealth	3	1	4	(2)
Survival	2	3	5	(2+)
Hunting			6	(3)

## Talents

Agile (+1 Dexterity rating/maximum rating)

## Resources

None

## Flaw

Primitive (-2 penalty on technology related rolls)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bow	2 L	0	6 L	(3) L
Spear	3 L	0	8 L	(4) L
Dagger	1 L	0	5 L	(2+) L
Punch	0 N	0	4 N	(2) N



## Pirates

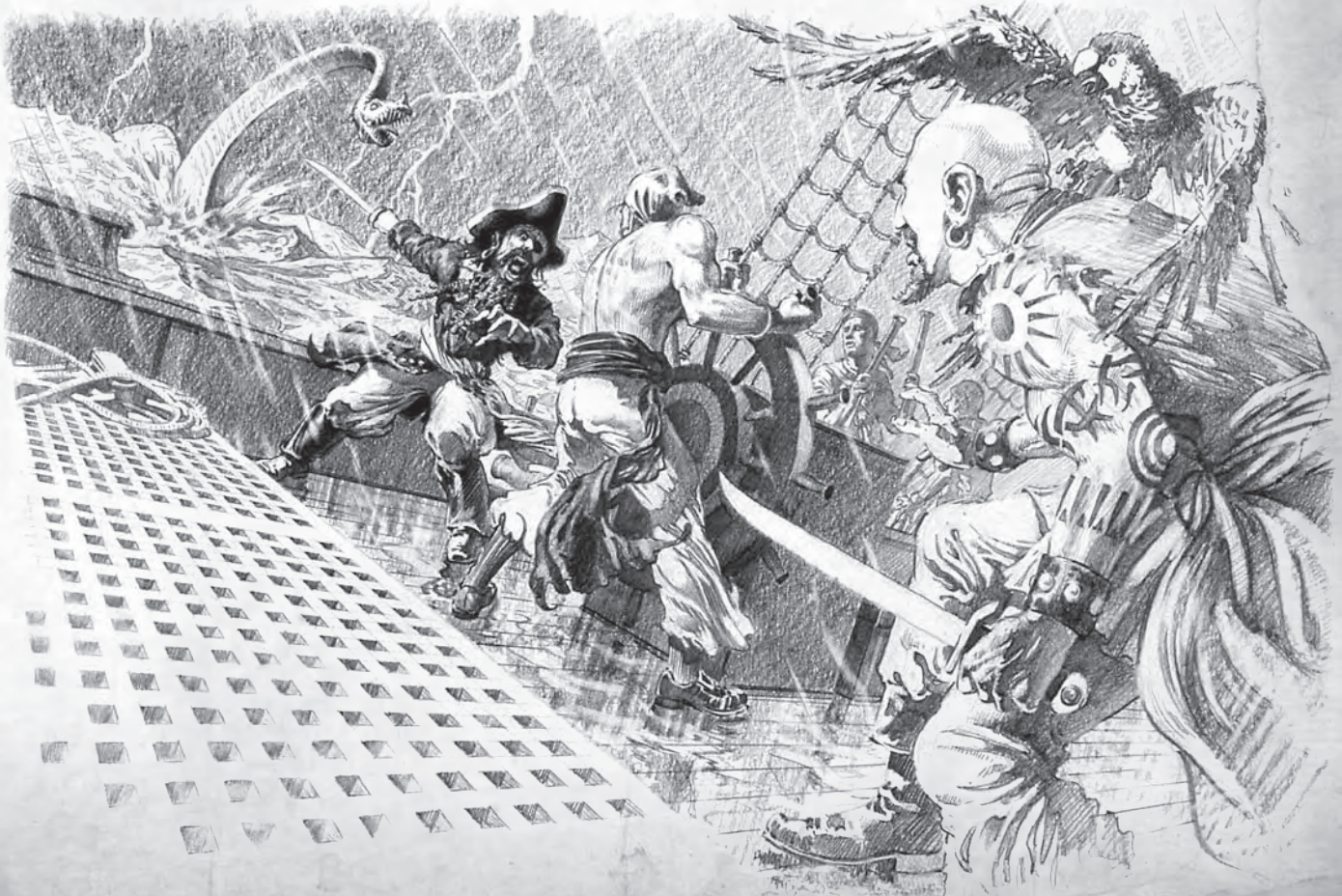
Due in part to the time-altering effects of the Hollow Earth and in part to the encapsulated environment, many ancient creatures and cultures are preserved beneath the surface; few have adapted as thoroughly as the pirates. This particular ocean-going population arrived primarily during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, when some ships thought to be lost at sea actually blundered through an aquatic portal to the inner Earth. Unlike most modern vessels, these highly independent privateers often traveled with a variety of specialists such as carpenters, sail-makers, and blacksmiths, and were thus able to sustain (but not advance) the technology of their day. Crews set up residences in wharves and harbors, and even congregated to create small port settlements, where they took native brides and perpetuated their lifestyle.

Although fishing is the basis of life for most of the descendants of the original pirates, almost all spend part of their lives aboard the schooners, galleys, and dreadnoughts in search of pillage and booty—often preying on ships trapped in the Hollow Earth. Those who sign on with a pirate crew are promised a life of hard work and adventure, and will return wealthy or never return at all.

## Blood Bay

Located in a sheltered cove, Blood Bay is the largest pirate settlement in the Hollow Earth. It resembles a shabby and violent port village of the type found in the Bahamas during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Its location seems to be near the opening of the portal to the Bermuda Triangle, which supplied many of the original piratical settlers and now sometimes supplies new ships for plunder. Around its land-side perimeter, the residents have erected a huge wall that serves to keep out most of the hostile jungle beasts and natives; to the sea-side, they have crafted long piers that serve boats of every size. The town itself boasts several competent ship builders and other skilled craftsmen, along with a robust selection of taverns, each featuring their own special brands of home-distilled rum and rotgut. Several pirate vessels frequent this port, and none have ever been foolish enough to raid it.

Life in Blood Bay is hard but orderly, thanks to the efforts of Governor Sarah Briggs, who took over the post after the death of her husband years ago. Sarah is a striking woman even by the healthy standards of the inner world: tall and sculpted like a bronze statue, her penetrating eyes and unwavering voice can still the hand of hardened cutthroats. Order in Blood Bay is tenuous at best, but things rarely get out of hand.





## Chapter Eight

Brawls are common, but blades and guns don't often come into play—the penalty is too harsh.

Order is maintained by the town's constable, a mountain of a man called Iron Tom. Seven feet tall and seemingly almost as wide, Iron Tom is the toughest seadog you're likely to meet. His tangled black hair and long beard merge together to give him a shambling appearance, but his booming voice carries over even the most raucous brawl. Ironically, Tom is a rather jovial fellow, spending most of his time chasing women and enjoying the fine booze available in town.

But the top authority in Blood Bay is unquestioningly Captain William Flint, the self-proclaimed Pirate King. After more than 30 years in the position, Flint seems to have aged little, leading to all sorts of rumors. Originally a successful buccaneer, Flint saw the future of piracy growing dim as the nineteenth century came to a close. When his ship—the *Vengeance*—chased a schooner into a Caribbean Storm, Flint lost his bearings; *Vengeance* became one of the many ships to disappear in the Devil's Triangle and find its way into the Hollow Earth.

Unlike many pirates, Flint was an educated (if unscrupulous) man, and he took readily to the challenge of this new world. Although he was unable to divine a path out of the Hollow Earth, he managed to ascertain the most likely points for things to fall into this world. By making regular patrols of these areas, he was able to salvage all manner of flotsam cargoes, as well as surprise newly deposited (and vulnerable) ships.

Building up resources, he eventually found his way to Blood Bay, and built himself a small fleet through negotiation, bribes, threats, and treachery. However, Flint had no intention of retiring to rule a colony; he simply wanted things to run smoothly so he'd always have a safe port. He levied taxes on other ships, mandated fines for disorderly crews, and eventually got enough money flowing to keep the docks up. He leaves management to the mayor, but the iron fist that ensures cooperation belongs to Flint.

Flint has more men than ships, so at any time there are a good number of his pirates in port spending their booty, carousing, taking leave, and making sure nobody starts thinking about not paying their tribute to Captain William Flint.

### Captain William Flint

As the Pirate King and captain of the *Vengeance*, Flint has enjoyed the challenge of facing the unknown and conquering the many difficulties that his crew has faced. Though at heart he is an adventurer, Flint is

more than capable of killing in cold blood if the situation demands it. He does not intend to give up his position or his ship, and the next bloody fool who tries to usurp him will end up as dead as the others.

Flint is a powerful, cunning, and ruthless man whose services are easily sold while his loyalty is nearly impossible to retain. Characters would have to go through considerable efforts to win him over, but those who do will find themselves with a tremendous advantage within the Hollow Earth.

### Captain William Flint, the Pirate King

Mentor 3

Archetype: *Pirate*

Motivation: *Greed*

Style: 3

Health: 6

#### Primary Attributes

Body: 3

Charisma: 4

Dexterity: 5

Intelligence: 3

Strength: 3

Willpower: 3

#### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 8

Move: 8

Defense: 8

Perception: 6

Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	3	3	6	(3)
Diplomacy	4	4	8	(4)
Firearms	5	3	8	(4)
Archaic			9	(4+)
Gunnery	3	2	5	(2+)
Cannons			6	(3)
Intimidation	4	4	8	(4)
Melee	3	5	8	(4)
Swords			9	(4+)
Ships	5	1	6	(3)
Survival	3	2	5	(2+)
Navigation			6	(3)

#### Talents

Dual Wield (Ignore off-hand penalty)

Fearsome (Unnerve enemies in combat)

#### Resources

Rank 2 (Pirate King: +2 social bonus and ability to requisition resources)

#### Flaw

Callous (+1 Style point whenever he does something selfish)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Flintlock pistol	3 L	0	12 L	(6) L
Cutlass	3 L	0	12 L	(6) L
Punch	0 N	0	6 N	(3) N

### The Vengeance

Flint's flagship, *Vengeance*, is a fast and maneuverable two-masted schooner with a crew of 24. About half of the crew descends from surface-world pirates,



with the other half being survivors of vessels plundered by the *Vengeance*. In addition to the *Vengeance*, Flint owns a number of other vessels, commanded by his loyal lieutenants.

The Vengeance	Size	Def.	Strc.	Spd.	Han.	Crew	Pass.
Schooner	8	6	24	12	-2	12-24	12-24

Armament	Dmg	Str	Rng	Cap	Rate	Spd	Cost	Wt
Cannon (8 per side)	6L	*	100 ft.	1(i)	1/3	S	n/a	500 lb.

## Pirates

The pirates of the Hollow Earth are every bit as motley as their ancestors. They are generally cut-throat mercenaries, but they do have their own codes of conduct. Nearly all are illiterate and many harbor buried scraps of religious guilt over their piratical deeds.

## Pirate

Ally 1

Archetype: *Pirate*

Motivation: *Greed*

Style: 0

Health:

### Primary Attributes

Body: 2

Charisma: 2

Dexterity: 2

Intelligence: 1

Strength: 3

Willpower: 2

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 3

Move: 5

Defense: 4

Perception: 5

Stun: 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	3	1	4	(2)
Firearms	2	2	4	(2)
Archaic			5	(2+)
Gunnery	1	3	4	(2)
Intimidation	2	2	4	(2)
Melee	3	1	4	(2)
Swords			5	(2+)

### Talents

Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Illiterate (+1 Style point whenever your inability to read causes trouble)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Flintlock pistol	3 L	0	8 L	(4) L
Cutlass	3 L	0	8 L	(4) L
Dagger	1 L	0	5 L	(2+) L
Belaying pin	2 N	0	6 N	(3) N
Punch	0 N	0	4 N	(2) N

## Beastmen

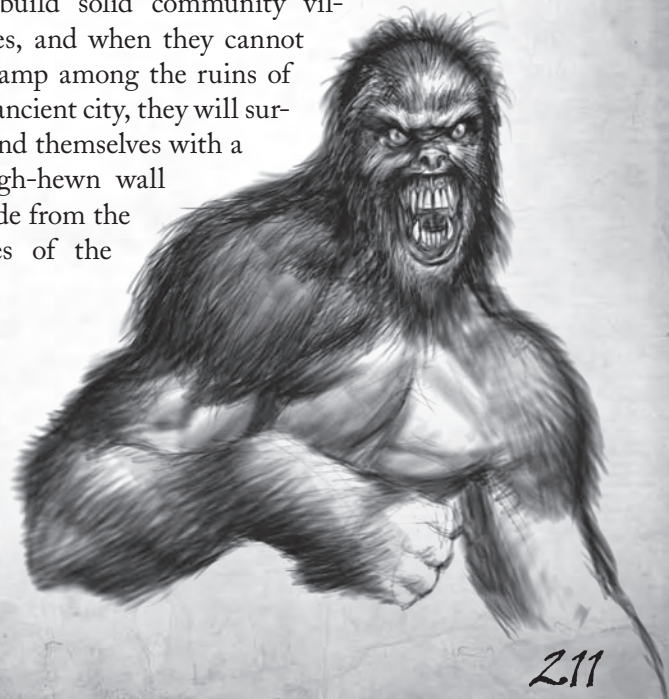
Among the most unnerving denizens of the Hollow Earth are the beastmen, who seem to bear traits of both animal and human descent. Clans of these humanoids are scattered throughout the inner world, and no record exists to indicate their point of origin. Most seem content to keep to themselves, and will avoid or drive off intruders. They are intelligent enough that it is not unheard of for human beings to establish some form of communication with them. The members of an expedition are as likely to work with them as against them.

The pattern of settlements of beastmen is no more predictable than it is for human tribes, although the beastmen do tend to make their homes in or around Atlantean ruins. What draws beastmen to these ruins is anyone's guess, but they do seem to have a connection to them.

## Apemen

The most feral and brutal of the beastmen are the apemen. Towering over 10 feet tall, these terrifying creatures are territorial and accept no intruders in their settlements. These creatures are covered in long hair in colors ranging from black to reddish brown to white; they have the appearance of very tall, shaggy men with lion-like manes surrounding their heads. Their faces strongly resemble that of a gorilla, while also displaying an uncanny resemblance to that of a human. However, it only takes one look at their incredibly long arms or stumpy fangs to remind the observer that this creature possesses the strength to lift a man over its head and tear him limb from limb.

Despite this incredible ferocity, the apemen tend to build solid community villages, and when they cannot encamp among the ruins of an ancient city, they will surround themselves with a rough-hewn wall made from the trees of the





# Chapter Eight

forest. Villages are usually organized in a circular layout with the least important areas (animal pens and barns) on the outer edge of the circle, and the most important areas (food storage and weapons) in the center. Apemen are also extremely hardy in cold weather, and are among the more dominant species in the frigid mountains of the Hollow Earth.

Apemen live communally, with food and responsibilities divided equally among them, although the stronger warriors usually claim multiple mates. Each village has an alpha male, but each also has a council of elders who tend to day-to-day matters and council the alpha in times of difficulty.

Apemen have little use for molemen or lizardmen. Conflict has broken out between these three species, but never on a large scale. Relations between clans of apemen run from cordial to strained, but they never reach the hostilities reserved for other species.

## Apeman

Ally 2

**Archetype:** *Beastman*

**Motivation:** *Survival*

**Style:** 0

**Health:** 8

### Primary Attributes

**Body:** 4

**Charisma:** 0

**Dexterity:** 3

**Intelligence:** 1

**Strength:** 5

**Willpower:** 3

### Secondary Attributes

**Size:** 1

**Initiative:** 4

**Move:** 8

**Defense:** 6

**Perception:** 4

**Stun:** 4

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Athletics	5	3	8	(4)
Brawl	5	3	8	(4)
Melee	5	3	8	(4)
Stealth	3	1	4	(2)
Survival	1	5	6	(3)

### Talents

Giant (+1 Size rating)

Strong (+1 Strength rating/maximum rating)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Primitive (-2 penalty on technology related rolls)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Great club	3 N	-1	10 N	(5) N
Bite	1 L	-1	8 L	(4) L
Punch	1 N	-1	8 N	(4) N

## Lizardmen

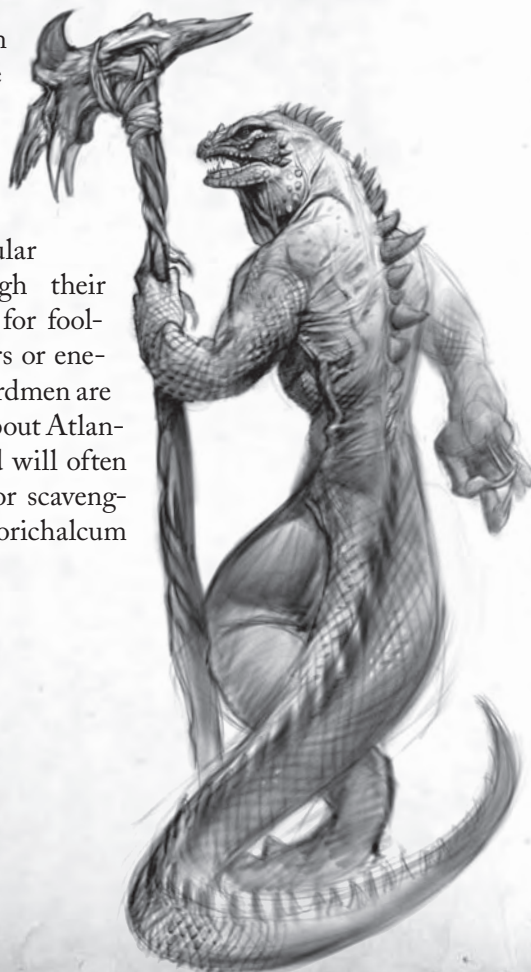
In vast contrast to the colossal apemen, the lizardmen are relatively small beings. Most stand no more than five feet high and are of slight build, giving the

impression of an erect iguana with large eyes and a pronounced snout. They are covered in shiny scales that run a gamut of colors from light green to a near black, and are completely hairless. A ridge runs from between their eyes all the way to the back of the neck and will change color to reflect the mood of that lizardman. Their thin arms end in a hand with three fingers and an opposable thumb, each with a sharp claw. Although they appear to be frail, they possess incredible strength; combined with their amazing speed, stealth and agility, they make formidable opponents.

