

# MYTHICAL DANGERS

A COLLECTION OF ANTAGONISTS FROM THE WORLD



**SCION**  
SECOND EDITION

# MYTHICAL DANGERS

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# MYTHICAL DENIZENS

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# INTRODUCTION

The World abounds with all manner of strange beings and mysterious creatures, from the benign to the malevolent to the simply inscrutable. This book provides an assortment of ready-made antagonists to use in your **Scion** stories, with a wide variety of origins and threats on display so you can easily incorporate the kind of opposition you need for your Heroes. Not all these characters are mustache-twirling villains, however. Some are more misunderstood than malicious, even sympathetic in their own way, and could become allies of the Heroes after some initial conflict. Others are pursuing their own enigmatic agendas, largely divorced from a pantheon's notions of right and wrong, and so may be allies or enemies depending on whether the Heroes share a common goal or get in their way.

Each antagonist is presented with a background to better understand their motivation and habits, as well as necessary game statistics and rules for any unique powers they might possess. Potential story hooks are included to easily incorporate them into ongoing games, or as a basis to set up a one-shot scenario. It's important to remember that Storyguide characters are designed along different principles than player characters, which means they may display unusual capabilities or special rules unavailable to the Heroes. This helps keep players guessing, as well as underscoring the strange and expansive nature of the World, but it's also important to present such capabilities in a way that they make sense as an extension of the antagonist.

Indeed, one good way to look at using these antagonists is to imagine them not just as enemies of the Heroes but to imagine how they see themselves as the protagonists of their own fable or folktale. Even in mythology it's rare for beings to simply declare "Today I shall do evil, simply for its own

## INSPIRATIONS

While **Scion: Mythical Denizens** contains several excellent antagonists ready to be dropped into your stories at a moment's notice, it's far from an exhaustive list. Apart from mythology itself, some other sources of inspiration for unusual antagonists include but are not limited to:

- *Neverwhere* by Neil Gaiman, featuring the strange denizens of London Below.
- *The Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling, featuring a variety of wily creatures.
- *Fables* by Bill Willingham, Mark Buckingham, etc., showcasing some thoroughly modern myths.
- The *Sandman* comics by Neil Gaiman, Sam Kieth, Mike Dringenberg, etc., highlighting ethereal and bizarre inhabitants.

sake! Mwa ha hah!" — it's far more common for even the most twisted and heinous villains to see their deeds as noble, or at least necessary. Viewing things from that perspective makes for antagonists that are complex and have understandable, if abhorrent, motivations, which is far more engaging than simply having video game bad guys who mindlessly attack until destroyed. Even the worst beings have a logic to their actions and presenting that is crucial to making them believable, allowing players to invest in them — and give their defeat real impact, as well.



# MYTHICAL DENZENS

# FAIR FOLK

The fair folk are mercurial, mischievous, and downright terrifying. Cross them at your peril.

## RED JACK

Once, he was Rúadhán — a púca of the Old Country — unusual among his coal-black kind for his rust-colored fur and coppery hair that graced his various forms. Like other púca, he enjoyed playing tricks on unsuspecting mortals (and the rare creature of legend he felt wouldn't kill him), though his distinctive look made him easy to identify as the culprit. Some people would come looking for retribution for his little jokes, and he was forced to be cleverer about his games.

At least, he started to wise up after a youthful and terribly ill-advised incident where he rolled around in soot to disguise himself; this proved not only disgusting but also utterly useless for fooling anyone with eyes.

A traveler in the country might see an unattended red horse and climb on, thinking to claim the wayward (and perhaps masterless) animal, but they'd also forever after remember the exceedingly particular look of the wild, fay thing that ran them ragged halfway around the county, only to throw them in a mud puddle right where the ride began. A few incidents of that kind, and Rúadhán would've perished either upon the pitchforks of the rural folk from whom he could not reasonably hide himself, or else of boredom for want of people willing to take a chance with any red-furred beast.

Thus, he meandered down through the years, uncertain of his place and hoping desperately for a chance to find a good niche of his own, one where he can play his games and not end up run out of town on a rail (or worse) in the process. His “weird” look makes other púca leery of him, so he doesn’t even really have his own kind for company. More than anything else, Jack could really use a friend; someone who’ll put up with his bullshit and maybe help him to find where he belongs in the World. While such a person will (obviously) need to deal with being pranked on the regular, Jack would also surely be a steadfast companion to them, through thick and thin. After all these long, sad years of loneliness and tedium, he’d be willing to go to the wall for someone who’d accompany him on the journey of getting comfortable within his own unusual skin.

