

# THE **WARG**

A MYSTERIOUS SHAPESHIFTER

BY BRENDAN MCLEOD

COMPATIBLE WITH  
**HEART**  
THE CITY  
BENEATH

## **The Warg**

A mysterious shapeshifter for  
**HEART: The City Beneath**

by Brendan McLeod

<http://sulcata.itch.io/warg>

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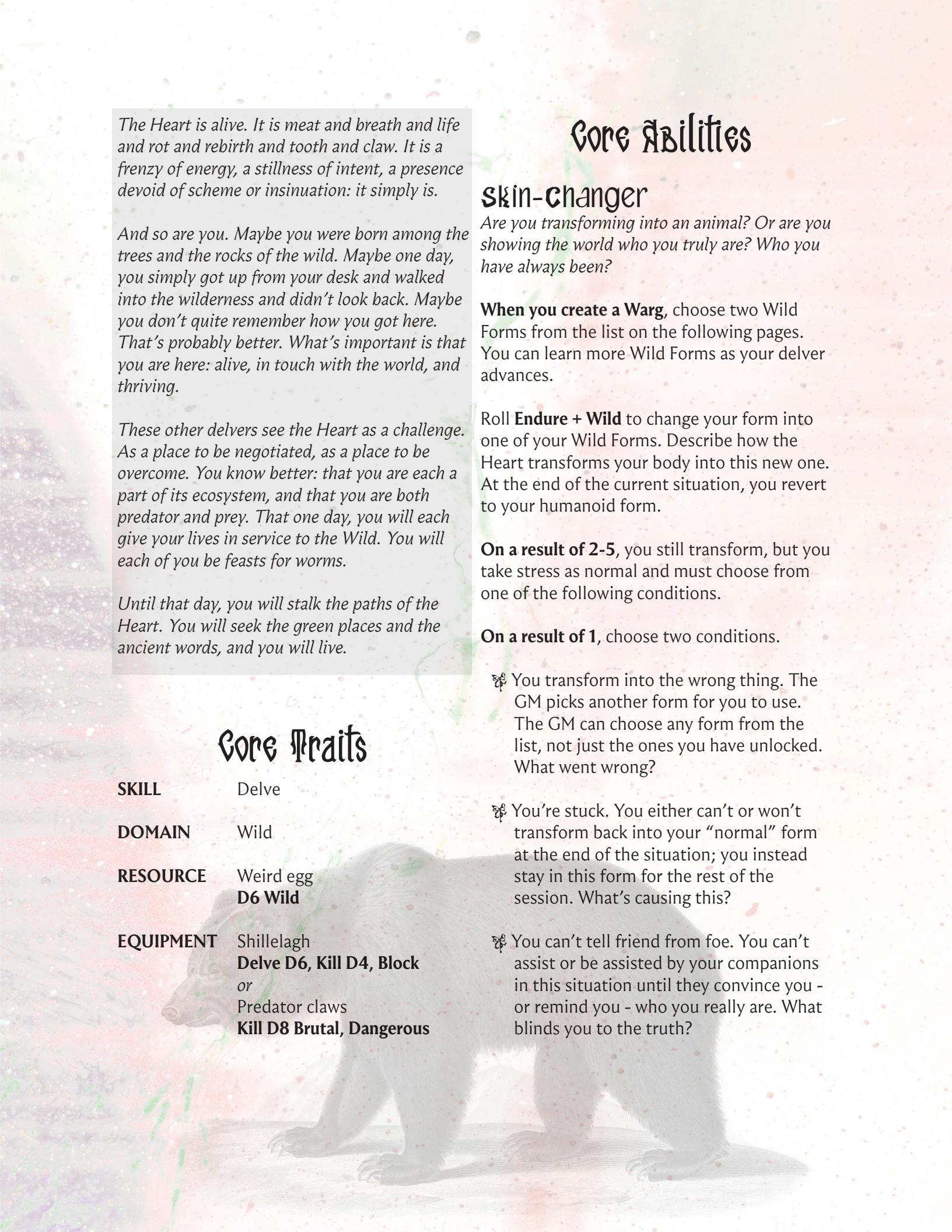
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*The Heart is alive. It is meat and breath and life and rot and rebirth and tooth and claw. It is a frenzy of energy, a stillness of intent, a presence devoid of scheme or insinuation: it simply is.*