Lizardmen do not wear clothes as such, but many will adorn themselves with trinkets and jewelry that strike their fancy. Shiny crystals and bits of metal scavenged from the ruins are always a favorite. They eagerly hoard such shiny items, especially the rare and striking mineral orichalcum. For this reason, treasure hunters often seek out lizardmen in hopes of discovering an orichalcum stash within their communal larder.

Lizardmen have no recognizable leaders. All clansmen seem to know what is expected of them and what they must do for the good of everyone else. The entire community cares for elder lizardmen and the hatchlings, putting their needs over the needs of those in their prime.

Lizardmen will avoid the massive apemen whenever possible, but they send regular patrols through their ruins looking for foolhardy intruders or enemies. The lizardmen are very curious about Atlantean ruins and will often go exploring or scavenging, seeking orichalcum above all else.





## Lizardman

Ally 1

Archetype: *Beastman*

Motivation: *Survival*

Style: 0

Health: 5

### Primary Attributes

Body: 2 Charisma: 0

Dexterity: 4 Intelligence: 1

Strength: 2 Willpower: 3

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 Initiative: 5

Move: 6 Defense: 6

Perception: 6 Stun: 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	2	2	4	(2)
Melee	2	1	3	(1+)
Stealth	4	2	6	(3)
Survival	1	5	6	(3)

### Talents

Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Primitive (-2 penalty on technology related rolls)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Spear	3 L	0	6 L	(3) L
Claw	1 L	0	4 L	(2) L

## Molemen

Among all of the beastmen, the least understood are the molemen. Small in height but broad in stature, the molemen possess tiny eyes, and flat ears that rest against their elongated heads. The creatures are covered in hair and sport long, impressive "whiskers" along the length of their bullet-shaped snout. Their hands end in very thick, sharp claws that are used for digging and excavating.

Being nearly blind, the molemen are highly sensitive to vibrations transmitted through the earth. This sense is so keen that a moleman can detect the location and cause of a vibration, and quickly tunnel under it to capture the source. Most molemen hunt in this fashion, although they are also known to gather roots and other underground creatures for food.

Molemen rarely venture above ground because they find most of what they need below. When they do emerge into open air, they take special care not to be seen. Their "communities" are actually honeycombs of tunnels that often stretch for miles. Any hapless human that stumbles into their labyrinth is almost certainly doomed to die in a cave-in or be taken prisoner.

Although it is rare to encounter molemen in the Hollow Earth, they are the beast that humans are most likely to encounter on the surface world. These tenacious diggers will sometimes tunnel clear through to the

surface. They do not usually stay long enough to cause extensive trouble (swiping only a few livestock or accidentally undermining a few minor structures before returning to their regular haunts) but their abandoned tunnels have often served as routes by which monsters from within the earth find their way out, or unsuspecting inhabitants from the surface accidentally find their way in.

Molemen prefer isolation and seek out no enemy or friend. While the molemen are non-aggressive, they are no easy prey. When chased, they quickly dig into the ground to escape. If cornered, they will fight savagely with their claws. When inside their tunnels, Molemen are among the fiercest close combatants in the Hollow Earth.



## Moleman

Ally 1

Archetype: *Beastman*

Motivation: *Survival*

Style: 0

Health: 6

### Primary Attributes

Body: 3 Charisma: 0

Dexterity: 2 Intelligence: 1

Strength: 3 Willpower: 3

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 Initiative: 3

Move: 5 (10)\* Defense: 5

Perception: 4 Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	3	3	6	(3)
Stealth	2	2	4	(3)
Survival	1	5	6	(3)

### Talents

Tunneling (Double Move rating when digging)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

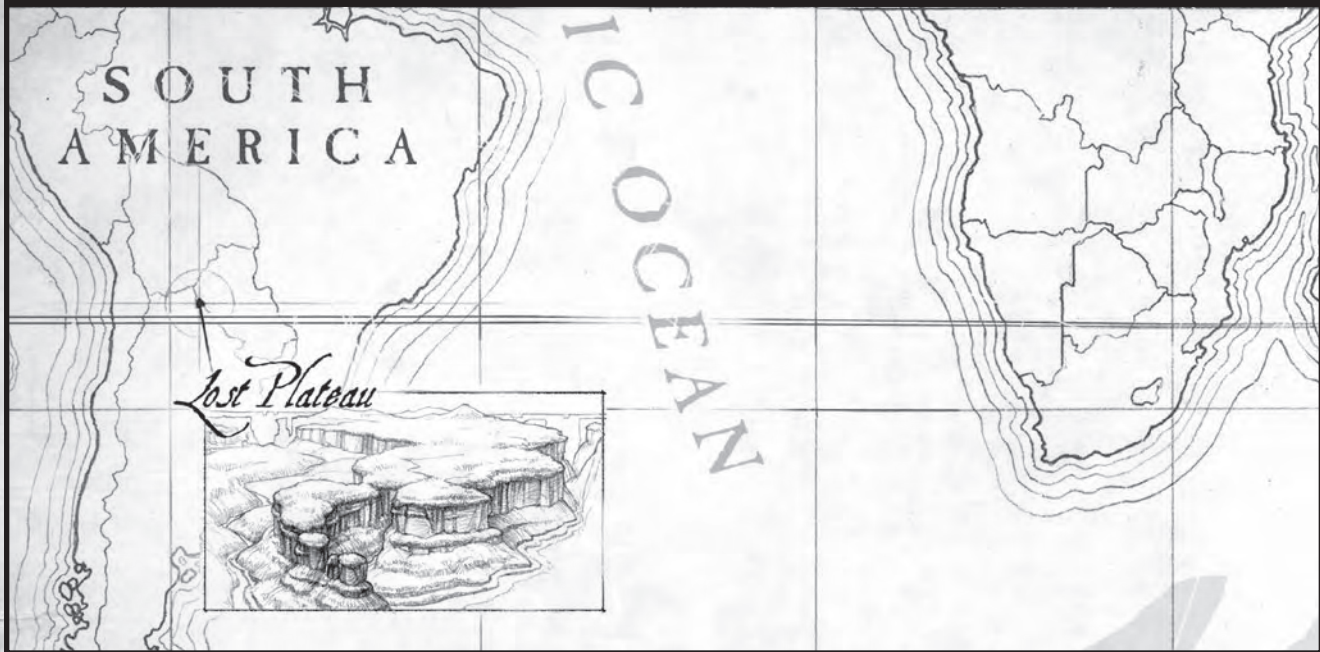
Primitive (-2 penalty on technology related rolls)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Claws	2 L	0	8 L	(4) L

\* Burrowing animals dig up to their Move rating in feet per hour. Molemen double their move rating when digging.



## ⊕ CHAPTER 9: **BESTIARY**



The ecology of the Hollow Earth is very strange indeed. Explorers can be fairly certain that both plants and animals have been imported over at least the last 500 million years. However, what is most puzzling is the effect that the Hollow Earth has on evolution. While some species have evolved into bizarre and dangerous new forms, others have remained relatively unchanged over tens, or even hundreds of millions of years.

The Hollow Earth has been a closed ecosystem over much of its existence, and this is a major factor to consider in its zoology and botany. The surface has experienced a number of major disasters that caused the extinction of many plants and animals. The Hollow Earth may have saved unknown creatures from extinction.

In ancient times, the formation and melting of glaciers caused entire continents to be taken by the sea. If land creatures from that time still exist in the Hollow Earth, they may be unrecognizable to explorers. There may even be a civilization unknown to anyone since the dawn of time.

The Permian-Triassic extinction (250 million years ago) wiped out 95% of life on Earth, and began what is commonly known as the Age of Dinosaurs. Their dominance of the surface world lasted until 65 million years ago, when an unknown cataclysm caused an upheaval so traumatic that very few creatures survived. Volcanic activity and changing sea levels may have allowed greater access to the Hollow Earth in those times, accounting for the great variety of creatures that escaped extinction.

The death of dinosaurs on the Earth's surface opened the door to smaller mammals; those creatures rose to dominate the planet, growing larger and smarter, and taking on an incredible diversity of forms. The disaster that destroyed the dinosaurs also apparently cut off most entrances to the Hollow Earth, but many ancient mammals still found their way to the inner world, including early hominids—colloquially called “cave men.” Some of these early human-like creatures may have changed significantly in their isolated environment. There is no telling what types of unusual races explorers may discover.

For all this seemingly rational explanation, though, there is no denying that some other factor is at work in the Hollow Earth. Humans here are healthier than on the surface: the men are tall, strong and vigorous, the women quick, capable, and beautiful. Species here grow bigger, meaner, and stronger than their counterparts on the outside. Some grow so large that it's difficult to explain how they manage to survive, but some unknown factor in this land provides the energy needed to keep this bizarre and dangerous ecosystem running. The Hollow Earth is truly a savage and mysterious world!

## **DINOSAURS**

Dinosaurs arose in the Mesozoic era, and ruled the surface of the Earth from approximately 250 million years ago, up until 65 million years ago. It is clear that during the three periods of the Mesozoic (Triassic, Jurassic, and Cretaceous), dinosaurs had intermittent



access to the Hollow Earth, but the access points they used have probably long been closed.

Formally named by English scientist Richard Owen in 1842, dinosaurs derive their name from the Greek words for “fearsome reptile.” The variety of dinosaurs is astounding: from the very large to the very small, herbivores and carnivores, quadrupeds and bipeds—spanning land, sea, and air.

Dinosaurs are believed by most scientists to be cold-blooded, meaning they must rely on the environment to regulate their temperature. This would lead to the supposition that they are sluggish creatures that need to conserve their energy. Unfortunately, this turns out not to be the case in the Hollow Earth. Explorers expecting slow, plodding creatures will be shocked by the speed and agility of Hollow Earth dinosaurs. The need to study these creatures will be overwhelming to any respectable scientist.

## Brontosaurus

The brontosaurus is one of the most familiar dinosaurs to the layman. With long necks, thick bodies, trunk-like legs, and long tapering tails, they exemplify the typical sauropod. These plant-eaters roamed the surface of the Earth for millions of years, relying on their size and mass to protect them from all but the most fearsome and determined predators. In the Hollow Earth, they make their home in the swamps and bogs, clustering together in small herds as they feast on prehistoric plants during most of their waking hours.

When threatened, the brontosaurus can be shockingly quick. The beast can rear up on its hind legs and stomp with its front feet to frighten foes. If slain, Brontosaurus are of great use to the natives. Their teeth and bones can be worked into jewelry, totems, handles for tools, and other useful items. Brontosaurus average over 80 feet long and weigh in at more than 40 tons.

### Brontosaurus

**Archetype:** *Dinosaur*      **Motivation:** *Survival*  
**Style:** 0      **Health:** 24

#### Primary Attributes

**Body:** 12      **Charisma:** 0  
**Dexterity:** 2      **Intelligence:** 0  
**Strength:** 12      **Willpower:** 4

#### Secondary Attributes

**Size:** 8      **Initiative:** 4  
**Move:** 14 (28)\*      **Defense:** 6 (8)\*\*  
**Perception:** 4      **Stun:** 12

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	12	2	16	(8)
Stealth	2	4	0***	(0)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

#### Talents

**Quick Reflexes** 1 (+2 Initiative rating)  
**Skill Aptitude** (+2 Brawl rating)  
**Skill Aptitude** (+2 Stealth rating)  
**Skill Aptitude** (+2 Survival rating)

#### Resources

None

#### Flaw

**Bestial** (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	4 L	-8	12 L	(6) L
Stomp	8 N	-8	16 N	(8) N
Tail	8 N	-8	16 N	(8) N

\* Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

\*\* Brontosaurus have a thick hide that provides a +2 Defense bonus

\*\*\* Brontosaurus suffer a -8 Size penalty on Stealth rolls and automatically fail unless underwater or camouflaged

## Plesiosaur

Large carnivorous aquatic reptiles with long, flexible necks, broad bodies, and a short tail. They are 40 feet long (half of which is just their neck) and weigh in at 40 tons. They have four flippers that power them through the water and give them surprising maneuverability for their size. In addition, they can use their powerful flippers to drag themselves onto dry land for short distances.

Unlike other sea creatures, plesiosaurs breathe air. They can dive beneath the surface for long periods of time, but generally prefer to cruise just beneath the waves, with only their long necks visible above the water. When hunting, plesiosaurs use their long necks to snap up unwary prey (such as fish and smaller sea creatures) and have been known to snatch humans out of canoes or off ship decks. They have incredibly powerful jaws, capable of cracking through the shells of most sea creatures.

Sea monsters of yore are believed to have been plesiosaurs, perhaps escapees from the Hollow Earth. The famed Loch Ness monster is the most famous plesiosaur, but how such a large creature manages to go undetected remains a mystery.

### Plesiosaur

**Archetype:** *Dinosaur*      **Motivation:** *Survival*  
**Style:** 0      **Health:** 16

#### Primary Attributes

**Body:** 8      **Charisma:** 0  
**Dexterity:** 4      **Intelligence:** 0  
**Strength:** 8      **Willpower:** 4

#### Secondary Attributes

**Size:** 4      **Initiative:** 4  
**Move:** 12 (6)\*      **Defense:** 8  
**Perception:** 6      **Stun:** 8



# Chapter Nine

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	8	2	12	(6)
Stealth	4	4	4**	(2)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

## Talents

Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

## Resources

None

## Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	4 L	-4	12 L	(6) L

\* Plesiosaurs use their full Move rating for swimming, and half their Move rating when on land

\*\* Plesiosaurs suffer a -4 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

## Pterosaur

The first vertebrates to evolve flight were the pterosaurs. Today, enormous specimens of this breed display absolute dominance of the Hollow Earth skies. Their leathery wings stretch across massive wingspans up to 30 feet, while their long beaks sport toothy jaws ideal for snatching up prey and swallowing it before it has a chance to struggle.

Pterosaurs are carnivores, and usually prey on creatures up to the size of a human being, which they can carry aloft to a secluded spot to tear apart in peace. They have no aversion to attacking humans, and may do so with great malice if their nests have been recently molested by natives. Pterosaurs do not hunt in flocks, but they do lay their eggs communally, and defend them as a group. Some clever natives make a living at infiltrating such nesting colonies in search of eggs. Pterosaur eggs are considered a great delicacy among most tribesmen.

When aloft, a pterosaur can spot even tiny movements on the ground below, and is extremely accurate when diving on its prey, whether it be a scurrying mammal or a wriggling fish near the surface of a lake. A pterosaur can fly at speeds up to 20 miles per hour for short periods, even while carrying prey, and are amaz-

ingly silent. Those unfortunate characters who don't look up may fail to notice the creature until it is upon them.

## Pterosaur

Archetype: Dinosaur

Motivation: Survival

Style: 0

Health: 12

## Primary Attributes

Body: 6	Charisma: 0
Dexterity: 4	Intelligence: 0
Strength: 6	Willpower: 4

## Secondary Attributes

Size: 2	Initiative: 4
Move: 10 (5)*	Defense: 8
Perception: 4 (8)**	Stun: 6

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	6	4	10	(5)
Stealth	4	2	4***	(2)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

## Talents

\*\* Keen Sense (+4 bonus on sight-based Perception rolls)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

## Resources

None

## Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	2 L	-2	10 L	(5) L
Claw	4 L	-2	12 L	(6) L

\* Pterosaurs use their full Move rating for flying, and half their move rating when on the ground

\*\*\* Pterosaurs suffer a -2 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

## Stegosaurus

Millions of years ago the stegosaur evolved with a brain the size of a walnut, but today's specimens in the Hollow Earth have brains the size of...a walnut. The herbivorous stegosaur doesn't have a lot going for it in terms of intelligence, but it manages to persevere with stubbornness and guts. Most recognizable for the plates along its back, the stegosaur also sports four large spikes at the tip of its tail, useful for deterring predators.

Stegosaurs average about 30 feet long and about 4 tons in weight, making them manageable work animals in the same way that elephants are utilized by some surface-world native populations. Though the stegosaur is not by any means easy to train, skilled handlers can use them to great effect. Some natives use special harnesses that let a handler stand in a stirrup-like loop on the animal's side while holding on to a handle with one hand, leaving the other free to manipulate the beast with signal blows from a stick.



## Stegosaurus

Archetype: *Dinosaur*

Style: 0

Motivation: *Survival*

Health: 12

### Primary Attributes

Body: 6

Charisma: 0

Dexterity: 2

Intelligence: 0

Strength: 6

Willpower: 4

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 2

Initiative: 2

Move: 8 (16)\*

Defense: 6 (8)\*\*

Perception: 6

Stun: 6

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	6	4	10	(5)
Stealth	2	2	2***	(1)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

### Talents

Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	2 L	-2	10 L	(5) L
Tail	4 L	-2	12 L	(6) L

\* Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

\*\* Stegosaurus gain a +2 Defense bonus from their back plates against attacks from above or behind. Attacks from the front, sides, or underbelly ignore this bonus.

\*\*\* Stegosaurus suffer a -2 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

## Triceratops

Among the most distinctive of dinosaurs, the triceratops has one long horn growing vertically from its snout and two others projecting from above the eyes on each side of the skull. In spite of its fearsome appearance, the triceratops is a grazing animal whose diet consists of plains grasses. The creatures live in mid-size to large herds, much like bison in the American plains. Its jaw is almost beak-like, a characteristic which allows it to tear apart tough vegetation and furrow in the ground for shrubs and roots.

The triceratops is one of the primary food sources for the better-equipped native tribes, but it can be dangerous prey for the foolish. The creature normally has little aggressive instinct, but the beast becomes as dangerous as any carnivore when protecting its young. Its horns are designed for charging durable predators like the tyrannosaur, which makes them more than capable of goring a human to death in a quick stroke. Triceratops are over 30 feet long and weigh approximately 6 tons.