In his human shape, Red Jack is a little on the short side, with a charmingly scrappy look about him. His handsomely tousled hair, as noted above, shines like a brand-new penny, and he often sports a day’s growth of beard to complete the roguish look. While he’s pale-skinned, Jack shows no trace of the freckles one often expects of a natural redhead, and his irises glint with a golden sparkle that borders on luminous. Far more unusual than that, however, is the animal “tell” that he always sports in this form. One day, it might be a hare’s ears, while the next it could be a horse’s tail or a goat’s curling horns. Whatever it is, it’s obvious and instantly marks him as something uncanny. Jack seems to



have some significant degree of control over what his tell is, when desired, though he frequently doesn’t much care and is content to let fortune spin the wheel for him.

Whenever taking on an animal shape, Jack’s fur (coat of feathers, etc.) is invariably rust-red, even on animals that simply don’t come in that shade, while his eyes glimmer like polished gold. A rust-colored dog with shining yellow eyes probably doesn’t draw too much attention, though a hare of the same hue can be a bit odd and spotting a russet raven is cause for serious curiosity in the scientific community. Of course, the púca also has his goblin-shape, which he uses to inspire fear and disgust (or even just enough surprise to make a clean getaway). In this form — small and bent, with crooked gnarled limbs, spindly digits, and a mouth full of uneven jagged brown teeth — he’s ruddy-skinned, with limp, wispy tufts of patchy deep crimson hair hanging from the wrinkled pate of his oversized and misshapen head. The eyes of the goblin sport a weird, sickly greenish undercurrent to the gold, which is flat and seems more to draw in light than reflect it.

Jack’s a charmer. He’s the sort of person that people know they shouldn’t like, but do, anyway — at least in the short-term. He readily talks people into having just one more drink, making that impulse purchase, or throwing the first punch at that guy who’s being a little too mouthy and hostile. Wherever Jack is, whatever he’s doing, he’s trying to make (exciting, chaotic) things happen. He’s a habitual shit-stirrer, and he’s got the charisma to, generally, not get blamed for it the first couple of times he pulls this sort of thing with any given person. Of course, anyone who hangs around for long enough finally gets burned one time too

many and cuts ties with him for the sake of safety and sanity. But there are always new people to meet when you're a púca with the gift of gab, right?

## STORY HOOKS

- Red Jack's in well over his head. He spent centuries trying to find another púca who could turn his hair to black, so that he wouldn't be singled out just for being a regular old trickster, but none of them seemed to know any magic that could free him of his coppery locks. So, since his own people couldn't help him, he turned to those who could: kelpies. They, too, have a penchant for taking on the shapes of black horses hoping to entice a foolish mortal to take a ride, but a kelpie's mad dash ends in a drowning death for the poor simpleton on the beast's back. The kelpies claim they can give Jack what he's always wanted, but he must first deliver them a dozen drowned dead, borne headlong into the waves on the back of a rust-red charger. Is he willing to go so far just to fit in? And, if he is, who's to say that one of his targets might not be a person important to someone powerful enough to stop him?
- Some other fair folk clue Jack into a possibility that's been staring him in the face all this time, but which had never occurred to him in his single-mindedness: Perhaps he can establish some new and entirely distinct Legend for himself, using his unusual coloration as a way to beneficially distinguish himself from "ordinary" púca. While he desperately *wants* to get up to the tricks that the others pull, such might simply not be his destiny. But, if not pranks, then *what*, exactly? Characters can stumble upon Jack while he's in the midst of "trying on new looks" for himself, or he might even be someone known to them, who seeks out their advice regarding his current conundrum.