*And so are you. Maybe you were born among the trees and the rocks of the wild. Maybe one day, you simply got up from your desk and walked into the wilderness and didn't look back. Maybe you don't quite remember how you got here. That's probably better. What's important is that you are here: alive, in touch with the world, and thriving.*

*These other delvers see the Heart as a challenge. As a place to be negotiated, as a place to be overcome. You know better: that you are each a part of its ecosystem, and that you are both predator and prey. That one day, you will each give your lives in service to the Wild. You will each of you be feasts for worms.*

*Until that day, you will stalk the paths of the Heart. You will seek the green places and the ancient words, and you will live.*

## Core Traits

SKILL	Delve
DOMAIN	Wild
RESOURCE	Weird egg <b>D6 Wild</b>
EQUIPMENT	Shillelagh <b>Delve D6, Kill D4, Block or</b> Predator claws <b>Kill D8 Brutal, Dangerous</b>

## Core Abilities

### Skin-changer

*Are you transforming into an animal? Or are you showing the world who you truly are? Who you have always been?*

**When you create a Warg,** choose two Wild Forms from the list on the following pages. You can learn more Wild Forms as your delver advances.

Roll **Endure + Wild** to change your form into one of your Wild Forms. Describe how the Heart transforms your body into this new one. At the end of the current situation, you revert to your humanoid form.

**On a result of 2-5,** you still transform, but you take stress as normal and must choose from one of the following conditions.

**On a result of 1,** choose two conditions.

• You transform into the wrong thing. The GM picks another form for you to use. The GM can choose any form from the list, not just the ones you have unlocked. What went wrong?

• You're stuck. You either can't or won't transform back into your "normal" form at the end of the situation; you instead stay in this form for the rest of the session. What's causing this?

• You can't tell friend from foe. You can't assist or be assisted by your companions in this situation until they convince you - or remind you - who you really are. What blinds you to the truth?

# Wild Forms

As a Warg, whenever you complete a **minor beat**, you can spend it to unlock **two** Wild Forms instead of earning a minor ability. You can unlock **four** Wild Forms with a major beat.

If you feel like spending a zenith beat on six Wild Forms, I'm not going to stop you.

Each Wild Form contains the following:

- A list of suggested animals that fit within that category. Pick one of the options, or add your own. You can choose a different option each time you transform into that Wild Form.
- A choice of either of two **skills**. Choose one each time you transform. You gain access to that skill so long as you're transformed. If you already have that skill, you gain access to a relevant **Knack** instead.
- A piece of **equipment** that reflects the change to your physical shape.
- Two **abilities** you gain access to while that Form.

You lose access to these aspects once you return back to your normal state.

Being in a Wild Form can confer implicit advantages - for example, you can fly while transformed into a bird, without needing to roll for it. They likely also confer disadvantages: trying to convince the local marshal to help you out will be harder if you're currently in the shape of a cow.

## Bird of Prey

*Eagle, Owl, Osprey, Falcon, Vulture*

**SKILL**      **Hunt or Kill**

**EQUIPMENT**    Razor talons  
                    **Kill D6 Brutal**

**Skyborne:** You can fly through the air. When you use flight to your advantage against a target that can't fly, your damage becomes **Brutal**.

**Hunter's Sight:** Once per situation, if you observe a target for ten minutes or so, you roll with **mastery** to hunt them down.

## Fowl

*Crow, Chicken, Duck, Jay, Raven, Seagull*

*The author is aware that passerines like crows and sparrows are not actually "fowl." It's just a game. I'm doing my best. Do not @ me.*

**SKILL**      **Discern or Evade**

**EQUIPMENT**    Lucky feathers  
                    **+1 Blood and +1 Fortune Protection**

**Flight or Flight:** You can either fly through the air or swim without difficulty; choose one or the other when you transform. When you do one or the other to escape from danger, reduce the difficulty of the roll by one step (to a minimum of **Standard**.)

**Shiny:** Once per session, you find a **D6** resource of a type relevant to the place you find it. What is it? Where did you find it?