## Triceratops

Archetype: *Dinosaur*

Style: 0

Motivation: *Survival*

Health: 12

### Primary Attributes

Body: 6

Charisma: 0

Dexterity: 2

Intelligence: 0

Strength: 6

Willpower: 4

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 2

Initiative: 2

Move: 8 (16)\*

Defense: 6 (8)\*\*

Perception: 6

Stun: 6

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	6	4	10	(5)
Stealth	2	2	2***	(1)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

### Talents

Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Horns	4 L	-2	12 L	(6) L
Trample	4 N	-2	12 N	(6) N
Bite	2 L	-2	10 L	(5) L

\* Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

\*\* Triceratops gain a +2 Defense bonus from their head plate. Attacks from the side, rear, or underbelly ignore this bonus.

\*\*\* Triceratops suffer a -2 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

## Tyrannosaurus Rex

By far the most recognizable of all dinosaurs, the Tyrannosaurus Rex—king of the tyrant lizards—is argu-



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ably the most feared predator in the Hollow Earth. Swift and agile, the huge size of this ferocious killer belies its effectiveness as the top predator in the lost world. Filled with six-inch long dagger-like teeth, the Tyrannosaurus Rex's mouth is capable of tearing hundreds of pounds of meat from its prey in one bite.

The Tyrannosaurus Rex weighs over 10 tons and towers nearly 25 feet in height; it has changed little in the past 65 million years.

Generally a solitary creature that defends its territory fiercely, Tyrannosaurus Rex hunts the herbivores of the Hollow Earth, even taking down smaller specimens of Brachiosaurus. T. Rex's guard their kills jealously, and will fight off other predators with great determination.

The natives of the Hollow Earth have learned to both fear and respect the "Tyrant Lizard." It is not unusual for native hunting parties to (carefully) follow a Tyrannosaur, in order to take pieces of the carnivore's freshly killed prey back for the tribe. As thorough as a Tyrannosaur may be, it leaves behind more than enough meat to feed a tribe of humans. However, they must sometimes compete with other scavengers for this prize.

Many tribes use the discarded teeth of the Tyrannosaurus Rex to make blades for daggers or spears, and on the rare occasion when one is killed, natives will scavenge the hide to make very durable armor or shields. Some village shrines display a Tyrannosaurus Rex skull as a symbol of both life and death.

## Tyrannosaurus Rex

Archetype: Dinosaur

Motivation: Survival

Style: 0

Health: 16

### Primary Attributes

Body: 8

Charisma: 0

Dexterity: 4

Intelligence: 0

Strength: 8

Willpower: 4

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 4

Initiative: 4

Move: 12

Defense: 8

Perception: 6

Stun: 8

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	8	4	14	(7)
Stealth	4	2	2*	(1)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

### Talents

Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

## Resources

None

### Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	4 L	-4	14 L	(7) L
Claw	2 L	-4	12 L	(6) L
Stomp	4 N	-4	14 N	(7) N

\* Tyrannosaurs suffer a -4 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

## Velociraptor

The velociraptor evolved in the late Cretaceous period, not long before the extinction of dinosaurs on the surface. It

represents the most refined and developed intelligence of any dinosaur. Smaller than many predators, more agile, and with keener senses, the velociraptor is among the most deadly predators to the human natives of the Hollow Earth—because it considers them to be a primary part of its diet. It could be that the velociraptor is so intelligent precisely because it chooses to hunt human beings.

Designed with powerful legs, the velociraptor can run at speeds over 30 miles per hour for short periods. The tail is held straight out behind the body, allowing it to turn on a dime and run down the most maneuverable prey. Its jaws can crush bone, and its razor-like teeth can slice through the toughest hide and flesh. The creature's front legs are capped with sharpened hook-like talons perfect for seizing its victim.

This dinosaur's most potent weapon is located in its skull. Operating in packs, velociraptors exhibit a highly developed communication system and an uncanny ability to learn and adapt. They display an almost telepathic ability to coordinate their attacks. Velociraptors may be the predecessors of rumored intelligent saurian humanoids in the Hollow Earth.

## Velociraptor

Archetype: Dinosaur

Motivation: Survival

Style: 0

Health: 6

### Primary Attributes

Body: 3

Charisma: 0

Dexterity: 5

Intelligence: 1

Strength: 3

Willpower: 3

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 6

Move: 8 (16)\*

Defense: 8

Perception: 6

Stun: 3



Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	3	5	8	(4)
Stealth	5	1	6	(3)
Survival	1	5	6	(3)

## Talents

Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)

\* Run (Double Move rating when running)

## Resources

None

## Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	0 L	0	8 L	(4) L
Claw	2 L	0	10 L	(5) L

# CARNIVORES

## Cave Bear

Believed to be extinct for over 10 thousand years, the cave bear is alive and thriving in the Hollow Earth. Cave bears resemble modern brown bears except they are much larger, standing over 12 feet tall and weighing nearly 1,500 pounds. Unlike their modern counterparts, who are solitary creatures, cave bears live in packs in large caves in high altitudes. They are omnivores, eating berries, grass, honey and, on occasion, smaller animals. They will only attack if provoked or intruded upon, or if the pack or cubs are threatened. When they do attack, it is swift and terrible. Cave bear claws can tear tree bark away from the trunk in one swipe and their incisors are well adapted for shredding flesh.

Cave bears enter a true state of hibernation during the winter, with different males taking turns guarding the cave entrance. Prior to hibernation, cave bears hunt and eat large amounts of food to store fat that allows them to survive their long sleep.

Cave bears are worshipped by a few of the tribes of natives that live at the foothills of the mountains where they are found. Shrines

and altars often display images or carvings of the giant ursine.



## Cave Bear

Archetype: Animal

Motivation: Survival

Style: 0

Health: 10

## Primary Attributes

Body: 5	Charisma: 0
Dexterity: 4	Intelligence: 0
Strength: 5	Willpower: 4

## Secondary Attributes

Size: 1	Initiative: 4
Move: 9 (18)*	Defense: 8
Perception: 6	Stun: 5

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	5	5	10	(5)
Stealth	4	1	4**	(2)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

## Talents

Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

## Resources

None

## Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	1 L	-1	10 L	(5) L
Claw	3 L	-1	12 L	(6) L

\* Creatures with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

\*\* Cave bears suffer a -1 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

## Dinichthys

The dinichthys, also known as dunkleosteus, is an armored fish-like species that reaches lengths of over 35 feet. Over one-third of its body length is made up of its armored head, with a hinged jaw that actually raised the upper jaw in relation to the lower. Dinichthys hunts in schools and are highly effective at capturing prey. Schooling together lets the dinichthys take on creatures larger than itself. Unlike many other predators, the dinichthys' "teeth" are not teeth at all but are composed of bone.

## Dinichthys

Archetype: Animal

Motivation: Survival

Style: 0

Health: 16

## Primary Attributes

Body: 8	Charisma: 0
Dexterity: 4	Intelligence: 0
Strength: 8	Willpower: 4

## Secondary Attributes

Size: 4	Initiative: 4
Move: 24 (0)*	Defense: 8 (10)**
Perception: 6	Stun: 8



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Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	8	2	12	(6)
Stealth	4	4	4***	(2)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

## Talents

Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

## Resources

None

## Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	4 L	-4	12 L	(6) L

\* Dinichthys double their Move rating when swimming, but cannot move outside of the water

\*\* Dinichthys have an armored skull that provides a +2 Defense bonus. Attacks from the sides, rear, or below ignore this bonus

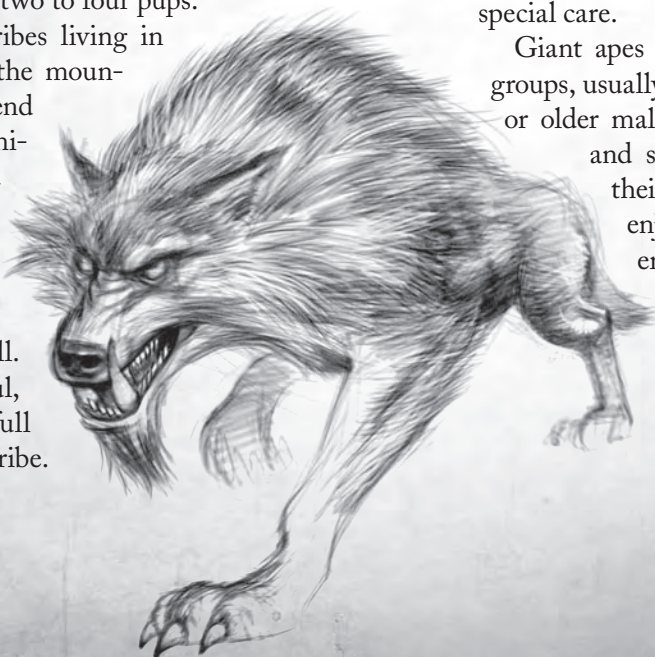
\*\*\* Dinichthys suffer a -4 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

## Dire Wolves

The dire wolves of the Hollow Earth are considerably larger and more vicious than their modern descendants, but otherwise they have remained unchanged for the past 10,000 years. They strongly resemble grey wolves but have comparatively larger skulls and thinner legs. Their small brain size has changed little since prehistory.

Dire wolves live in the mid- to high-elevations of the mountains in the Hollow Earth. They tend to be solitary creatures, but will temporarily band together to hunt large prey. Afterward, however, the relationship breaks down and the pack fights for the largest section of meat. The only other time the dire wolf will seek out others of its kind is to mate. A male hunts for a mate and upon finding a female, begins the courtship, which resembles a whirlwind of teeth and fur. Afterward, the male returns to his territory, and leaves the female to raise the litter of two to four pups.

The native tribes living in the foothills of the mountains will often send a young warrior initiate to track and kill a dire wolf and bring back its pelt and head as confirmation of his kill. If he is successful, he is made a full warrior of the tribe. If he fails...



## Dire Wolf

Archetype: Animal

Motivation: Survival

Style: 0

Health: 7

## Primary Attributes

Body: 3

Charisma: 0

Dexterity: 5

Intelligence: 0

Strength: 3

Willpower: 4

## Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 5

Move: 8 (16)\*

Defense: 8

Perception: 4 (8)\*\*

Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	3	5	8	(4)
Stealth	5	1	6	(3)
Survival	0	4	4	(2)

## Talents

\*\* Keen Sense (+4 bonus on smell-based Perception rolls)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

## Resources

None

## Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	2 L	0	10 L	(5) L

\* Creatures with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

## Giant Ape

The Hollow Earth is home to giant gorillas, well over 25 feet tall and weighing over 10 tons. They are incredibly powerful creatures capable of holding their own against even the fiercest predators. Apes are omnivorous, capable of hunting and eating virtually anything smaller than themselves. However, each individual seems to have his own tastes. While this may include humans, these giant primates are capable of bonding with specific individuals, whom they will protect and treat with special care.

Giant apes are social creatures that live in family groups, usually led by an alpha male. Adolescent males or older males that have been deposed by younger and stronger rivals may be found living on their own, however. In general, giant apes enjoy heights and are swift, agile climbers. When in a new area, they will often scale the highest structure to look around, or to get away from danger when threatened. Not much frightens them, however, and they will ferociously defend themselves if provoked.



## Giant Ape

Archetype: Animal

Motivation: Survival

Style: 0

Health: 15

### Primary Attributes

Body: 8

Charisma: 0

Dexterity: 4

Intelligence: 1

Strength: 8

Willpower: 3

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 4

Initiative: 5

Move: 12 (24)\*

Defense: 8

Perception: 6

Stun: 8

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
--------	------	--------	--------	-----------

Brawl	8	4	14	(7)
-------	---	---	----	-----

Stealth	4	2	2**	(1)
---------	---	---	-----	-----

Survival	1	5	6	(3)
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### Talents

Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)

Climb (Double Move rating when climbing)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
---------	--------	------	--------	-----------

Bite	2 L	-4	12 L	(6) L
------	-----	----	------	-------

Punch	4 N	-4	14 N	(7) N
-------	-----	----	------	-------

Stomp	4 N	-4	14 N	(7) N
-------	-----	----	------	-------

\* Giant apes double their Move rating when climbing

\*\* Giant apes suffer a -4 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

## Giant Spider

Large carnivorous arachnids stalk the forests, swamps, and caverns of the Hollow Earth, searching for unsuspecting prey. They measure 10 feet long (not including legs) and weigh over 500 pounds, but can move with surprising speed and agility. They hunt humans and other small creatures, incapacitating them with fast-acting paralytic venom and dragging them off for later consumption. The victim is cocooned and left in the spider's lair while it goes out hunting. If the prey is not dead when the spider returns, it will bite the victim again, pumping him with enough venom to stop his heart.



Giant spiders generally prefer to strike from ambush, either dropping on their prey from above or attacking from a camouflaged hole in the ground. Their eight powerful legs can propel them up into trees, across cavern ceilings, or down into burrows in search of food. As a result, giant spiders may strike when their prey least expects it.

## Giant Spider

Archetype: Insect

Motivation: Survival

Style: 0

Health: 8

### Primary Attributes

Body: 3

Charisma: 0

Dexterity: 4

Intelligence: 0

Strength: 4

Willpower: 4

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 1

Initiative: 4

Move: 8 (16)\*

Defense: 6 (8)\*\*

Perception: 6

Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
--------	------	--------	--------	-----------

Brawl	4	4	8	(4)
-------	---	---	---	-----

Stealth	4	3	6***	(3)
---------	---	---	------	-----

Survival	0	4	6	(3)
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### Talents

Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
---------	--------	------	--------	-----------

Bite	1 L	-1	8 L	(4) L
------	-----	----	-----	-------

Venom	5 N	n/a	Special	
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\* Creatures with four or more legs double their Move rating when running. Giant spiders may climb up sheer surfaces and even across ceilings at their normal climbing rate.

\*\* Giant spiders have a tough shell that provides a +2 Defense bonus to attacks from the front, above, or sides. Attacks from the rear or underbelly ignore this bonus.

\*\*\* Giant spiders suffer a -1 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

**Venom:** After a successful attack, Giant spiders inject venom into their victim. A poisoned character makes a Body roll against a Toxin rating of 4. If the character fails this roll, they take four points of nonlethal damage. Giant spiders may use their venom up to five times per day.

## Hyaenodon

Resembling a large dog, hyaenodons are over 10 feet long, weighing more than 1,000 pounds—larger than a modern horse. Their powerful, elongated jaws are highly efficient for biting and crushing prey. Their exceptional sense of smell lets them track prey for miles. Prehistoric



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ancestors of the hyaenodon had massive skulls but small brains. Their descendants living in the Hollow Earth have large skulls, but their brain has grown to make them highly intelligent predators. While there is no doubt that hyaenodons are predators, they also are efficient scavengers, not being fussy about what they eat.

Hyaenodons live and hunt in packs, often howling or making a chattering sound similar to modern hyenas. Litters produce between six and eight pups that reach maturity in three years, although they become adept hunters/scavengers by the end of their first year. A pack of hyaenodons takes down prey by circling and attacking one at a time, wearing the target down before they all move in for the kill.

Rumors drift through the Hollow Earth that a savage tribe has managed to tame hyaenodons and use them for guardians or for hunting. However, no one has actually seen this with their own eyes. At least, no one still alive.

## Hyaenodon

**Archetype:** Animal **Motivation:** Survival  
**Style:** 0 **Health:** 9

### Primary Attributes

**Body:** 5 **Charisma:** 0  
**Dexterity:** 4 **Intelligence:** 1  
**Strength:** 5 **Willpower:** 3

### Secondary Attributes

**Size:** 1 **Initiative:** 5  
**Move:** 9 (18)\* **Defense:** 8  
**Perception:** 4 (8)\*\* **Stun:** 5

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	5	5	10	(5)
Stealth	4	1	4***	(2)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

### Talents

\* Keen Sense (+4 bonus on smell-based Perception rolls)  
Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	3 L	-1	12 L	(6) L

\*\* Creatures with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

\*\*\* Hyaenodons suffer a -1 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

## Kraken

Once thought to be creatures of legend, krakens are colossal-sized squids, capable of sinking ships and submarines. At over 100 feet long and weighing approximately 40 tons, they are one of the most dangerous creatures in the Hollow Earth, with the possible excep-

tion of the leviathan and megalodon. Krakens typically prey on other large sea creatures such as plesiosaurs and dinichthys, but have also been known to capsize and devour ships full of people. Their favored hunting method is to grapple a creature and drag it down into the depths of the sea, where lack of oxygen or intense pressure kill it, leaving the giant squid free to consume its prize at its leisure.

## Kraken

**Archetype:** Animal **Motivation:** Survival  
**Style:** 0 **Health:** 22

### Primary Attributes

**Body:** 10 **Charisma:** 0  
**Dexterity:** 4 **Intelligence:** 0  
**Strength:** 12 **Willpower:** 4

### Secondary Attributes

**Size:** 8 **Initiative:** 4  
**Move:** 32 (0)\* **Defense:** 6 (8)\*\*\*  
**Perception:** 4 (8)\*\* **Stun:** 10

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	12	2	16	(8)
Stealth	4	4	0****	(0)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

### Talents

\*\* Keen Sense (+4 bonus on sight-based Perception rolls)  
Dual Wield 1 (Ignore off-hand penalty)  
Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)  
Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	4 L	-8	12 L	(6) L
Tentacle	8 N	-8	16 N	(8) N

\* Krakens double their Move rating when swimming but cannot move outside of the water

\*\*\* Krakens have a thick hide that provides a +2 Defense bonus

\*\*\*\* Krakens suffer a -8 Size penalty on Stealth rolls and automatically fail unless underwater or camouflaged

## Megalodon

One of the most dangerous creatures in the Hollow Earth is the megalodon, an enormous shark over 100 feet long and weighing 50 tons. It has jaws over seven feet wide and eight feet high, filled with three or four rows of seven-inch-long teeth. Even though it has all those teeth, a megalodon swallows its food all in one gulp. Their main food source is whale, although they will not turn away from other chances to feed. Wounded plesiosaurs or other large sea denizens are also fair game to the giant shark. It will, however, avoid challenging the gigantic kraken (see above).