### RED JACK

**Archetype:** Rival

**Qualities:** Imperfect Disguise (animal tells), Obligation

**Flairs:** Hail Eris!, Many Forms

**Drive:** To prank the shit out of some people, and to maybe finally find his purpose

**Primary Pool (9):** Stirring Up Shit, Traveling

**Secondary Pool (7):** Socializing

**Desperation Pool:** 5

**Health:** 3

**Defense:** 3

**Initiative:** 6

**Extras:** +2 Enhancement for Stunts other than Inflict Damage.

## MANY FORMS

**Cost:** None

**Duration:** Indefinite

**Subject:** Self

**Range:** Self

**Action:** Reflexive

**Cooldown:** 1 round

**Prerequisites:** Rival or greater Archetype

This is the gift that allows púca to shapeshift expertly (and might be possessed by certain other cultures' master shapeshifters). At will, a púca can transform into any of the following animals: cat, dog, fox, goat, horse, rabbit (or hare), raven, or wolf. Some púca may learn additional shapes — indeed, there's no real limit to how many more they can tack on if they're of a mind to be especially industrious about it — but these eight are far and away the most common. Likewise, the púca may become human or take on the form of a gruesome little gnome. None of these are the púca's "true" form, for they have no such thing; their nature is essentially protean. If subjected to some power that forces them to return to their "natural" form, a púca may instead opt to remain in their current shape or change to any other form they possess.

As with the Shapeshifter Flair, the púca's dice pools do not change with their forms, and they add one Health box for forms larger than human and subtract one for forms smaller than human.

## MISS HETTY

Miss Hetty never intended to be one of those cat ladies.

It wasn't that she didn't like cats; she liked them fine. She owned a couple growing up and another when she was living alone after college, but then she married Herman. He was a fine man and perfectly serviceable husband, but he was terribly allergic. So, she gave Whiskers to a friend and settled into a long stretch of equally fine and perfectly serviceable dogs. Marriage means reasonable compromise, after all, and there are few people as reasonable as Miss Hetty.

Try as they might — and they did, twice each week and an extra time every birthday and major holiday — Miss Hetty and Herman found children of their own eluded them, even as nieces and nephews shot up like summer corn. Eventually they resigned themselves to extra rooms in their too-large house; Herman made one into an office before too long, while finally Miss Hetty fitted out a sewing room and tried not to remember how darling the family crib had looked in it. Herman thought she handled it well, mostly because she never let him see her cry.

They still had dogs, after all.



Retirement was supposed to be for all those plans they'd saved up over the years, but that's when Miss Hetty learned that Herman was neither a fine man nor the serviceable husband he'd pretended to be. He left her abruptly for a woman nearly thirty years her junior, and, thanks to some sharp lawyer friends, he took the house, the money, and the dogs too. Miss Hetty hardly even fought; she was so shocked. Her family was outraged, of course, but far away, and busy with their own lives. She used what little she had left to purchase a tiny house, a seedy thing at the edge of town. It was there, alone with her memories and her hurt and her bitterness, that she noticed the cats beginning to arrive.

At first it was just one: a scraggly orange tom who looked like he'd been through the wars. Miss Hetty started setting out food, and, though wary as any seasoned campaigner, the tom eventually warmed to her — even let her scratch his head. One night she was doing just that, in fact, when she muttered about how she wished Herman's little floozy was all scratched up instead of this poor old cat. The cat immediately bounded away, pausing only to glance back at her at the edge of the woods before disappearing into the trees. Miss Hetty was sure she'd scared it away for good, but the cat came back the very next night, and she saw on the news that Herman's pretty young thing had tripped and fallen through a plate glass window. She would live, thankfully, but the less said about her face, the better.

Miss Hetty was a reasonable woman, and she was sure it was a coincidence but not so sure that she didn't whisper another request to the old tom. Sure enough, he

bounded away, and the next day poor Herman suffered a dreadful and thoroughly unlikely mishap while visiting his lady friend in the hospital. The doctors were baffled how a pair of rusty hedge clippers found their way into a hospital, much less how anyone could sit on them to such a painfully emasculating result, but there it was. Miss Hetty gave the old tom a good scratch behind the ears, and set out another bowl of food for a ragged Persian she saw watching them from the tree line. She almost tried to catch the poor thing — Persians don't last long in the wild, after all, too civilized — but when the time came she whispered something to it instead. The Persian sauntered off just as proud as you please, and Miss Hetty's favorite nephew got the job he wanted.