## ungulate

*Cow, Horse, Sheep, Goat, Deer, Rhino, Warthog*

**SKILL** Delve or Endure

**EQUIPMENT** Hoof strike  
Kill D8 Spread

**Pack Animal:** You're made for being on the move. Your delve rolls gain the **Trusty** tag.

**Rolling Start:** You're hard to stop once you get going. If you have a running start, reduce the difficulty of a relevant action by one step.

## cold-blooded

*Snake, Lizard, Turtle, Frog, Salamander*

**SKILL** Sneak or Discern

**EQUIPMENT** Poison strike  
Kill D6 Debilitating  
*or*  
Curative goo  
Mend D6 Distressing

**Gulp:** Whenever you incapacitate a target, you can immediately eat them whole. If you do, refresh D6.

**Spit:** Gain the following equipment:

⌚ Wretched spew - Kill D6 Ranged



## vermin

*Rat, Squirrel, Opossum, Weasel, Ferret*

**SKILL** Sneak or Evade

**EQUIPMENT** Unrelenting chompers  
Kill D4 Brutal, Piercing

**Natural-Born Intruder:** Once per session, you can get inside somewhere automatically. Describe what small, secret route you found to get inside.

**Now Where Did They Go...?:** Once per situation, when an opponent would find you, they don't. Describe where you are, instead of where they thought you would be.

## domestic

*Dog, Cat, Rabbit, Guinea Pig, Regular Pig*

**SKILL** Compel or Discern

**EQUIPMENT** Companionable  
Mend D6 Mind

**Everyone's Best Friend:** Gain **mastery** on rolls made in a landmark with the **Haven** domain.

**A Nose for Trouble:** Once per session, declare that you've got the scent for something and follow it. Roll a D6; the GM will describe what you find.

⌚ 6 - Something useful.

⌚ 3-5 - Something curious.

⌚ 1-2 - Something ominous.

## Insect Swarm

*Ants, Bees, Locusts, Moths, Worms*

You can also choose to just be an individual insect, if you want, but you don't get access to the **Equipment** if you do.

**SKILL** Kill or Evade

**EQUIPMENT** Sheer numbers  
**Kill D10 Spread Reload**

**Irresistible:** You can get in through any opening. You cannot be kept out with anything short of vacuum-sealed or interdimensional barriers.

**Inevitable:** You cannot be stopped. Once per session, when you would take **Blood** stress but before you mark it down, gain **+3 Blood Protection**. It goes away immediately after.

## primate

*Gorilla, Chimpanzee, Baboon, Monkey, Mandrill*

**SKILL** Delve or Mend

**EQUIPMENT** Unbridled strength  
**Kill D8, Delve D6**

**Ballistic:** You can easily climb, swing, and leap through the air. If you're using your acrobatic prowess to attack an opponent, you can use **Delve** to make an attack roll.

**Opposable:** Your hands work like a person's, or near enough. You can use **equipment** that requires the use of your hands in this Wild Form.

## big fish

*Trout, Salmon, Tarpon, Bass, Tuna, Eel*

**SKILL** Delve or Evade

**EQUIPMENT** Electro-receptors  
**Delve D6 Trusty**

**Aqualung:** You can swim and breathe underwater without difficulty.

**Adaptive:** Choose one of the following additional pieces of equipment when you transform:

needle teeth - **Kill D6**

iron scales - **+1 Blood Protection**

advanced gill - You can breath air as well as water.

## Apex predator

*Wolf, Tiger, Bear, Shark, Alligator, Hyena*

**SKILL** Hunt or Kill

**EQUIPMENT** Crushing jaws  
**Kill D8 Brutal**

**King of the Jungle:** Your very appearance inspires fear. Once per session, when you use your presence to cow or intimidate, reduce the difficulty of your next action to **Standard**.

**First Strike:** Once per situation, your first attack gains the **Brutal** tag.

# Notes on changing into an animal

## Can I still communicate with my fellow delvers?

This is up to you. If I was playing a Warg, I could absolutely imagine situations where I really would prefer to be able to just talk like a normal person if I've changed into a fish or a bat or whatever.

But likewise, I could see it being a fun challenge where you can communicate, but it's somehow constrained. Maybe you can only say single words, or something.

Figure out what's most fun. Be willing to change your mind if you pick something and decide you want to do something else!