Megalodons are always found alone. They defend



their territory viciously and will not back down from any challenge, be it another megalodon or an adventurous soul's boat or raft.

Little else is known about the megalodon except that there are very few people who have encountered the giant shark and lived to tell about it.

## Megalodon

**Archetype:** Animal **Motivation:** Survival  
**Style:** 0 **Health:** 24

### Primary Attributes

**Body:** 12 **Charisma:** 0  
**Dexterity:** 2 **Intelligence:** 0  
**Strength:** 12 **Willpower:** 4

### Secondary Attributes

**Size:** 8 **Initiative:** 2  
**Move:** 28 (0)\* **Defense:** 6 (8)\*\*\*  
**Perception:** 4 (8)\*\* **Stun:** 12

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	12	2	16	(8)
Stealth	2	4	0****	(0)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

### Talents

\*\* Keen Sense (+4 bonus on smell-based Perception rolls)  
Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)  
Skill Aptitude (+2 Stealth rating)  
Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	8 L	-8	16 L	(8) L

\*Megalodons double their Move rating when swimming, but cannot move outside of the water

\*\*\*Megalodons have a thick hide that provides a +2 Defense bonus

\*\*\*\*Megalodons suffer a -8 Size penalty on Stealth rolls and automatically fail unless underwater or otherwise camouflaged

## Roc

The roc (or rukh) was only known in myth and in tales from *One Thousand and One Nights* and *Sinbad the Sailor*, although there are recorded sightings as early as the eighth century and as late as the sixteenth century in the Middle East. As the story goes, the roc is a gigantic white bird capable of grasping, lifting and eating an elephant. Here in the Hollow Earth, the story is reality.

With a wingspan dwarfing a sailing ship, the roc resides on the top of some of the highest peaks in the Hollow Earth, preying on the creatures residing in the valleys and plains below. While larger creatures, such as woolly mammoths or protoceratops, are its preferred meal, it has been known to dine on human sized morsels. Once secured, the roc flies its prey to its gigantic

nest to feed its young or itself.

Rocs are always found solitary except to mate, which they do for life. Typically, rocs lay only one egg but can sometimes lay two. The egg hatches within four weeks of being laid and the ravenously hungry chick is immediately capable of feeding on the prey its parent brings.

The feathers of the roc are highly prized by many native tribes; they are used for anything from fans for the tribal chief to badges of courage for the warrior brave enough to climb to the roc's nest.

## Roc

**Archetype:** Animal **Motivation:** Survival  
**Style:** 0 **Health:** 16

### Primary Attributes

**Body:** 8 **Charisma:** 0  
**Dexterity:** 4 **Intelligence:** 0  
**Strength:** 8 **Willpower:** 4

### Secondary Attributes

**Size:** 4 **Initiative:** 4  
**Move:** 12 (6)\* **Defense:** 8  
**Perception:** 4 (8)\*\* **Stun:** 8

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	8	4	12	(6)
Stealth	4	2	4***	(2)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

### Talents

\*\* Keen Sense (+4 bonus on sight-based Perception rolls)  
Skill Aptitude (+2 Stealth rating)  
Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	4 L	-4	12 L	(6) L
Claw	6 L	-4	14 L	(7) L

\* Rocs use their full Move rating for flying and half their move rating when on the ground

\*\*\* Rocs suffer a -4 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

## Saber-Toothed Cats (Smilodon)

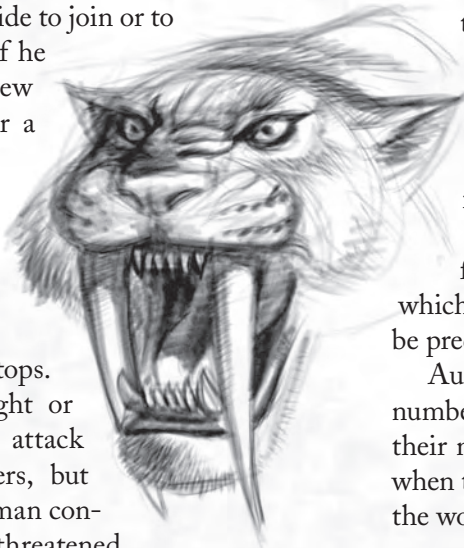
Often referred to as saber-toothed tigers (even though they were not tigers), smilodons roamed Earth from 11 million years ago up until the most well-known species (the *Smilodon fatalis*) died off 10 thousand years ago. They now survive only in the Hollow Earth. Smilodons in the Hollow Earth have fangs over twelve inches long that can be used to grab and hold prey, slash a victim's throat or abdomen, or even stab their quarry. Weighing around 600 pounds, they are over 5 feet in length, with very short tails and powerful legs.



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Smilodons are social animals, living in “prides” of up to 20 cats, usually ruled by a dominant male. The chief male must defend his dominance every year just prior to mating season. Normally, the oldest male will challenge the dominant male by initiating a bloody conflict from which only one usually emerges alive. If the defeated cat lives, it wanders across the plains searching for another pride to join or to live his life out alone. If he does manage to find a new pride, he must fight for a place.

The saber-toothed cats hunt in packs, often attacking and bringing down very large prey, such as albertosaurus or triceratops. During times of drought or famine, smilodons will attack villages or lone travelers, but will otherwise avoid human contact unless provoked or threatened.



## Saber-Toothed Cat

Archetype: <i>Animal</i>		Motivation: <i>Survival</i>		
Style: 0		Health: 7		
Primary Attributes				
Body: 3		Charisma: 0		
Dexterity: 5		Intelligence: 0		
Strength: 3		Willpower: 4		
Secondary Attributes				
Size: 0		Initiative: 5		
Move: 8 (16)*		Defense: 8		
Perception: 6		Stun: 3		
Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	3	5	8	(4)
Stealth	5	1	6**	(3)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)
Talents				
Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)				
Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)				
Resources				
None				
Flaw				
Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)				
Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	2 L	0	10 L	(5) L
Claw	0 L	0	8 L	(4) L

\* Creatures with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

\*\* Saber-toothed cats suffer a -1 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

# HERBIVORES

## Aurochs

The aurochs is a huge, black, ox-like creature with spreading, forward-curving horns. Standing six feet tall at the shoulders, this “proto-ox” is a recent arrival to the Hollow Earth, arriving sometime during the fifteenth century. Most aurochs roam wild over the plains and forests of the lowlands, but some have been domesticated by native tribes to help with farming. Some natives hunt the aurochs for food, as do the many predators in the Hollow Earth, but the aurochs are not easy targets. Their front horns are well adapted to ramming enemies, which is usually more than enough to dissuade a would-be predator.

Aurochs travel in vast herds, counting on safety in numbers. One might mistake the ground shaking under their movement as the approach of a brontosaurus, but when that many aurochs are on the move, it's no wonder the world rocks.

## Aurochs

Archetype: <i>Animal</i>		Motivation: <i>Survival</i>		
Style: 0		Health: 9		
Primary Attributes				
Body: 5		Charisma: 0		
Dexterity: 2		Intelligence: 0		
Strength: 5		Willpower: 3		
Secondary Attributes				
Size: 1		Initiative: 2		
Move: 7 (14)*		Defense: 6		
Perception: 5		Stun: 5		
Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	4	4	8	(4)
Stealth	2	3	4**	(2)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)
Talents				
Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)				
Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)				
Resources				
None				
Flaw				
Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)				
Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Horns	3 L	-1	10 N	(5) N
Trample	3 N	-1	10 N	(5) N

\* Creatures with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

\*\* Aurochs suffer a -1 Size penalty on Stealth rolls





## Equus

The equus may seem familiar to explorers of the Hollow Earth, as it is the ancestor of the modern horse. The equus of the Hollow Earth, however, is much larger than the equus of the past. It is nearly the size of a modern horse and it has a great deal more muscle mass than those that first came to the Hollow Earth. The equus prefers to graze on the tall grasses alongside riverbeds, but can often be found in large herds on the plains and even in the mountains and valleys. They possess incredible speed and agility, and are very difficult to capture.

Many tribes have domesticated the equus for use in the hunt and to go from one place to another. A domesticated equus is a very valuable prize and there are those who will kill for one.

## Equus

Archetype: Animal Motivation: Survival  
Style: 0 Health: 7

### Primary Attributes

Body: 4 Charisma: 0  
Dexterity: 5 Intelligence: 0  
Strength: 4 Willpower: 2

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 1 Initiative: 5  
Move: 9 (18)\* Defense: 8  
Perception: 4 Stun: 4

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	4	4	8	(4)
Stealth	5	2	6**	(3)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

### Talents

Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)  
Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Kick	1 N	-1	8 N	(4) N

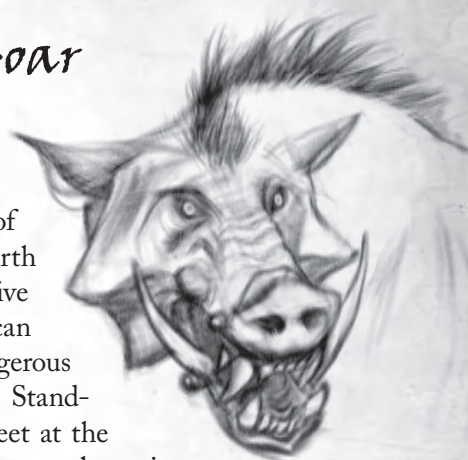
\* Creatures with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

\*\* Equus suffer a -1 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

## Giant Boar

Like its modern descendant, the giant boar of the Hollow Earth is an aggressive creature that can become dangerous very quickly. Standing nearly five feet at the shoulder, the nocturnal porcine possesses large, sharp tusks that can gore larger enemies. Its skin, bristling with stiff hair, is incredibly thick, protecting the boar from minor lacerations. Despite its size, the giant boar is quick and agile, making it very dangerous prey indeed.

In spite of the danger, the giant boar is highly sought by the native tribes of the plains for its meat and its hide. Attempts at domestication, however, have not been successful.



## Giant Boar

Archetype: Animal Motivation: Survival  
Style: 0 Health: 8

### Primary Attributes

Body: 4 Charisma: 0  
Dexterity: 4 Intelligence: 0  
Strength: 3 Willpower: 4

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 Initiative: 4  
Move: 7 (14)\* Defense: 8  
Perception: 6 Stun: 4

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	4	4	8	(4)
Stealth	4	2	6	(2)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

### Talents

Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)  
Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Tusks	2 L	0	10 L	(5) L

\* Creatures with four or more legs double their Move rating when running



## Giant Sloth

One of the stranger denizens of the Hollow Earth is the giant sloth. This large mammal weighs over 5 tons and, standing on its hind legs, can tower over 20 feet. Although possessed of very sharp claws, the giant ground sloth only uses them to dig up roots or to strip bark and leaves from trees. The ground sloth is nocturnal and sleeps through the day in burrows.

The local native tribes don't generally bother the giant sloth. They do, however, make use of abandoned burrows left behind by the towering herbivore. Hunters pull leaves and branches over themselves to hide in the burrow, then lie in wait for prey. When the prey moves into sight, the hunter makes a surprise attack. Hunters will also hide in the burrows if they find themselves the targets of another predator.

### Giant Sloth

Archetype: <i>Animal</i>		Motivation: <i>Survival</i>		
Style: 0		Health: 12		
Primary Attributes				
Body: 6		Charisma: 0		
Dexterity: 4		Intelligence: 0		
Strength: 4		Willpower: 4		
Secondary Attributes				
Size: 2		Initiative: 4		
Move: 8 (16)*		Defense: 8		
Perception: 4		Stun: 6		
Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	4	2	6	(3)
Stealth	4	4	6**	(3)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)
Talents				
Blind Fight 1 (Ignore up to -2 penalty due to poor visibility)				
Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)				
Tunnel (Double Move rating when tunneling)				
Resources				
None				
Flaw				
Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)				
Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	2 L	-2	6 L	(3) L
Claws	4 L	-2	8 L	(4) L

\* Burrowing animals dig up to their Move rating in feet per hour. Giant sloths double their move rating when digging

\*\* Giant sloths suffer a -2 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

## Giant Unicorn

This animal is not the mythical horse of legend, but is instead a giant rhinoceros similar to the woolly rhinoceros. The giant unicorn stands over 6 feet tall and is more than 20 feet long, weighing in excess of 6 tons. Like other rhinos, it sports a large horn on its forehead:

a horn over 6 feet long. Unlike other rhinos, however, its legs are longer, allowing the giant unicorn to gallop quickly across the plains of the Hollow Earth.

The giant unicorn is a docile creature and easily frightened. A large herd can be easily spooked by a loud sound, resulting in a stampede of dozens of 6-ton creatures. It is possible that some natives will have domesticated the giant unicorn for riding or farming.

### Giant Unicorn

Archetype: <i>Animal</i>		Motivation: <i>Survival</i>		
Style: 0		Health: 10		
Primary Attributes				
Body: 6		Charisma: 0		
Dexterity: 4		Intelligence: 0		
Strength: 6		Willpower: 2		
Secondary Attributes				
Size: 2		Initiative: 4		
Move: 10 (20)*		Defense: 8		
Perception: 4		Stun: 6		
Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	6	4	10	(5)
Stealth	4	2	4**	(2)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)
Talents				
Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)				
Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)				
Resources				
None				
Flaw				
Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)				
Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Horn	4 L	-2	12 L	(6) L
Trample	4 N	-2	12 N	(6) N

\* Creatures with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

\*\* Giant Unicorns suffer a -2 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

## Glyptodon

A gigantic relative of the armadillo, the glyptodon is roughly the size of a small automobile and weighs one to two tons. A large and heavy animal, it moves extremely slowly as it grazes on the plants found along rivers and lake banks. Glyptodons are protected by a large flattened round shell made up hundreds of bony plates and a bony cap on their skull, while their sheer bulk means predators will have a difficult time trying to turn the glyptodon over to reach its unprotected belly.

Glyptodons are not social animals, but neither are they aggressive to other glyptodons they may encounter—even during mating season. They treat the world around them with complete indifference, unless they're under attack.

Some native tribes will hunt the glyptodon and use the shells as shelter during inclement weather.



## Glyptodon

Archetype: Animal

Motivation: Survival

Style: 0

Health: 16

### Primary Attributes

Body: 8

Charisma: 0

Dexterity: 2

Intelligence: 0

Strength: 4

Willpower: 4

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 2

Initiative: 2

Move: 6 (12)\*

Defense: 8 (10)\*\*

Perception: 4

Stun: 8

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	4	2	6	(3)
Stealth	2	4	4***	(2)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

### Talents

Robust (+2 Health rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	2 L	-2	6 L	(3) L

\* Creatures with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

\*\* Glyptodons have a tough shell that provides a +2 Defense bonus. Attacks from underneath ignore this bonus

\*\*\* Glyptodons suffer a -2 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

## Irish Elk (Giant Deer)

Previously known only from skeletons found in Irish bogs, the Irish Elk is a huge creature (seven feet at the shoulders) sporting the largest known antlers of any deer-like animal. Reaching nearly fifteen feet from tip to tip, the Irish elk's antlers are used in combat with other males for access to the females. The large size of the antlers requires a source of plants high in calcium and phosphate compounds. If drought or other ecological disaster makes these plants scarce, the males may start to suffer from a form of osteoporosis as the growth of the antlers depletes these compounds from the elk's bones.

The Irish elk is hunted by many denizens of the Hollow Earth, from rocs, tyrannosaurs and hyaenodons, to the many tribes that inhabit the areas near forests and plains—home to the giant deer. A prosper-



ous and successful village will often be decorated with the antlers of this magnificent beast, and many have built shrines to the giant deer to thank its spirit for sustaining the people of the village.

## Irish Elk

Archetype: Animal

Motivation: Survival

Style: 0

Health: 9

### Primary Attributes

Body: 4

Charisma: 0

Dexterity: 5

Intelligence: 0

Strength: 3

Willpower: 3

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 1

Initiative: 5

Move: 8 (16)\*

Defense: 8

Perception: 5

Stun: 4

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	3	5	8	(3+)
Stealth	5	2	6**	(3)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

### Talents

Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Antlers	3 L	-1	10 L	(5) L
Kick	1 N	-1	8 N	(4) N

\* Creatures with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

\*\* Irish Elk suffer a -1 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

## Leviathan

Leviathans are enormous whales, measuring nearly 100 feet long and weighing over 100 tons, making them the largest creatures on Earth. They are normally docile creatures, and have few predators, but will occasionally have to defend their young from the predation of megadolons and krakens.

Leviathans are unusually intelligent, and seem to be able to communicate across vast distances through whale song. They are also very social creatures normally found in family groups, though rogue males may occasionally be encountered. These solitary leviathans are often very aggressive and may display unique characteristics, such as carnivorous tendencies or albino skin coloration.



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## Leviathan

Archetype: Animal  
Style: 0

Motivation: Survival  
Health: 25

### Primary Attributes

Body: 12 Charisma: 0  
Dexterity: 2 Intelligence: 1  
Strength: 12 Willpower: 3

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 8 Initiative: 3  
Move: 28 (0)\* Defense: 6 (8)\*\*\*  
Perception: 4 (8)\*\* Stun: 12

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	12	2	16	(8)
Stealth	2	4	0****	(0)
Survival	1	5	6	(3)

### Talents

\*\* Keen Sense (+4 bonus on hearing-based Perception rolls)  
Robust (+2 Health ratings)  
Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)  
Skill Aptitude (+2 Stealth rating)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	4 L	-8	12 L	(6) L
Tail	8 N	-8	16 N	(8) N

\* Leviathans double their Move rating when swimming but cannot move outside of the water

\*\*\* Leviathans have a thick hide that provides a +2 Defense bonus

\*\*\*\* Leviathans suffer a -8 Size penalty on Stealth rolls and automatically fail unless underwater or otherwise camouflaged

## Woolly Mammoths

Giant and shaggy describes the woolly mammoth, which reaches a height of 13 feet at the shoulders and a weight of 8 tons. The elephantine mammoth's body is covered with thick, shaggy hair up to 20 inches long which, along with a layer of subcutaneous fat 3 inches thick, keeps the mammoth warm in the coldest of extremes. Their extremely long tusks, some up to 16 feet in length, are used mainly to shovel snow out of the way of the vegetation underneath. The tusks can also be used as a devastating weapon against predators, allowing the mammoth to smash or throw an attacker.