## What happens to my stuff?

There's two schools of thought, here. One is that you transform and all your stuff falls in a heap - clothes, items, whatever, just everything falls to the ground. This is fun and amusing.

What's more convenient, from a gameplay perspective, is to just say all of that stuff is conveniently "elsewhere" when you transform. Just sort of shifted off to the side, in a pocket dimension, waiting for you until you shift back. This is fine and useful for players who (like me) don't want to concern themselves with inventory management.

You can always choose to keep something around in the world when you shift, but as a general rule, you can't use delver equipment in a Wild Form.

## What if I die when I'm transformed?

What if, indeed?



# Minor Abilities

Wargs don't learn domains in the same way that other delvers do, but they have access to a broader set of skills to reflect their ability to survive in the wilderness.

## Alternative medicine

*Leaf and sap, dirt and spit. These will tend the flesh better than any doctor-mixed remedy.*

Gain the **Mend** skill. Once per session, you can apply an esoteric treatment to yourself or to someone else to relieve the effects of a fallout. It won't make the fallout go away, but it can be safely ignored for the rest of the session. Describe what unconventional method you use to treat the problem.

## barkskin

*Your body is built to endure. The gnarled wood growing over your flesh is both shell and shield.*

Gain +2 **Blood** Protection.

## circle of life

*There is no glory in a kill that goes to waste.*

Gain the **Kill** skill. When you kill something and go out of your way to make sure that its corpse can be used effectively, whether by you, someone else, or by the natural world, you may refresh **D6**.

## in the bones

*A storm is coming.*

Gain the **Discern** skill. Once per session, you may observe the weather, the environment, or some other natural phenomena around you, and make a prediction about how it will change. It will come to pass, guaranteed.

## live off the land

*You know how to find food and shelter out here; if you didn't, you wouldn't belong.*

Gain +2 **Supplies** Protection.

## Natural defenses

*You can only get bit, scratched, and stung so many times before it becomes routine.*

Gain the **Endure** skill. You are immune to mundane poisons, intoxicants, and infections.



## Not All Who Wander

*The wild is your home, but you're a migratory beast.*

Gain access to one of the following domains: **Cursed, Desolate, Haven, Occult, Religion, Warren, Wild.** You can take this ability more than once.

## Off-the-grid

*Always be prepared.*

Gain access to one of the following skills: **Delve, Discern, Endure, Evade, Hunt, Kill, Mend, Sneak.** You can take this ability more than once.

## Pass without trace

*Only a fool gives their presence away.*

Gain the **Sneak** skill. Once per session, you can disappear from a situation without having to justify how you got away; one moment you are there and then the next you are gone.

## Predatory instinct

*It pays to keep tabs on the neighbors.*

Gain the **Evade** skill. Once per situation, ask the GM what the biggest threat in the area is. Once they tell you, describe which of your weird senses gave you this hunch.

## Survivalist

*You've lived this long, and you've got the callouses to thank for it.*

Gain +1 Protection in the **Blood, Mind, or Fortune** resistance. You can take this ability more than once.

## Unerring tracker

*Something happened here.*

Gain the **Hunt** skill. Once per session, if you observe signs of a passage - footprints, broken twigs, blood splatter - you can tell with uncanny precision who was here, where they went, and what condition they're currently in.

## Word-wise

*Other people are a necessary part of the ecosystem. You've accepted this, but you can't help but think you've lost something of yourself in the process.*

Gain the **Compel** skill. Pick one of the other skills on your character sheet and cross it off; your character can't get it by any means.

# Major Abilities

## Chlorokinesis

*Who can resist nature's grasp? Cities are razed and kingdoms are buried by the inevitable march of green. Hack away, chop and burn, but you cannot purge it all. Slowly, eventually, nature will run its course, and grind you into dust.*

Roll **Mend + Wild** to commune with the vegetation in the surrounding area.

On a success, you can cause the vegetation to move, grow, and act according to your will, within the physical capabilities of the vegetation. You could tell a tree to hit something with one of its branches, or coil something up with its vines, but getting it to pull up its roots and start walking around is probably a stretch.

### MINOR: Green-speaker

You can speak as freely with plants, lichens, and fungus as you would with anyone else in Heart.