Woolly mammoths are only found in the cold, mountainous regions of the Hollow Earth where few predators bother them. Their main enemy is the dire wolf which, when working together, can take down

a small or ill mammoth.

The woolly mammoths are always found in small family groups, but will often gather together for migrations.

Many native tribes throughout the Hollow Earth prize the tusks of the mammoths. Tribes that can "harvest" the tusks can barter them for tremendous amounts of goods and supplies from other tribes. The tusks are used for everything from dagger handles to protective barrier doors.

## Woolly Mammoth

Archetype: Animal  
Style: 0

Motivation: Survival  
Health: 12

### Primary Attributes

Body: 6 Charisma: 0  
Dexterity: 2 Intelligence: 0  
Strength: 6 Willpower: 4

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 2 Initiative: 2  
Move: 8 (16)\* Defense: 6 (8)\*\*  
Perception: 6 Stun: 6

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	6	4	10	(5)
Stealth	2	2	2***	(1)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

### Talents

Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)  
Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Tusks	4 L	-2	12 L	(6) L
Trample	4 N	-2	12 N	(6) N

\* Creatures with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

\*\* Woolly Mammoths have a tough hide that provides a +2 Defense bonus

\*\*\* Woolly Mammoths suffer a -2 Size penalty on Stealth rolls





## Woolly Rhinoceros

This species of rhinoceros arrived in the Hollow Earth around the same time as the woolly mammoth. Like the woolly mammoth, this herbivore is covered in long hair over its stocky body to protect it from the cold. It also possessed two horns, one on its snout and another between its eyes. The larger, sharp horn on the snout is over three feet in length, which makes it very useful for defending against predators.

Despite its stocky appearance, the woolly rhinoceros is a fast running animal able to change direction very quickly. A very skittish animal, it will charge anything in its immediate area that it perceives as threatening.

### Woolly Rhinoceros

Archetype: <i>Animal</i>		Motivation: <i>Survival</i>		
Style: 0		Health: 8		
Primary Attributes				
Body: 5		Charisma: 0		
Dexterity: 2		Intelligence: 0		
Strength: 6		Willpower: 2		
Secondary Attributes				
Size: 1		Initiative: 2		
Move: 8 (16)*		Defense: 6 (8)**		
Perception: 4		Stun: 5		
Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	6	4	10	(5)
Stealth	2	3	4***	(2)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)
Talents				
Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)				
Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)				
Resources				
None				
Flaw				
Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)				
Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Horns	3 L	-1	12 L	(6) L
Trample	3 N	-1	12 N	(6) N

\* Creatures with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

\*\* Woolly Rhinoceros have a tough hide that provides a +2 Defense bonus

\*\*\* Woolly Rhinoceros suffer a -1 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

## PLANTS

### Blackbreath

Clinging to cliffs near the coast, this plant can be difficult to reach, but is much sought after by certain tribes that dive on giant oyster beds or engage in underwater spear fishing (line fishing is unknown to

the primitive tribes of the Hollow Earth). The blackbreath is a vine that sprouts narrow black leaves about six inches long and one-half inch wide.

The amazing property of the fibrous leaves becomes evident when they are folded up and chewed by divers. A man chewing continuously on a blackbreath leaf can hold his breath almost twice as long as he could otherwise. The mechanism by which the plant induces this ability is a complete mystery. It does not act as a stimulant or sedative, and has no other effect on stamina or endurance.

Although the leaf has no adverse effects with a single use, over a long period the pigment in the leaves will stain the teeth. Natives that chew blackbreath for fishing or diving have teeth that are pitch black, but otherwise amazingly healthy (the plant contains fluoride).

**Special:** Chewing blackbreath allows a character to double the amount of time he can hold his breath (see Drowning and Suffocation, p. 134).

### Death Spore

This oddly bulbous plant is actually a deadly species of fungus. It is normally found growing on corpses, but may also be found where there is no direct light or strong wind: under the cover of dense forest canopy, or in the shadow of cliffs or cave mouths. It needs moderately soft soil, and so does not grow in caves or on very rocky ground. As they grow, death spores swell with toxic spores until they are full to bursting at maturity. When the fungi are disturbed by the footsteps of a creature, the bulb bursts like a balloon, filling the air with deadly spores. When inhaled, the spores are toxic and can overwhelm most man-sized creatures.

If the victim succumbs to the toxic spores, the fungus takes root in the body and the cycle repeats itself. Any scavenger that comes to devour the corpse may become a victim itself.

**Special:** Death spores are sensitive to vibration within a five-foot radius. Sneaking past a death spore requires a Stealth roll (Difficulty 3). Each additional spore sensitive to the area the character is moving through (i.e., two or more spores with overlapping radii) increases the Difficulty by 1. If the character fails the roll, the spore (and any nearby spores) explodes, filling the air in a five-foot radius with a deadly cloud of toxic spores.

Creatures caught in the cloud must make a Body roll against a Toxin rating of 5 (see Resistance, p. 43) for each turn they are exposed to the toxic spores. If a character fails this roll, he takes two points of lethal



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damage. Simply holding one's breath is not enough to prevent damage, as the spores will infiltrate any mucus membrane, including the eyes. The cloud dissipates at the rate of one Toxin rating per turn. When it reaches zero, the cloud is gone.

### Glowroot

The bulb of this onion-like plant contains a chemical that becomes brightly luminescent after absorbing large amounts of iron. Some natives, having discovered this property, cultivate the plant and water it with the blood of animals. When the mature bulb is pulled from the ground, it will illuminate a ten-foot diameter for up to eight hours. It can then be placed back in the earth, where it will soon sprout new roots. If properly nourished, it can be used again after a week, and this process can be repeated many times. It also makes a delicious meal (tasting much like a yam) and is extremely nutritious.

Survival Gear	Cost	Weight
Glowroot	—	2 lbs.

### Heartflower

This plant is very rare, and its blood-red flowers only briefly bloom on an unknown cycle. On the rare occasion that its flowers bloom, the plant produces a chemical that can be used to treat almost any toxin, bacteria, or viral infection.

Heartflower is nearly impossible to cultivate, and extremely hard to locate in the wild unless its flowers are blooming. Harvesting the extract from the flowers is a tricky procedure, and must be done during the very short blooming period (usually about an hour). The native healers who harvest the extract of the heartflower guard the location of the plants jealously. How they are able to determine when the flowers will bloom is a mystery.

**Special:** Finding and harvesting a blooming heartflower requires a Survival roll (Difficulty 4). Once the flower has been harvested, its essence must be turned into an elixir, which requires a Medicine crafting roll (Difficulty 4). Because of the delicate nature of the extract, a character has only one chance to make this roll. If the roll fails, the heartflower is wasted and the process must begin all over again. A successful roll, however, results in one dose of heartflower elixir—a potent medicine. When used, it doubles the effectiveness of a Medicine roll, healing one lethal or two non-lethal wounds per success. In addition, it will immediately cure one disease or remove all toxins and poisons from the person who ingests it.

### Ironcane

This bamboo-like plant grows to be six feet high and one-half inch thick, but it takes decades to mature. Once fully grown, the stalks are extremely rigid and durable, nearly impossible to break or cut. A few native tribes harvest them, strip the leaves, and, with diligent effort requiring rough stones, sharpen one end for use as a spear. It is one of the best native weapons against creatures with tough hides.

Spears made out of Ironcane have the following statistics:

Melee Weapon	Dmg	Str	Spd	Cost	Wt
Spear, Ironcane	4L	2	A	—	9 lbs.

### Mantrap

This gargantuan plant grows among large trees in dense forest. Its stem is usually one-foot thick; it rises straight up to a height of fifteen feet, then hooks over like an enormous cane to reveal a huge, pouch-like maw lined with thorny "teeth." The plant's roots are sensitive to vibration, so when prey walks under the petals, it triggers the plant's feeding reflex. The entire stalk curls suddenly downward and scoops up any animal below. Thorny spines of the maw are curled inward and cross over one another, to restrain the prey. Within the maw, acid sprays from glands in the tissue lining, choking and burning prey, and eventually digesting it.

### Mantrap

<b>Archetype:</b> <i>Plant</i>		<b>Motivation:</b> <i>Survival</i>		
<b>Style:</b> 0		<b>Health:</b> 10		
<b>Primary Attributes</b>				
Body: 5		Charisma: 0		
Dexterity: 2		Intelligence: 0		
Strength: 4		Willpower: 4		
<b>Secondary Attributes</b>				
Size: 1		Initiative: 4		
Move: (0)*		Defense: 6 (8)**		
Perception: 6		Stun: 5		
<b>Skills</b>	<b>Base</b>	<b>Levels</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>(Average)</b>
Brawl	4	4	8	(4)
Stealth	2	3	4***	(2)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)
<b>Talents</b>				
Alertness 1 (+2 Perception rating)				
Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)				
<b>Resources</b>				
None				
<b>Flaw</b>				
Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)				
<b>Weapons</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Attack</b>	<b>(Average)</b>
Bite	3 L	-1	Special	



- \* Mantraps are rooted in one place and cannot move
- \*\* Mantraps have a thick outer skin that provides +2 Defense bonus
- \*\*\* Mantraps suffer a -1 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

**Special:** Mantraps make a Brawl touch attack to grab an opponent (See Touch Attack, p. 126). If the amount of extra successes exceeds the target's Strength rating, the victim is trapped inside the mantrap and takes three lethal wounds per turn until she escapes or dies trying. A trapped character must succeed in an opposed Strength roll against the mantrap in order to free herself.

## Stranglevine

Stranglevine can be found in many places in the Hollow Earth, as it is one of the hardiest plants known. Basically a carnivorous weed, stranglevine tends to root near game trails and paths where it can most easily find prey. When its searching vines latch onto an immovable object, such as a large tree or rock, the plant will slowly pull its roots from the soil and migrate across the ground. It can move significant distances in this manner, and will put down roots again after it migrates. Mobile stranglevine does not attack prey. This may fool some explorers into believing the plant harmless, if they first encounter it under these conditions.

When rooted, stranglevine becomes a deadly predator. It normally covers several square feet, with vines as thick and strong as ship's rope, and can lash out at prey and pull even mid-sized creatures to the ground. Once down, the prey is crushed and strangled to death; it slowly decays, nourishing the stranglevine and helping it grow larger and stronger.

## Stranglevine

Archetype: Plant

Motivation: Survival

Style: 0

Health: 6

### Primary Attributes

Body: 2

Charisma: 0

Dexterity: 2

Intelligence: 0

Strength: 4

Willpower: 4

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 4

Move: 0 (6)\*

Defense: 4

Perception: 4

Stun: 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	4	2	8	(4)
Stealth	2	4	6	(3)
Survival	0	4	4	(2)

### Talents

Quick Reflexes 1 (+2 Initiative rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)

### Resources

None

### Flaw

Bestial (Character cannot communicate or use tools)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Entangle	2 N	0	Special	

\* Stranglevine is normally rooted in one place, but can creep up to its Move rating by pulling itself toward an immovable object.

**Special:** Stranglevine makes a Brawl touch attack to grab an opponent (See Touch Attack, p. 126). If the attack succeeds, no immediate damage is done. Instead, compare the amount of damage that would have been done to the target's Strength rating. If the amount of damage exceeds the target's Strength rating, the target is entangled in the stranglevine and takes two nonlethal wounds per turn until he escapes or is crushed to death. An entangled character must succeed in an opposed Strength roll against the stranglevine in order to free himself.





# **THE HOLLOW EARTH EXPEDITION**



**Warning:** This section is for the Gamemaster's eyes only. Reading this as a player not only ruins the surprise, but also makes the game a lot less fun to play.

This adventure may be run as a one-shot game to introduce players to *Hollow Earth Expedition* or as the lead-in to an ongoing campaign. It has all the hallmarks of a classic *HEX* adventure: Nazis, dinosaurs, and lost civilizations!

As written, the adventure should take approximately four hours to complete, but additional encounters and subplots may be added to it to make it last much longer.

The adventure was constructed using the standard beat chart formula, with action scenes followed by plot development, followed by more action scenes, and so on. This formula is highly recommended for any Gamemaster interested in creating a fast paced and interesting game.

## **Plot Synopsis**

A hand-picked group of explorers is sent by the U.S. government to foil a Thule Society expedition to the North Pole. Along the way, they discover the Hollow Earth, encounter dinosaurs and native people, explore ancient ruins, and much more!

## **Archetypes**

If running this adventure as a one-shot game, you'll probably want to provide pre-generated characters for your players. Several of the sample characters would be appropriate if you just want to sit down and start playing right away.

On the other hand, if you want to use this game as the introduction to a longer campaign, you'll want your players to generate their own characters. As described in the Gamemastering chapter, the more information you share with your players about the type of game you want to run, the more they can customize their characters to suit your campaign. Communication is not a one-way street, however, and a free-flowing exchange of ideas also gives you an idea of what your players are expecting out of the game. Take a minute to talk about the kind of characters your players are interested in creating.

To help get you started, the Archetypes best suited for this adventure are listed below along with their reason for going on the expedition.

- **Academic:** The Thule Society has been running all over the globe, collecting various religious and historical artifacts. It may be helpful to have an expert along who is familiar with anthropology, archeology, or linguistics.
- **Adventurer:** Few people will race a rival expedition through unknown territory in order to claim a prize that may not even exist. To an adventurer, the risk



just might be worth the reward.

- **Doctor:** No expedition should leave home without some sort of medical professional along. Finding a qualified individual willing to go may be difficult, though.
- **Engineer:** The expedition has to get to the Hollow Earth somehow, and it's generally a good idea to have someone along that can keep your equipment in working order.
- **Explorer:** Exploring unknown territory is dangerous, and with so much riding on the success of the expedition, the U.S. government wants someone with experience leading it.
- **Hunter:** Expeditions travel on their stomachs, and being able to provide fresh meat is a huge boon. Besides, if those rumors are true it'll be good to have someone along who is good with a gun.
- **Occultist:** The Thule Society is an occult organization, and there is no way to know what they are after or what they can do with it without an expert along who is well versed in occult lore.
- **Reporter:** Having a journalist along may sound unusual, but having someone along to report on the expedition may help sway public opinion against Nazi Germany.

## Motivations

Having the right mix of Archetypes is just the beginning. If the characters aren't motivated to follow the plot—or worse, have conflicting Motivations—the game will end fairly quickly. Plus, characters with goals in line with the game have more opportunities to earn Style points, which makes the characters more effective and more fun to play. Therefore, it's important to make sure that each character's Motivation is compatible with the adventure and with each other.

The following Motivations are best recommended for the adventure.

- **Duty:** The U.S. government has asked you to keep the Thule Society from getting their hands on anything dangerous. Who are you to say no?
- **Fame:** Exploring uncharted territory is a great opportunity to put your name on the map. Besides, they wanted the best of the best for this expedition, right?
- **Truth:** What is the Thule Society after? Is there really some lush, verdant land at the North Pole? This is your chance to answer these questions once and for all.

Once everyone has a character that they are happy with, it's time to play. Let the adventure begin!

## The Hook

**Gamemaster's note:** While it's important to get the characters into the Hollow Earth as quickly as possible—that's where all the excitement happens, after all—it's just as important to take the time to hook the players and set the stage for the adventure to come.

Each one of the scenes described below should only be a brief stop on the expedition. In fact, drawing a line on a map to indicate travel (perhaps while playing some dramatic music) can really put your players in a pulp frame of mind.

## Briefing New York, 1936

The player characters have been summoned to a non-descript office building in Manhattan. A rotund, balding man greets them when they arrive. He is wearing a blue suit and has a pipe sticking out from beneath his mustache. He introduces himself as Major James Eaton, of U.S. Army Intelligence.

He thanks the characters for coming and reminds them that everything he is about to tell them is strictly confidential. He goes on to brief them on the mission.

"I'll get straight to the point. The U.S. government needs your help. One of our European sections intercepted a Nazi communiqué from Norway to Berlin. It says, 'Fraenkel journals acquired. Thule expedition proceeding. Von Wartenburg.'" Eaton looks around, waiting to see if anyone recognizes the name.

If one of the characters has the Archeology, History, or Religion Skill, have them make a Skill roll with a difficulty rating of 3. If they succeed, they already know about Ultima Thule (see sidebar, p. 234)

"This von Wartenburg character is the member of the Thule Society," Eaton says. "They believe that some place called Ultima Thule is at the North Pole. Supposedly it was some kind of advanced society. We think this von Wartenburg is after one of its artifacts, possibly to use as a weapon."

"Officially, the U.S. government is neutral, but some of us are very concerned with what is going on in Europe. Hitler is tied to the Thule Society, so we're worried about what would happen if von Wartenburg brought home some sort of super-weapon," Eaton says.



## Ultima Thule

Ultima Thule, the Nordic equivalent of Atlantis, is believed to lie "beyond the ice, beyond the North." It was supposedly inhabited by a race of giant supermen who had psychic and technological capabilities far exceeding any of the achievements of the 20th century. The Thule Society believes Ultima Thule to be the birthplace of the Aryan race, and intends to use its technology for its own nefarious purposes...

"This is where you come in. We can't send troops to stop the Thule expedition, but we can give you everything you need to stop it yourselves. What do you say? Will you do it?"

Eaton pauses just long enough for the characters to answer him before telling them to be at the Lakehurst Naval Air Station in New Jersey by tomorrow. This gives the characters just enough time to gather their personal gear and be on their way.

## Aurora

When the characters arrive at the airfield, they are met with an amazing sight: Tethered to the ground is a huge, metal-skinned airship—the *Aurora* (ZMC-3). A one-of-a-kind airship, the *Aurora* is 250 feet long and covered with duraluminum skin (an aluminum alloy). It has eight stabilizer fins and is powered by two huge motors. It has a crew of ten: The captain, pilot, navigator, engineer, and up to six player characters.