### MINOR: Briar-warden

You can manifest a large, thorn-covered vine. Gain the following weapon: **Kill D6 Ranged Debilitating.**

### MINOR: Arbor-kin

Gain +1 **Fortune** Protection. If you are surrounded by vegetation, unless someone is specifically looking for you, you are effectively invisible.



## Ancient Order

*Your ways are old, and they are shared by others who honor and respect the Heart's will. Not as a presence, but as a process: an ecosystem of living things. You are its wardens, its shepherds.*

You are initiated into a secret order of druids - or, you reveal that you have always been a part of this order. When you take this advance, name someone in the order that you get along with, and someone you don't.

Gain the order as a bond (*Heart* pg 98). Roll **Compel + Wild** to whisper a message to your comrades. On a success, it reaches their ears. You can use this to transfer stress of any kind to the order as a bond, no matter how far away you are. Describe how your words reach their ears, and how their efforts relieve your situation.

If and when your order suffers fallout and needs your assistance, you can find them at a landmark they call home. Describe it. You can reach it from any other landmark by completing a delve as described below. This is true no matter where you start from; mysteriously, your path always seems to manage to lead you - and your chosen companions - to the order's home.

### Delve to the Ancient Order

<b>DOMAINS</b>	Start with a Domain relevant to your starting location; the destination is <b>Wild</b> .
<b>TIER</b>	II
<b>STRESS</b>	D8
<b>RESISTANCE</b>	12
<b>PROTECTION</b>	1

#### MINOR: In Good Standing

Your order gains **+1 Protection** against stress you allocate to it (so, if you transfer D8 stress to the bond and roll a 6, remove 6 and the bond only takes 5.)