Captain Bennett greets the characters when they arrive and helps them get situated onboard. Other than the captain's quarters, there isn't room for private space, so the characters bunk together in the passenger quarters.

Captain Bennett is a handsome, outgoing man who is more than eager to answer questions about the *Aurora* and the flight plan. The airship is brand new, and there has never been anything like her. He tells the characters that they will be leaving immediately for Spitsbergen, Norway, where they will refuel and take on the last of their supplies before heading for the pole.

## Spitsbergen

The *Aurora* leaves New Jersey and flies to Spitsbergen, Norway, where it takes on supplies. The flight itself is uneventful, but the characters pick up some interesting information once they get there:

- Roald Amundsen: When they get to Spitsbergen, Captain Bennett tells the characters that the *Aurora* is tied up in the same place as the *Norge*, the blimp that carried famed explorers Roald Amundsen, Umberto Nobile, and Lincoln Ellsworth to the pole in 1926. Bennett recalls that Amundsen disappeared mysteriously two years later. He was flying to the rescue of Nobile, whose airship, *Italia*, had crashed in the Arctic. The two men had a famous dislike for each other, so it was odd that Amundsen would risk his life to rescue Nobile. Although Amundsen disappeared, Nobile and his crew were safely rescued.
- Thule Expedition: Spitsbergen isn't much of a town. So if the characters ask around, have them make a Streetwise roll with a difficulty rating of 1. If successful, they'll find out that the Thule expedition left Spitsbergen one week ago in a German U-boat. The Thule commander was a stern looking man with piercing blue eyes who spoke Norwegian without an accent.

## Polar Flight

With the Thule expedition one week ahead of them, the characters have no time to lose. Captain Bennett orders the *Aurora* to leave as soon as the last of the supplies are onboard. The flight to the North Pole takes approximately 36 hours. Along the way, strange phenomena occur:

- Polar Illusions: The terrain under the *Aurora* slowly turns into icepack. It's almost hypnotic in its plainness, sliding by slowly, hour after hour. Any character looking out at the terrain will start seeing things. One character may see a mountain range in the distance that no one else sees. Another may glimpse a dark shape in the water between icebergs only to do a double-take and find that it's gone. Soon, everyone is seeing things. The pilot finds it disorienting but the navigator reports that he is relying on the compass for navigation.
- Polar Winds: There is a sudden shock through the

The Aurora	Size	Def.	Strc.	Spd.	Han.	Crew	Pass.
Airship	8	6	12	50	-2	4	6

Armament	Dmg	Str	Rng	Cap	Rate	Spd	Cost	Wt
Browning M2 .50 MG	4L	*	250 ft.	100 (b)	A	S	n/a	128 lbs.



ship as the *Aurora* hits a major headwind. The pilot tries to tack around it, but can't seem to avoid it. He increases engine speed to compensate, and the *Aurora* continues its northward progression.

- **Magnetic Disturbance:** Later, the navigator reports that the compass is spinning wildly, seemingly at random, but he has the sun and the radio signal from Spitsbergen to navigate by.
- **Radio Disturbance:** The navigator reports that the radio has stopped working. All it picks up is static. Without the radio signal, he only has the sun to navigate by.
- **Sunset:** The sun slowly sets—in the wrong location. Even though it's the polar summer and the sun shouldn't set at all, it slips slowly beneath the horizon. The navigator can only point in the direction he thinks is north.

## A New Day

Lost in the darkness, without any way to determine the airship's exact location or direction of travel, all Captain Bennett can do is order the *Aurora* to proceed and hope for the best. After a few more hours, a faint glow is seen on the horizon. It turns out to be the sunrise. The headwind is gone, but the radio and compass still don't work. The navigator surmises that the *Aurora* must've gotten turned around in the darkness and drifted or been blown off course.

The sun slowly rises into the sky, and the air warms up significantly. The ice flow breaks up and open ocean can be seen below. Over the next few hours, the sun rises to high noon—higher in the sky than it was when the *Aurora* left Spitsbergen—and the temperature climbs to the point where the crew can comfortably remove their heavy arctic clothing.

- **Land:** Have all players make Perception rolls for their characters. The character with the most successes is the first to spot land ahead. Although it's still far away, it's clearly covered in lush, green plant life.
- **Mythology:** If any of the characters have the Anthropology, History, or Religion Skill, have them make the Skill roll with a difficulty 2. If the roll is successful, the character recalls that mythical places are often magically guarded or hidden from outsiders, such as Shangri-La in Tibet. If so, the land ahead may be Ultima Thule.

## The Triceratops Clearing

As the *Aurora* nears land, the characters can make out a huge clearing surrounded by giant trees and with dark shapes moving around within it.

- **Triceratops:** Eventually, the dark shapes can be seen with the naked eye. Have all the players make a Perception roll. The character with the most successes is the first to recognize the creatures as a herd of Triceratops! There are approximately forty of them in the clearing, grazing near the edges or milling around in the center. Most of them are full-sized adults but there are some young scattered throughout the herd, usually under the watchful eye of an adult.
- **Airplane:** Looking into the clearing, the characters see a glint of metal at the far end of the clearing, near the tree line. Identifying it requires a Perception roll with a difficulty rating of 3. On a successful roll, the character can see that it appears to be a wrecked airplane, partially overgrown with foliage.

The characters will no doubt wish to land to check out the airplane. Unfortunately, because of the tall trees surrounding the clearing, the *Aurora* cannot land right next to airplane. The trees are over 50 feet tall, so the airship will have to land 300 feet away and the characters will have to walk.

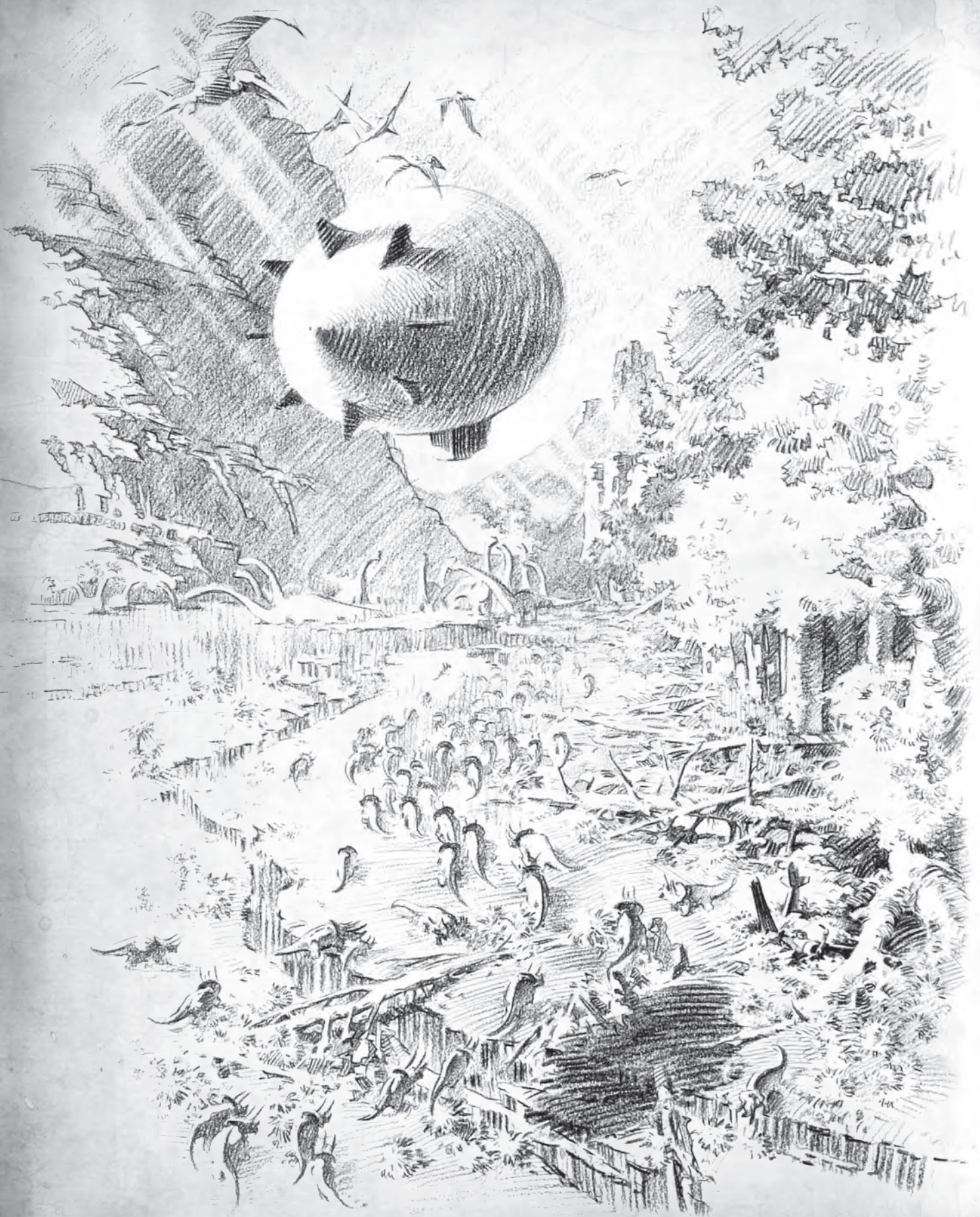
Captain Bennett orders the *Aurora* to land, and the characters disembark. The Captain and the rest of the crew are under orders to stay with the *Aurora*, so they won't leave the ship. It's up to the characters to investigate the airplane, but Bennett assures them the *Aurora* won't leave without them.

## Triceratops

As the airship lands, the Triceratops snort at it and move away, spreading out around the edge of the clearing. Two of the Triceratops, a mother and her young, back themselves up against the airplane. There is no way to get to the airplane without dealing with them. The characters can't skirt the edge of the clearing to get at the airplane without running into the rest of the herd that moved there when the *Aurora* landed.

If the characters walk through the center of the clearing they can come within 50 feet of the Triceratops before the mother will try to protect her young. Unfortunately, unless the characters can come up with a clever way to distract her, they are either going to have to attack her (or her young) or be attacked them-







selves when they try to sneak up to the airplane. The dinosaurs are unfamiliar with firearms, so they have no innate fear of the noise. It causes them to flinch, but these creatures do not fear man.

See the Bestiary chapter for stats on the Triceratops. If provoked, the mother will make a charge attack against the closest character and try to stay between the characters and her young. Attacking her young will enrage the mother, but the young will run out into the middle of the clearing, drawing her away from the airplane.

Once the Triceratops are dead or have run off, the characters may investigate the plane. During the fight, the rest of the herd moved off into the trees.

## Airplane

Any character with the Pilot Skill will recognize the airplane as a Dornier Flying Boat. Investigating the plane requires an Investigation roll with a difficulty rating of 2. On a successful roll, the character finds that the first aid kit has been taken; everything else, including the flight log, has been left behind. The plane is damaged beyond repair, but the person flying seems to have survived.

One look at the flight logs indicates that they are written in Norwegian. Deciphering the logs requires a Linguistics roll with a difficulty rating of 2. On a successful roll, the character determines that the flight logs are from the 1928 rescue flight of the missing explorer, Roald Amundsen.

While some characters are investigating the interior of the airplane, other characters may investigate the outside. Investigating the crash site requires a Survival roll with a difficulty rating of 3. On a successful roll, the character determines that the crash could not have happened more than a year or two ago—a fact that doesn't synch up with the flight logs. Also, nearby is a well-marked trail that indicates where the person from the plane went. Like any good explorer, the person marked the trail by hacking marks into trees. Following the trail is so easy that it only requires a Survival roll with a difficulty of 1.

## Tyrannosaurus Rex

Once the characters have investigated the airplane, the Triceratops herd comes stampeding back into the clearing. They charge as far away from the woods as they can, effectively blocking the way back to the Aurora. Interpreting the herd's behavior requires a

Survival or Animal Handling roll with a difficulty of 2. On a successful roll, the character surmises that they are fleeing from a predator.

Soon a T. Rex appears, searching for food. If there is a dead Triceratops in the clearing, it will go for it. Otherwise it will go after the nearest prey, which is the group of player characters. Hiding requires an opposed Stealth versus Perception roll. If the characters fail, the T. Rex will go after them, driving them into the woods. If the characters hide inside the airplane and sneak off later, they get a +4 cover bonus on their Stealth roll.

The T. Rex is likely more than the characters can handle and they should be dissuaded from trying to attack it. If they decide to fight it anyway, use the stats for the T. Rex in the Bestiary chapter.

## The Village

The characters should now be following a clearly marked trail through the woods. As the characters hike, they spot lots of unusual plant and animal life. The goal is to get the characters on to the next part of the adventure, so none of the things they encounter are dangerous, but a more thrilling encounter could be inserted here if a Gamemaster wanted to extend the adventure.

As the character's hike, they note that the sun has not moved in hours. When they get a glimpse of it through the forest canopy, it is still directly overhead. It's been high noon ever since they left the Aurora.

After several hours of hiking, the path they are following passes close to a native village and the characters cross paths with a group of hunters. The native people are dressed simply, wearing cured animal skins and clothing woven from plant fibers. Their skin is bronzed and their facial features are hard to place, but they look similar to South American Indians.

The hunters are friendly and they greet the characters in their native language mixed with little bits of Swedish and Norwegian. Communicating with them requires a Linguistics roll with a difficulty rating of 2. On a successful roll, the character determines that the natives are happy to see more "Pola" friends and offer to guide them to their village.

The native village is not far from the trail, and along the way, the hunters confirm that Roald Amundsen lives with them. He is not the first explorer to visit them, however. Three other men used to live with them, but they went home. This village is the same one





visited by Andree, Fraenkel, and Strindberg in "Flight of the Eagle" at the beginning of this book.

The native village is arboreal, built high above the ground for safety from predators. When the hunters arrive, a basket is lowered to carry the characters up into the village. The basket is actually the gondola of the Eagle. Stamped on the inside are the words "Andree's Polar Expedition 1897." In fact, the whole village is a bizarre combination of indigenous and surface world construction. Bits of balloon silk, rope, and even some metal can be seen everywhere. The gondola is rigged to a series of pulleys that seems beyond the capability of the native villagers.

### *Roald Amundsen*

Shortly after the characters arrive, Roald Amundsen and the chief arrive to greet them. Roald is extraordinarily fit for a man his age, with a sharp nose and keen eyes. His explorer's outfit is patched and he's clearly let himself "go native." He eyes the characters suspiciously.

The chief is a strange sight. He is wearing a shirt made out of tiny pits of metal that jangle when he walks. He looks comical to the characters, but walks proudly. Diplomatic characters would note that no one else in the village can afford to have metal clothing, so it is a mark of his rank and status. They would do well not to insult him.



The characters are invited to rest and eat. It occurs to them that they haven't slept since the polar flight, and are very tired and hungry. Over a fine meal of roasted boar, the characters find out that Roald did, in fact, come here on purpose. He and his fellow explorers discovered the Hollow Earth but were sworn to secrecy. They became members of a secret society called the Terra Arcanum. Unfortunately, Nobile and Amundsen were forbidden to explore further. Nobile tried and failed. Roald, seeing his opportunity, took an airplane and vanished from the world forever. He is more than a little shocked to discover how much time has passed since he left, believing that he'd only been here a couple of years.

## Trade

The chief will be keen to trade with the characters for any bits of metal or gadgets they have with them. Although he desperately wants one, Roald will advise them not to give him a firearm. Use the stats for Cargo Cultist from Friends and Enemies chapter for trading with the chief. If the characters refuse to give him a firearm, the chief frowns at Roald and asks if they would like to go to "the place of smooth stone." Roald glares at the chief, but it's too late, the secret is out. The characters learn that there are some ruins nearby and that the Thule expedition has been seen there. Roald is initially defensive about the ruins, but when he finds out that the character's mission is to stop the German expedition, he offers to take them there.

Satisfied that he caused Roald trouble, the chief offers the characters his hut to sleep in. If they choose to sleep, the characters will awake refreshed and any wounds they've suffered will be miraculously healed! Unfortunately, there is no way to determine how long they sleep, as any watches will wind down while they sleep. If the characters refuse to sleep, and go directly to the ruins, they suffer one nonlethal wound due to exhaustion.

## The Ruins

It takes a couple of hours to hike to the ruins, which sit in a small, coastal valley. The characters get a good look at it from the lip of the valley, and can see that the architecture is unlike anything they've seen before. It's not just a mixture of ancient architectural styles, but somehow the original from which the others were copied. Even in its ruined state, the city is impressive. In the center of the ruins is a huge tower constructed

from a strange coppery metal. Identifying it requires an Anthropology, History, or Religion roll with a difficulty rating of 3. On a successful roll, the character realizes that it is made from the mystical metal orichalcum!

Roald explains that this was just a small city, that there are probably countless others just like it. He comes here often to study the ruins and knows of a large crystal in the remains of the tower. He suspects that the Thule expedition will be found there.

The characters venture into the ruins and see that the doorways are slightly oversized and that there are huge, muddy handprints anywhere there might have been ornamentation on the buildings.

## Apemen

Have the players make Perception rolls with a difficulty rating of 2. On a successful roll, the character notices half a dozen giant apemen on the rooftops of nearby buildings. They carry huge clubs and are obviously following the characters as they venture deeper into the ruins. If the characters attempt to confront the apemen or ask Roald about them, he tells them to ignore the apemen. They are no threat.

The apemen have other ideas. They've been fighting the Nazi soldiers ever since the Thule expedition first arrived and will brook no further incursions into their territory. They circle the characters and start to pound their clubs on the ground, calling even more apemen to join them and working themselves up to attack the characters.