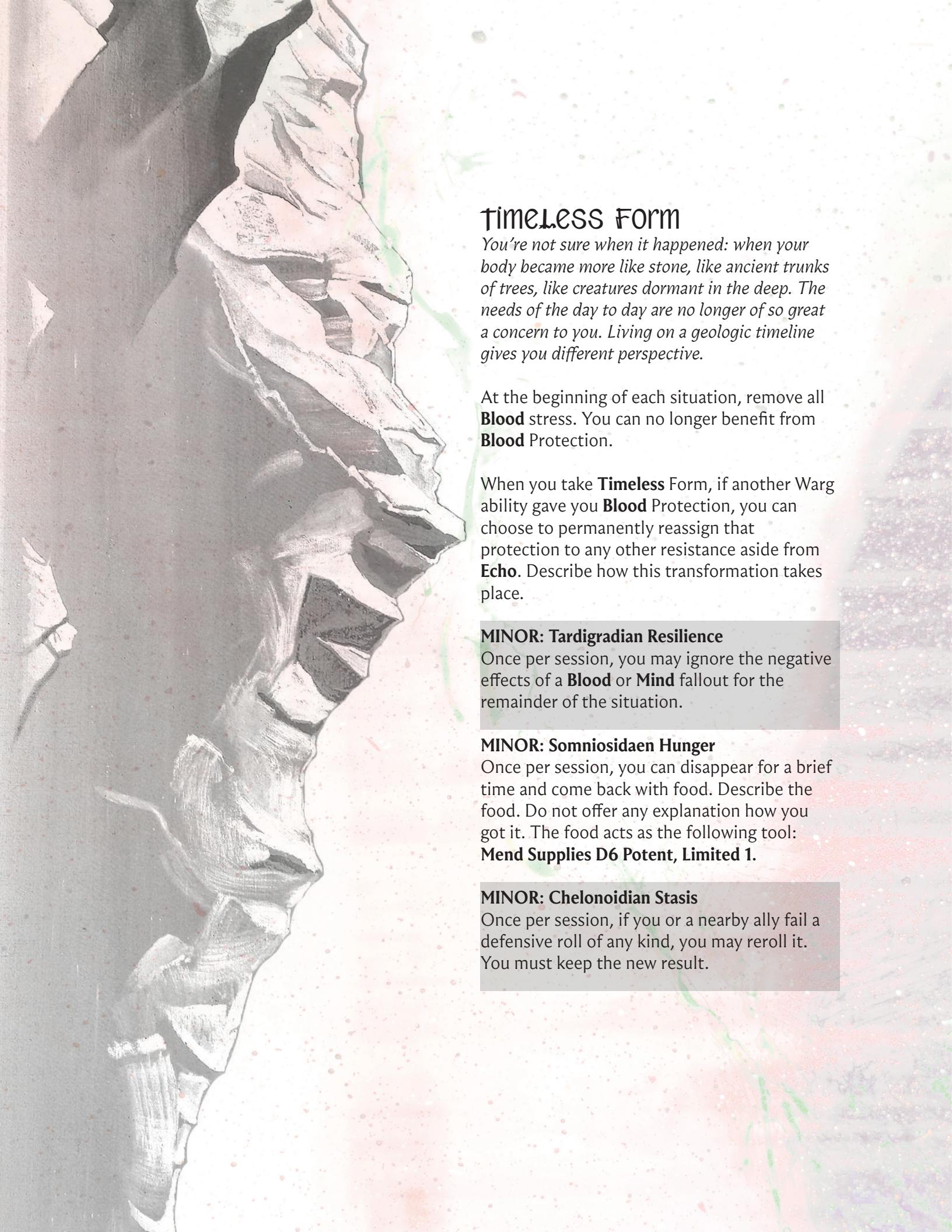
#### MINOR: Tenured

The first time this bond would suffer Critical fallout, ignore it.

#### MINOR: Open Door Policy

Delves to your order's landmark now function as if you have a connection (*Heart* pg 102). Cut the delve's Resistance in half.





## Timeless Form

*You're not sure when it happened: when your body became more like stone, like ancient trunks of trees, like creatures dormant in the deep. The needs of the day to day are no longer of so great a concern to you. Living on a geologic timeline gives you different perspective.*

At the beginning of each situation, remove all **Blood** stress. You can no longer benefit from **Blood Protection**.

When you take **Timeless Form**, if another Warg ability gave you **Blood Protection**, you can choose to permanently reassign that protection to any other resistance aside from **Echo**. Describe how this transformation takes place.

### MINOR: Tardigradian Resilience

Once per session, you may ignore the negative effects of a **Blood** or **Mind** fallout for the remainder of the situation.

### MINOR: Somniosidaen Hunger

Once per session, you can disappear for a brief time and come back with food. Describe the food. Do not offer any explanation how you got it. The food acts as the following tool: **Mend Supplies D6 Potent, Limited 1**.

### MINOR: Chelonoidian Stasis

Once per session, if you or a nearby ally fail a defensive roll of any kind, you may reroll it. You must keep the new result.

## Chimera

*The natural world is a thing of wonders. You are part of it, yes, but you are something more: you have learned how to improve. How to evolve. How to adapt to the world around you. And isn't that what being alive is all about?*

Add a new Wild Form of your own creation to your available forms for **Skin-Changer**.

Select a skill choice, equipment, and two abilities from the other forms (or make up your own, if you're feeling keen) to create your new animal form.

What is it? What physical and behavioral elements exist in this new form? What is it called?

You can take this advance multiple times, in order to create additional new Wild Forms.

### MINOR: Mutation

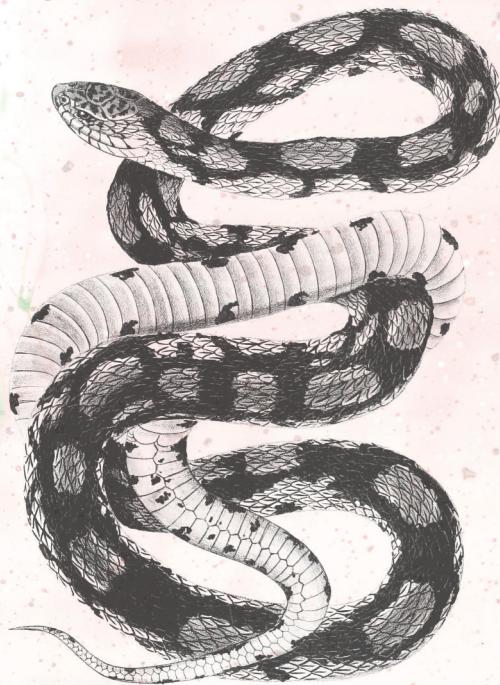
Choose a piece of equipment from a Wild Form you know. You now have access to that equipment in your normal form.