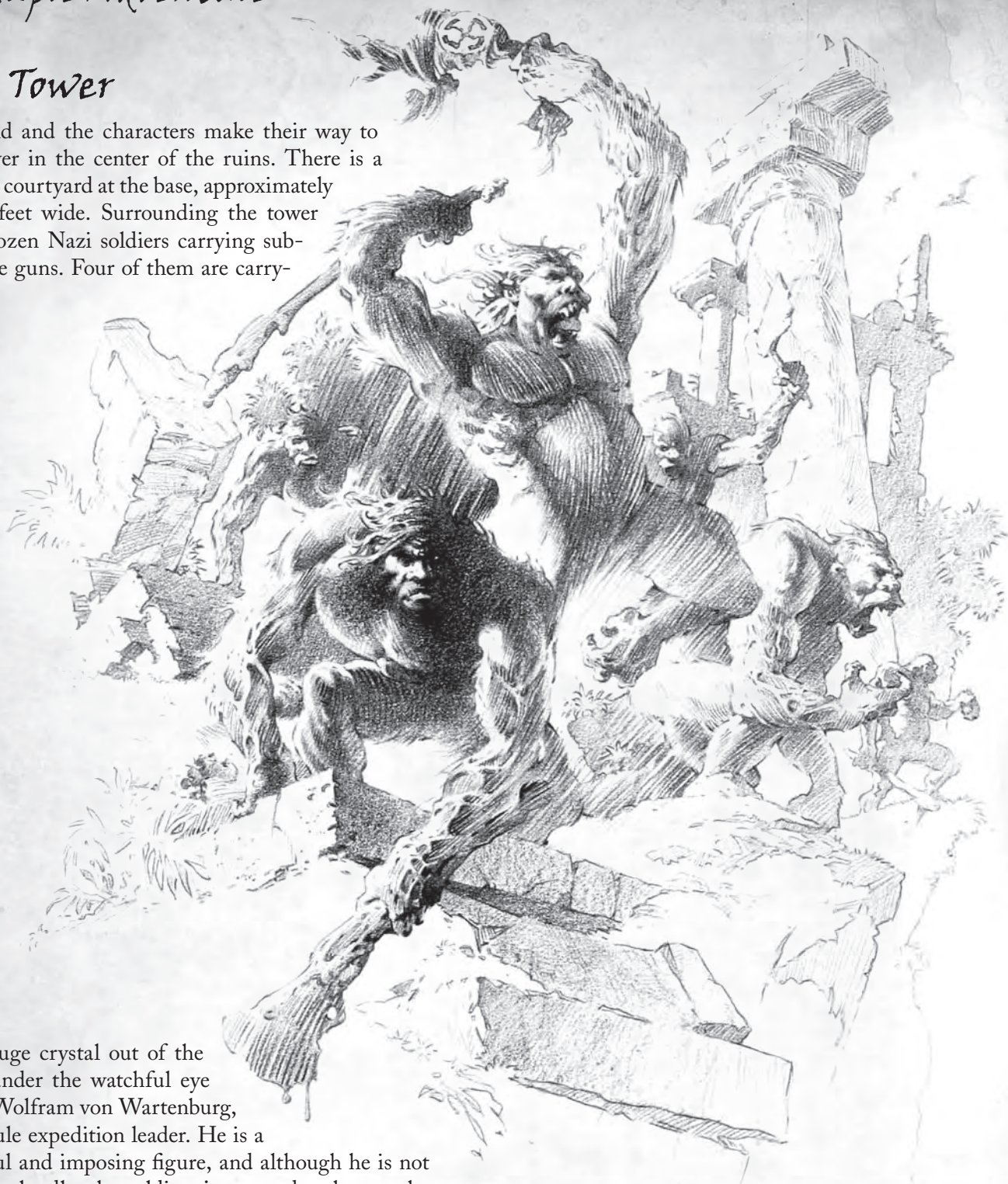
Before the players have a chance to roll for Initiative, however, Roald's voice cuts across the din, powerful and clear. Although he's not speaking English, the message is undeniable: Stop! The apemen immediately quiet, slowly setting their clubs on the ground.

Roald explains that he's learned some of the language of the people that used to live in the ruins and that it allows him to communicate with the apemen. By now it should be obvious that Roald has many secrets and that he is not telling the characters everything. The apemen allow the characters to pass, but continue to follow the party at a distance.



## The Tower

Roald and the characters make their way to the tower in the center of the ruins. There is a circular courtyard at the base, approximately fifteen feet wide. Surrounding the tower are a dozen Nazi soldiers carrying sub-machine guns. Four of them are carry-



ing a huge crystal out of the tower under the watchful eye of Dr. Wolfram von Wartenburg, the Thule expedition leader. He is a powerful and imposing figure, and although he is not speaking loudly, the soldiers jump to do whatever he asks them to do.

There are four roads that terminate in the circular base around the tower and the characters are approaching from the one the Nazis are using to leave. This is the characters' chance to stop the Thule expedition!

Use the statistics for Nazi Soldiers in the Friends and Enemies chapter. The stats for von Wartenburg may be found at the end of the sample adventure.

Regardless of the characters' battle strategy, Roald

will have the apemen circle around to attack from the far side. During the combat, the Nazis are going to get the worst of it, caught as they are between the apemen and the player characters; von Wartenburg will take cover, but if one of the characters manages to shoot him, he'll use his Style points to reduce the damage. He needs to be around for what happens next.

The apemen will beat their way to the crystal. Just as they are going to strike, von Wartenburg commands them to stop using the same language Roald used to



talk to them. As before, the apemen immediately stop their aggressive behavior. Roald responds, however, and orders the apemen to attack the crystal. Before von Wartenburg can react, the apemen attack the crystal, cracking it with their powerful blows. Some strange chemical reaction occurs and it starts vibrating and glowing. The crystal is going to explode!

## Resolution

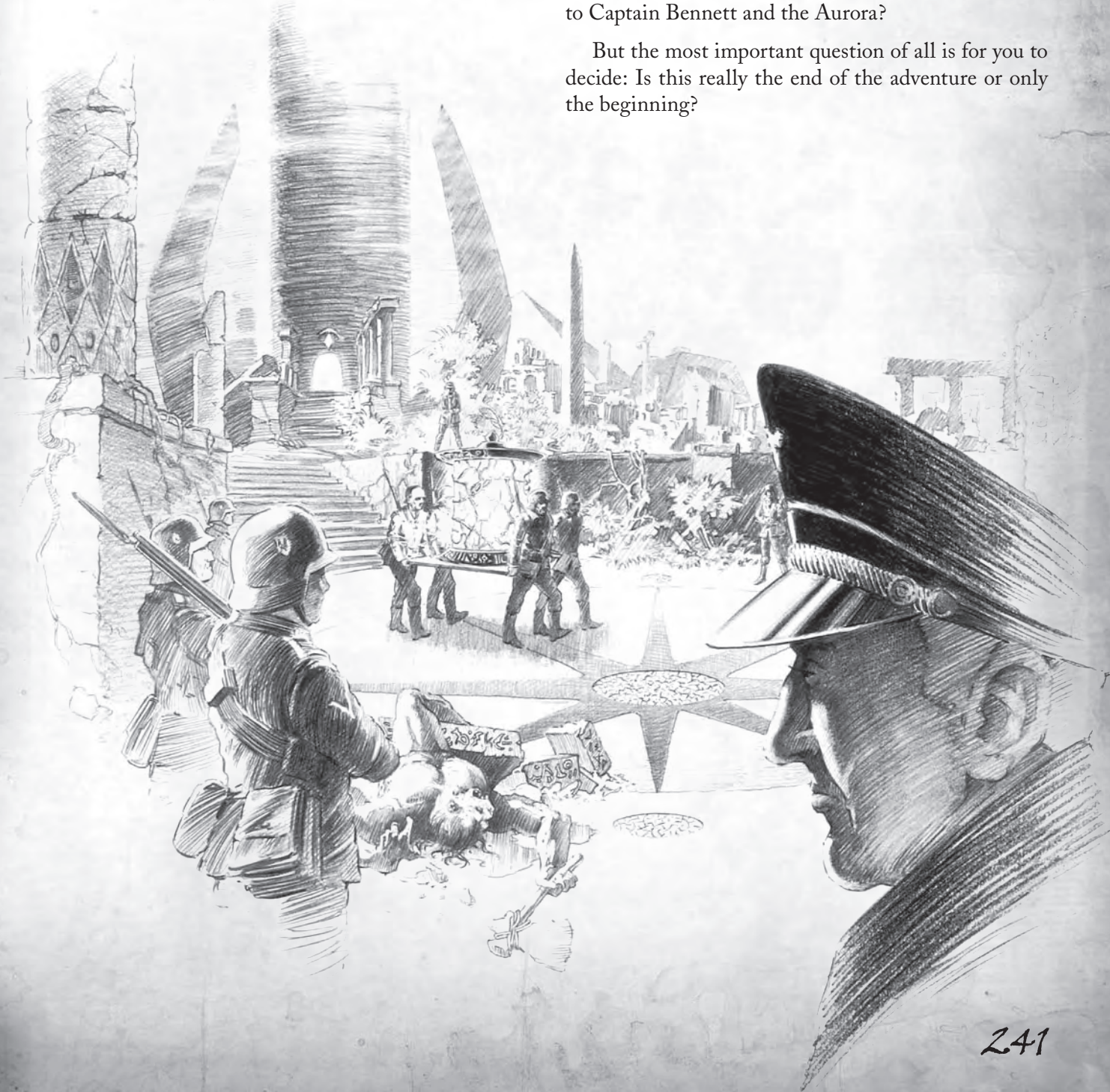
At this point, the combat and the adventure are both over. The Nazis flee and so should the characters. If the characters pause long enough to confront Roald,

he will tell them that he couldn't risk letting the device be taken—by anyone—and he tells them to run while they still can.

The characters should be able to make it to safety before the crystal explodes, devastating the ruined city. If the characters run down the road, they will find the German U-boat. If they run back the way they came, they will make it to the tree line before the explosion. They make their way back to the village and onto the clearing only to discover that the Aurora is gone.

Many questions remain: What happened to the Thule expedition? Did von Wartenburg escape? What happened to Roald and the apemen? What happened to Captain Bennett and the Aurora?

But the most important question of all is for you to decide: Is this really the end of the adventure or only the beginning?





## Non-Player Characters

### Roald Amundsen

Mentor 3

Archetype: *Explorer*

Motivation: *Duty*

Style: 3

Health: 8

#### Primary Attributes

Body: 4	Charisma: 2
Dexterity: 4	Intelligence: 4
Strength: 3	Willpower: 4

#### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0	Initiative: 8
Move: 7	Defense: 8
Perception: 8	Stun: 4

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Athletics	3	3	6	(3)
Brawl	3	1	4	(2)
Diplomacy	2	4	6	(3)
Firearms	4	1	5	(2+)
<i>Rifles</i>			6	(3)
Investigation	4	2	6	(3)
Linguistics	4	2	6	(3)
Medicine	4	2	6	(3)
Melee	3	1	4	(2)
<i>Spears</i>			5	(2+)
Ships	4	2	6	(3)
Stealth	4	2	6	(3)
Survival	4	4	8	(4)

#### Talents

Atlantean 2 (Basic fluency and ability to issue one word commands)

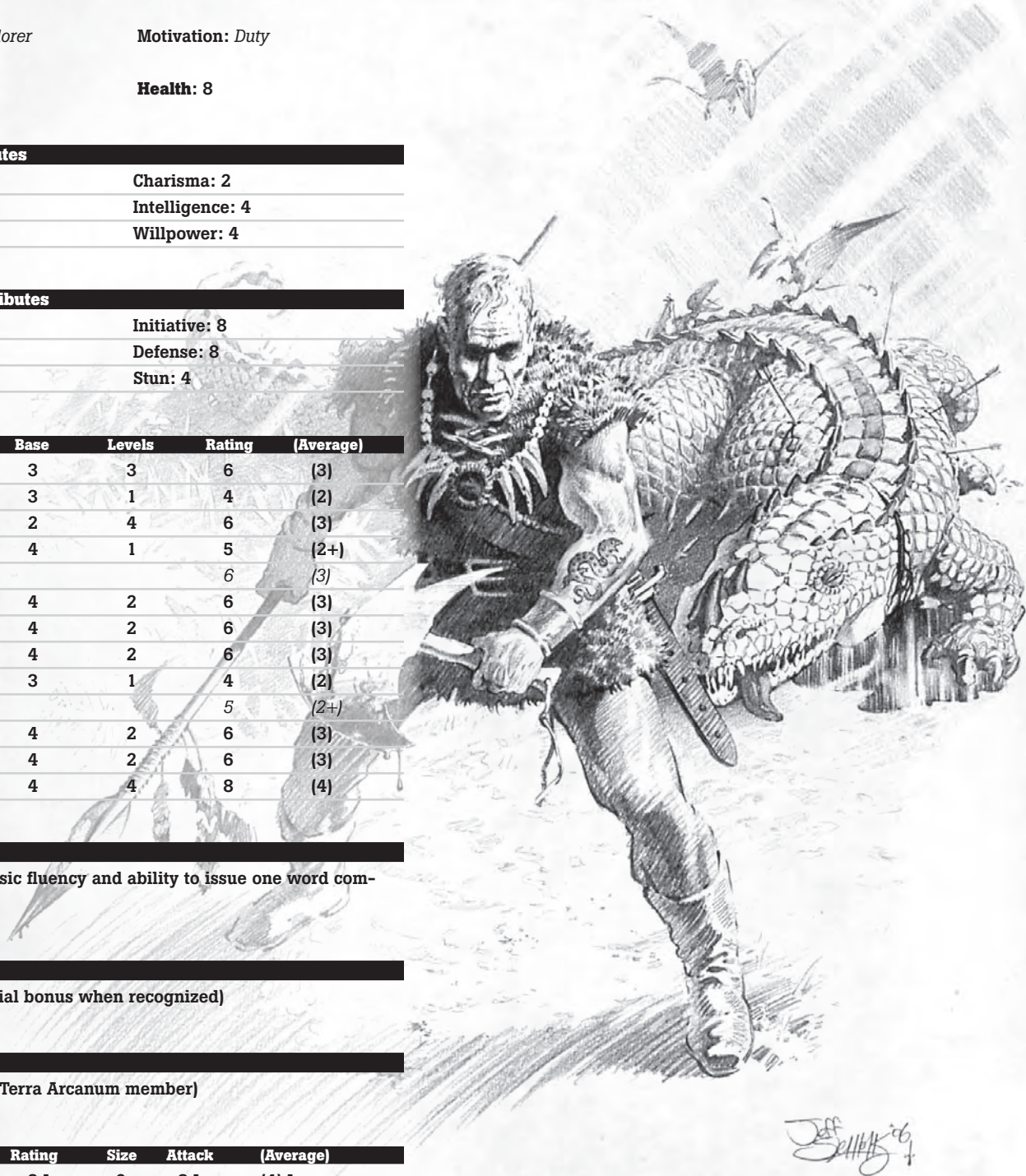
#### Resources

Fame 1 (+2 social bonus when recognized)

#### Flaw

Secret (Former Terra Arcanum member)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Webley revolver	3 L	0	8 L	(4) L
Spear	3 L	0	8 L	(4) L
Hand axe	2 L	0	6 L	(3) L
Punch	0 N	0	4 N	(2) N



Jeff Smith '06



## Dr. Wolfram von Wartenburg

Mentor 5

**Archetype:** Occultist

**Motivation:** Power

**Style:** 5

**Health:** 9

### Primary Attributes

Body: 4

Charisma: 5

Dexterity: 4

Intelligence: 5

Strength: 4

Willpower: 5

### Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 9

Move: 8

Defense: 8 (10)\*

Perception: 10

Stun: 4

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Athletics	4	2	6	(3)
Brawl	4	2	6	(3)
Diplomacy	5	3	8	(4)
Firearms	4	2	6	(3)
Intimidation	5	5	10	(5)
Investigation	5	5	10	(5)
Linguistics	5	5	10	(5)
Melee	4	4	8	(4)
Philosophy	5	3	8	(4)
Stealth	4	4	8	(4)

### Talents

Atlantean 2 (Basic fluency and ability to issue one word commands)

### Resources

Rank 4 (Thule Society: +8 social bonus and ability to requisition resources)

### Flaw

Condescending (+1 Style point whenever he proves his superiority)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Luger P08	2 L	0	8 L	(4) L
Ritual Dagger	2 L	0	10 L	(5) L
Punch	0 N	0	6 N	(3) N

Armor	Defense	Str	Dex
* Breastplate	+2	2	0





# PULP RESOURCES AND INSPIRATION

Popular entertainment from the 20s and 30s provides plenty of material for anyone interested in period correct, mysterious goings-on. This was a thriving time for horror films, horror fiction, and pulp adventure. The items listed below are not only good indications of the sorts of fantasy that appealed to the public's imagination in 1936, but also excellent reference materials for the Gamemaster seeking adventure ideas.

There is a veritable treasure trove of great pulp material out there to give you story ideas, inspiration for characters, or just some good old-fashioned two-fisted entertainment. To help you along, we've compiled the following list of pulp books, movies, and other media that we found inspiring when making *Hollow Earth Expedition*.

## Books about the Pulp Adventure Genre

These books, categorized by author, provide truly excellent sources of HEX plots and scenes.

**Aristophanes:** *The Frogs* tells of how Dionysus, the god of drama, had to go the Underworld (Hades) to retrieve Euripides.

**Burroughs, Edgar Rice:** Nearly all his books have some element of pulp adventure, but look especially for his *Pellucidar* series, *The Land that Time Forgot* series, and his *Tarzan* novels.

**Carter, Lin:** The *Zarkon, Lord of the Unknown* series provides some ideas on how a lost civilizations might evolve (or not) in the Hollow Earth.

**Conrad, Joseph:** A literary classic, *Heart of Darkness* takes us on a jungle cruise that shows us exactly how thin the line is between civilization and savagery.

**de Camp, L. Sprague:** *A Gun for Dinosaur* remains one of the best short stories for illustrating the perils of mucking about in a lost world when you don't really know what you're doing.

**Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan:** A reading of *The Lost World* is a must for any HEX Gamemaster!

**Durie, Alistair:** *Weird Tales* surveys the entirety of the pulp magazine world, from authors to illustrators to publishers.