### MINOR: Evolution

Whenever you use **Skin-Changer**, you don't merely take on a Wild Form: you take on a Wild Form relevant to the surrounding area. Choose a **domain** relevant to the surrounding area; you have access to that domain while in this form. This benefit doesn't persist between transformations. How does this Wild Form look different from usual?

### MINOR: Natural Selection

Whenever you use **Skin-Changer**, you get both of the Wild Form's **skills**, rather than choosing between either one.



## Ancient names

*Those who came before left their mark on this place: you can still hear them, if you know how to listen.*

Roll **Discern + Wild** to perform a ritual to commune with the spirits of the land. This ritual takes ten minutes as you prepare the space, perform the rites, and enter a trance.

If you have knowledge of another domain besides **Wild** that's relevant to the surrounding area, roll with mastery.

On a success, you will be granted a vision of significance by the spirits that occupy that surrounding place.

### MINOR: Strange Trails

After you use Ancient Names successfully, the next time you delve to-or-from this place, the delve roll is **Trusty**.

### MINOR: Yawning Grave

On a failed roll, you're still granted a useful vision, even as you take stress in the process.

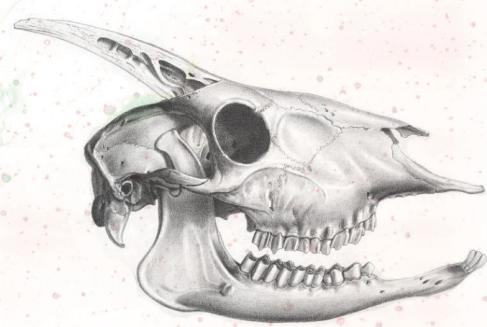
### MINOR: Back from the Edge

After a successful vision, refresh **d4**.





Zenith Abilities



## primordial

*Life as a person no longer holds any meaning for you. It had its time, but it has come to an end. You are becoming something more. Something greater.*

To activate this ability, use **Skin-Changer** one last time.

Your body shudders and changes more violently than it ever has before: the change is total, complete, and final. After this transformation, you will remain in your Wild Form. This is who you are, now. This is who you were always meant to be.

You are more. Bigger. Stronger. Your form is replete with horrible majesty that it never had before. You can take your next three actions utterly unopposed.

Your impact is felt everywhere. You are the prime mover. You roar, and the wild listens. You are the ur-specimen of a new species, a new force within the ecosystem. Elsewhere in Heart, this new animal will emerge, spurred on by your example, and take its place in the natural order of things.

After this situation, you vanish into the wild, to take your rightful place as king.



## Yggdrasil

*The beasts and birds of the wild are but emissaries. The true power is the green and the wood, the root and the barb. You see clearly. You have tasted the rainwater and the light of the solar underground. You have glimpsed the truth, and you will reveal it to everyone, though yourself.*

To activate this ability, enter a landmark.

You transform into a massive, impervious tree. The pieces of the landmark around you are reconfigured - some destroyed, some preserved - as your form rewrites the landscape and links to it to places once out of reach.

Name two other landmarks - even on other Tiers. Those landmarks are caught up in your ever-branching transformation. The three landmarks are effectively part of one new landmark that your tree is at the center of. If it didn't have it before, the new landmark gains the **Wild** domain.

Choose one of the following:

- You have say over what stays and what goes. Name who and what is preserved in this new landmark, and who is obliterated,
- or,
- Leave it up to natural selection. For each person or thing that's narratively relevant, roll a D6. On a result of 4+, they survive.



## shepherd

*Your quest is complete. Now your real work can begin.*

You have finished the grand task set before you, but you are still called to serve. You are a tender of groves, a guardian of beasts. There is no spectacular finale for you, no hero's death. You still have work to do.

Choose a landmark, or create a new one. This place becomes your sacred land. You can move at will throughout it, and you have instinctual knowledge of everyone that enters. You can expel anything or anyone - people, buildings, entire domains - that should not be here.

You devote the remainder of your long life to protecting and guarding the ecosystem of this place, ensuring that nature will continue on, as it must.

Each player, including the GM, should share a story they hear about this landmark after your Warg becomes its guardian.