**Emerson, Willis George:** *The Smoky God* is an account of Olaf Jansen, a Norwegian fisherman, who claims to have spent two years in Agarthā—the Hollow Earth.

**Farmer, Philip José** *Doc Savage: His Apocalyptic Life*, is an exhaustive resource on one of pulp adventure's greatest heroes, this book offers HEX Gamemasters a wealth of ideas for villains, sidekicks, supporting NPCs, and suitably futuristic (yet retro) equipment.

**Fleming, Fergus:** *Ninety Degrees North* is full of valuable information about man's quest to reach the North Pole.

**Goulart, Ron:** *Cheap Thrills* is another survey of the pulps, covering a number of mini-genres and featuring interviews with some authors.

**Grant, Maxwell:** This is the pseudonym of Walter B. Gibson, author of so many stories in the famous series *The Shadow*.

**Greenberg, Martin H. (Editor):** The *Rivals of Weird Tales* anthology features stories reprinted from actual pulp adventure magazines but *not* *Weird Tales*.

**Haggard, H. Rider:** *She* and *King Solomon's Mines* are quintessential pulp adventure yarns that contain dozens of ideas for HEX campaigns.

**Hartmann, Franz:** This famous occultist's novel, *Among the Gnomes*, is an adventure story worth reading.

**Hogan, Robert:** Check out the *G-8 & his Battle Aces* series for ideas on campaigns involving characters belonging to a military unit.

**Howard, Robert E.:** Howard wrote a number of pulp adventure short stories, including the *Solomon Kane* series.

**Lloyd, John Uri:** *Etidorpha* is a tale about a man's journey into the center of the Earth.

**Lovecraft, H.P.:** His Cthulhu Mythos stories first appeared in the pulp magazines of the 1920s, and their treatment of strange, alien civilizations and deities are good inspirations for ways to handle Atlantean technology. Give special attention to *At the Mountains of Madness*, *The Call of Cthulhu*, and *The Shadow Out of Time*.

**Lyon, William F.:** *The Hollow Globe or The World's Agitator and Reconciler* is a treatise on the physical conformation of the Earth.

**MacGregor, Rob:** He penned a series of licensed novels featuring Indiana Jones.

**McCoy, Max:** Another fine series about Indiana Jones.

**Poe, Edgar Allan:** A well-known author for his hair-raising tales, Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* is a fast-paced narrative chronicling the adventures



of a stowaway who finds himself amidst a mutiny, survives a shipwreck, and encounters fantastic creatures and visions as he journeys to the South Pole.

**Preiss, Bryon:** The editor of the *Weird Heroes* anthology series, which is a treasure trove of plot and subplot ideas.

**Robeson, Kenneth:** The pseudonym for Lester Dent, author of the *Doc Savage* series. The originals may be difficult to locate, but well worth the effort!

**Rohmer, Sax:** Look to his *Fu Manchu* novels for prime examples of deathtrap cliffhangers and secret government agendas.

**Saville, Frank:** *Beyond the Great South Wall: The Secret of the Antarctic* is a wonderful resource for any Gamemaster.

**Smith, E.E. "Doc":** The *Lensmen* series should give some ideas on how to craft truly mind-blowing Atlantean technology.

**Steranko, Jim:** *The Steranko History of Comics* is crammed with adventure inspiration taken from the

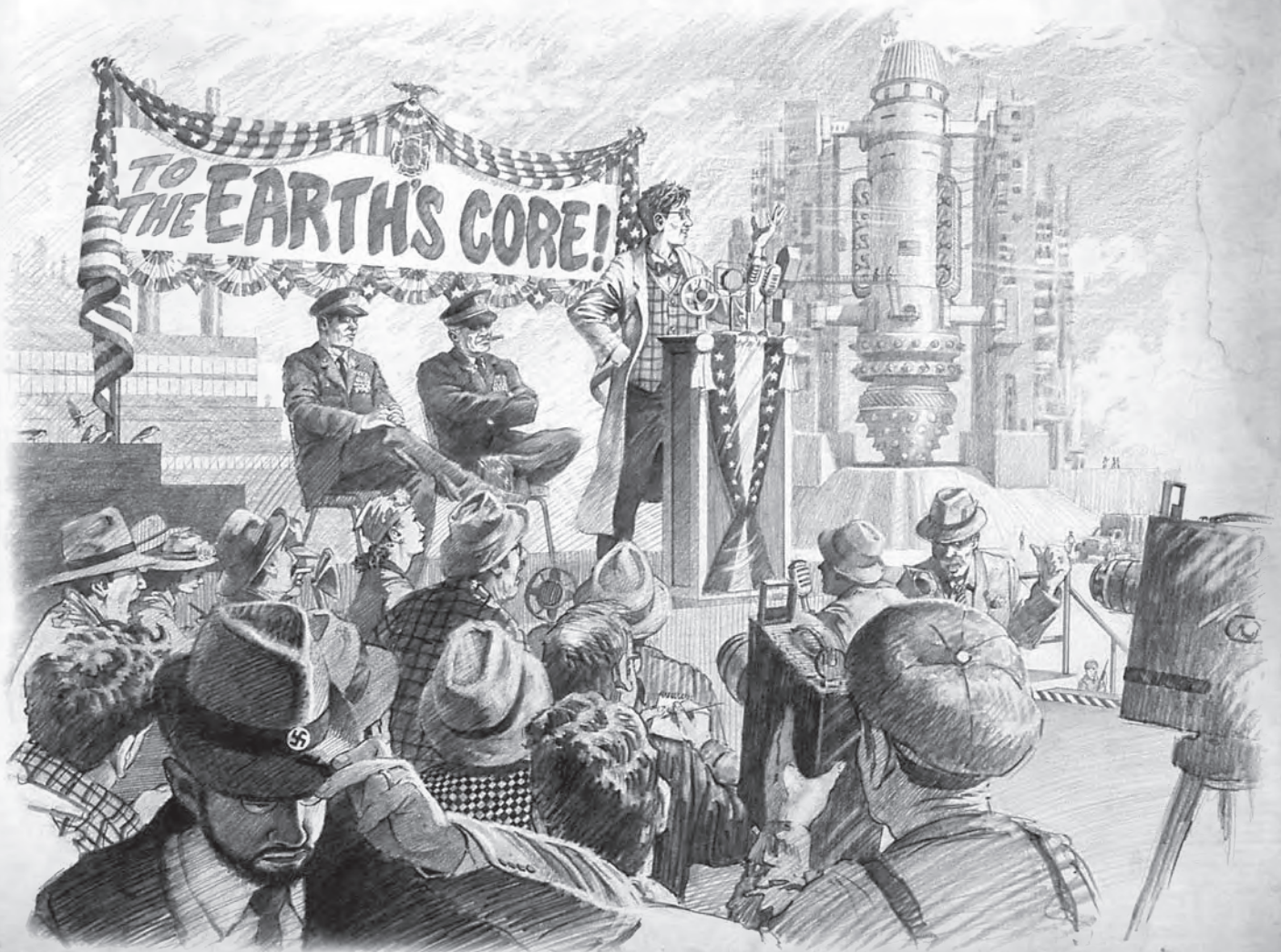
golden age of comics.

**Verne, Jules:** Another author writing before the pulp era, he nonetheless captured the essential spirit of the Hollow Earth adventure in his *Journey to the Center of the Earth*.

**Warren, William F.:** A Boston University president who truly believed the Garden of Eden was at the North Pole; Warren's *Paradise Found* is a valuable resource for both players and Gamemasters.

**Weiss, Ken:** If you're looking for a comprehensive listing of nearly every pulp adventure serial ever made (including plot synopses and cast lists), complete with photos and sidebars on cliffhanger perils, *To Be Continued* is the book for you.

**Wells, H.G.:** Although he published his novels and stories well before the true pulp era began, his novel *The Time Machine* offers a fun example of a hidden world adventure, while *Island of Dr. Moreau* introduces us to half-human beastmen.





## Comic Book Series and Graphic Novels

*Airboy*  
*Agent 13*  
*Doc Savage*  
*Flash Gordon*  
*Justice Inc.*  
*The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*  
*The Phantom*  
*The Shadow Strikes*  
*The Rocketeer*  
*Sandman Mystery Theatre*  
*The Shadow*  
*The Spirit*  
*Terry and the Pirates*  
*Tintin*

## Film

*20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1954)  
*At the Earth's Core* (1976)  
*Big Trouble in Little China* (1986)  
*Bulldog Drummond* (film series, 1922-1969)  
*Cast a Deadly Spell* (1991)  
*Charlie Chan* (film series, 1934-1981)  
*Chinatown* (1974)  
*Dick Tracy* (1937)  
*Doc Savage: The Man of Bronze* (1975)  
*High Road to China* (1983)  
*Indiana Jones* (film series, 1981-1989)  
*Island at the Top of the World* (1974)  
*Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1959)  
*Jurassic Park* (film series, 1993-2001)  
*King Kong* (1933, 1976, 2005)  
*King Solomon's Mines* (1937, 1950)  
*Lost Horizon* (1937)  
*The Land that Time Forgot* (1975)  
*The Last Dinosaur* (1977)  
*The Lost Continent* (1968)  
*The Lost World* (1960, 1992)  
*The Maltese Falcon* (1931, 1941)  
*The Mask of Fu Manchu* (1932)  
*Mr. Moto* (film series, 1937-1965)  
*The Mysterious Island* (1929, 1961)  
*The People that Time Forgot* (1977)  
*Planet of the Apes* (film series, 1968-1973)  
*The Rocketeer* (1991)  
*She* (1935, 1965)  
*Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* (2004)  
*The Shadow* (1940)

*The Time Machine* (1960)  
*The Untouchables* (1987)

## Movie Serials Available on DVD or VHS

*Buck Rogers*  
*Cliffhangers: Adventures from the Thrill Factory*  
*Daredevils of the Red Circle*  
*Dick Tracy*  
*Fighting Devil Dogs*  
*Flash Gordon*  
*King of the Rocket Men*  
*Manhunt on Mystery Island*  
*Spy Smasher*  
*The Tiger Woman*  
*Undersea Kingdom*

## Television Series

*The Adventures of Brisco County, Jr.*  
*Bring 'Em Back Alive*  
*The Green Hornet*  
*Jonny Quest*  
*Land of the Lost* (try to find the original 1970s series!)  
*Lost*  
*Surface*  
*Tales of the Gold Monkey*  
*The Untouchables*  
*Tintin*  
*Young Indiana Jones*

## Radio

Radio programs and serials were immensely popular entertainment. Radios were common, the programs were free, and broadcasts were live. Besides comedy and music—pulp-action adventures such as *The Shadow*, *The Spider*, *Terry and the Pirates*, *Tarzan*, *Flash Gordon*, the *Green Hornet*, the *Lone Ranger*, the *World Adventurers' Club*, and *Buck Rogers* thrilled listeners across the country every week. Many of these episodes can still be heard now via the internet!

Orson Welles's landmark broadcast of *War of the Worlds* wouldn't happen until 1938, but no one says you can't change history a bit.



## **GLOSSARY**

**Action:** Represents the types of tasks your character attempts to accomplish. Standard actions are quick and straightforward; extended actions take time to accomplish; reflexive actions take no thought to perform; opposed actions occur when another character tries to resist or interfere with your character's action.

**Archetypes:** Classic roles and iconic character types, representing the part a character will play in the story. Examples range from Doctor to Moneyman, and Academic to Soldier, making a good starting point when designing a new character.

**Atlanteans:** Technologically advanced residents of the legendary city of Atlantis, these beings are believed by some to have created the Hollow Earth, and to have retreated there after Atlantis fell.

**Attribute:** A character's natural abilities. There are Primary and Secondary Attributes, which are the basis for all Skills and special abilities. Virtually every die roll made in the game will involve a character's Attributes.

**Cliffhanger:** A convention of pulp stories, cliffhangers occur when the hero is in a perilous situation and the scene ends. The action cuts to other characters to see what they're up to, and the hapless fellow in dire straits is left hanging as to his fate!

**Deathtraps:** Natural or man-made situations where the hero is faced with inevitable death (and yet there is always a chance for a dramatic escape). Examples include being tied under a slowly descending pendulum, or locked in a room with a malfunctioning Atlantean artifact building towards a catastrophic overload.

**Dice Pool:** The number of dice rolled to determine the outcome of a character's action. Dice pools are calculated based on the character's appropriate Skill or Attribute rating.

**Flaw:** A character's physical, mental, or social shortcomings. Whenever a character is hurt or hindered by his Flaw during play, he earns Style points.

**HEX:** Hollow Earth Expedition

**Hollow Earth:** A savage and mysterious world existing far beneath the Earth's surface, filled with strange and wondrous locales and creatures. No one knows how the Hollow Earth came to be, but many who know of its existence covet the riches and secrets contained therein.

**Motivation:** A character's driving goal or greatest desire, explaining everything from why they get out of bed in the morning, to why they are seeking or exploring the Hollow Earth.

**Orichalcum:** A mystical gold and copper alloy commonly believed to have been used in Atlantean technology.

**Pulp:** A genre of fiction set in the 1920's and 30's, and the backdrop for the HEX setting. Characterized with larger-than-life heroes and villains, this is a time of exploration into places few dream exist, undertaking adventures few would

think possible.

**Resources:** A character's friends, influence, and wealth at her disposal. Characters without any Resources are neither destitute nor outcasts. They have enough to get by on, but when the going gets tough, they have to fend for themselves.

**Skills:** A character's training and education over the course of his life. Skills cover a wide variety of topics and activities—everything from negotiating a business deal in a foreign language to performing acrobatic stunts on the wing of a plane.

**Style Points:** Points awarded to players who make the game more enjoyable for all involved. These points can be spent to help a character perform extraordinary feats, survive an overwhelming threat, or simply overcome a bad roll of the dice.

**Taking the Average:** Divide the dice pool in half to determine the average number of successes rolled. Compare the average number of successes with the difficulty rating of the desired action. If the average is higher than the difficulty, the action succeeds without a roll.

**Talents:** A character's aptitudes and special abilities. Talents cover a wide range of activities and either give a character a new ability, or improve one he already has. Talents also let you "break the rules" by ignoring certain penalties, or by allowing a character to do something normally not permitted.

**Terra Arcanum:** Besides the ruins and fragments of their culture, the Atlanteans left one more thing behind when they disappeared: the Terra Arcanum. Originally dedicated to safeguarding Atlantean secrets and shepherding humanity, this organization has developed into a hidden network of power brokers who pull the strings of the world's institutions and leaders.

**Thule Society:** The Thule Society is ruthless, elitist, and on track to discover the truth of the Hollow Earth. Most—but not all—are Germans who believe that the Nazi party represents the force by which they may rediscover the hidden powers needed to usher in a new era of their supremacy.

**Ubiquity Dice:** Optional color-coded 8-sided dice designed for use with the Ubiquity system. These dice simulate rolling larger numbers of regular dice, speeding up gameplay.

**Ubiquity Roleplaying System:** The system used to play HEX, the Ubiquity roleplaying game system is streamlined for fast, cinematic game play. While speed and simplicity are emphasized over gritty realism, players can still make tactical decisions that will directly impact their character's chance of success. The goal is to spend less time rolling dice and more time telling a story.

**Wound:** Another name for damage, a character is sometimes said to "take two lethal wounds" instead of "two points of lethal damage."



## TERMS

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# UBIQUITY DICE

Specially designed for use with *Hollow Earth Expedition*, Ubiquity dice dramatically improve your gaming experience. Roll up to one-third less dice and simply add up the total. It's that easy!

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SOON!**

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This sourcebook contains:

- Expanded secret societies information
- Expanded rules for vehicles and weird science artifacts
- New rules for psychic powers and sorcery



This sourcebook contains:

- Expanded Hollow Earth information, including unique locations such as Shangri-La and the lost city of Atlantis
- Expanded bestiary information
- New rules for playing native and beastmen character types

# MYSTERIES OF THE HOLLOW EARTH

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# HOLLOW EARTH EXPEDITION

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Player \_\_\_\_\_

Archetype \_\_\_\_\_ Motivation \_\_\_\_\_

## Primary Attributes

Body  Charisma   
Dexterity  Intelligence   
Strength  Willpower

## Style

## Secondary Attributes

Size  Initiative   
Move  Defense   
Perception  Stun

## Health

## Skills

Skill	Base	+	Levels	=	Rating	(Average)	Skill	Base	+	Levels	=	Rating	(Average)
			+	=						+	=		
			+	=						+	=		
			+	=						+	=		
			+	=						+	=		
			+	=						+	=		
			+	=						+	=		
			+	=						+	=		
			+	=						+	=		
			+	=						+	=		
			+	=						+	=		

## Combat

Weapon	Damage	Modifier	Attack Rating	(Average)
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Range	Capacity	Rate	Speed	Weight
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Ammunition	Notes			
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>			
Weapon	Damage	Modifier	Attack Rating	(Average)
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Range	Capacity	Rate	Speed	Weight
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Ammunition	Notes			
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>			
Weapon	Damage	Modifier	Attack Rating	(Average)
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Range	Capacity	Rate	Speed	Weight
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Ammunition	Notes			
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>			

## Talents

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## Resources

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## Flaws

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Armor	Defense Bonus	Modifier	Dex Penalty	Weight
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Shield	Defense Bonus	Modifier	Dex Penalty	Weight
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Attributes: 15 pts. • Size = 0 • Move = Dexterity + Strength • Perception = Intelligence + Willpower • Initiative = Dexterity + Intelligence • Defense = Body + Dexterity • Health = Body + Willpower • Stun = Body • Skills: 15 pts. • Choose 1 Talent or Resource • Choose a Flaw (Optional)













ARCTIC OCEAN

ASIA

EUROPE

Greece

Shambhala, Tibet

North Polar Opening.

GREENLAND

AFRICA

Equator

INDIAN OCEAN

Mysterious Island

Tropic of Capricorn

AUSTRALIA

SOUTHERN OCEAN

Antarctic Circle







**First we discovered that the Earth is round.**

**Then we discovered that it's hollow.**

**Now we must keep its secrets from  
falling into the wrong hands.**

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