Miss Hetty was a reasonable woman, but reasonable doesn't mean foolish. While she had never been a superstitious woman or particularly prone to prayer, she took these events as signs, and who's to say they weren't? She went down to the market and spent the money she'd been saving for a night at the movies on bags of cat food and some fine ceramic bowls painted with little violets, her favorite flower.

Before long, Miss Hetty had thirteen bowls on her back steps and thirteen cats that came from the woods most every night, as wild and different a collection as you ever might see. She has other cats living in the house with her as well, but it's the cats of the woods that she whispers her wishes to, and the cats of the woods that disappear to go work her will. It's been a process of trial and error to learn when she can make her wishes — full moons and new moons work best, as do the high holy days of the Old Ways she learned from a library book — but Miss Hetty is nothing if not persistent. And very, very powerful.

While she is of course aware that the cats are the source of her supernatural power, what Miss Hetty doesn't know is that she's entered a bargain with the Fair Folk. Leaving out food for them is an ancient rite, after all, and in so doing she signaled her willingness to make a deal. That she didn't know what she was doing is of no consequence to them — a deal is a deal, and by fulfilling her wishes, or at least many of them, the Fair Folk sealed the pact. Should she stop upholding her end of the bargain, the Fair Folk would not hesitate to take punitive action, an act that would most likely leave her as little more than a living automaton that exists only to feed and care for her "cats."

Indeed, complicating matters further is the fact that the bargain is slowly draining Miss Hetty's life force, as the Fair Folk take a little with each meal offered and a little more with each wish granted. Miss Hetty hasn't realized the extent of her peril; she attributes her bouts of weariness and confusion to her age and taking care of so many cats, and the exhaustion that follows a granted wish as part of the cost of the magic. She spaces out her wishes accordingly whenever possible, and one of the factors that has limited her requests so far is that she fears the toll that a truly spectacular wish might take. The Fair Folk are patient, however, and don't mind devouring her bit by bit.

It should be noted that while Miss Hetty is not particularly wicked or destructive by nature, the many little disappointments in her life combined with a few serious betrayals have left her with a shockingly vindictive streak running through her otherwise calm and friendly demeanor. Anyone who brushes her off, who snubs her, or in particular reminds her of her ex-husband, his young fling, or their infidelity, will find themselves on the receiving end of an extremely nasty curse. When you add in the persistent whispers and nudges of the Fair Folk, you have a very subtle, but very dangerous, unpredictable foe. Many Scions are so concerned about rampaging giants and other obvious threats that a little old cat lady living at the edge of town hardly seems worth mentioning. And yet, that is exactly what makes her so formidable — by the time you've identified her as a threat, chances are she's already well aware of you.

Miss Hetty also has the potential to be a very sympathetic antagonist, especially if they get to know more of her life story and the fact that she wasn't aware she was bargaining with the Fair Folk (or what it's costing her). After all, who wouldn't take the opportunity to get a little payback, not to mention add some magic and mystery into their lives? Empathetic Scions may even wish to free her from her bargain, though unless it's handled just right, they risk earning the ire of the Fair Folk in the process. She could even begin a story as a mentor figure of sorts, a modern twist on the Witch of the Woods mythic archetype, only to eventually require rescuing — or defeating — as she sinks deeper into her pact and starts losing control of the situation.

## STORY HOOKS

- Word of Miss Hetty's wish-granting magic is getting around, thanks to the loose lips of some folks she's helped, and it's starting to attract all the wrong kinds of attention. Although Miss Hetty's wishes are usually benign these days, there's no question that some of them have done real harm, and that's more than enough to spook the mortal population. Attacking someone so tied to the Fair Folk could provoke a much larger and nastier response than the mortals realize, however, and so it's up to the Scions to see if they can find a way to defuse the situation without drawing the wrath of the Fair Folk or facing off against a torch-wielding mob.
- A Scion whose lineage is often associated with cats, such as Bast or Freyja, receives a request from their divine parent to check out rumors surrounding an old woman and her magical clowder of cats, to see if she might be a long lost relative (or stole something from one). What's worse, her wishes are causing trouble with the area's supernatural inhabitants, and with cats being the common theme, blame is being placed squarely on the wrong god! It's up to the Scion

## WISHING CATS

**Cost:** 1+ Tension

**Duration:** Varies

**Subject:** As named by Miss Hetty

**Range:** Varies

**Action:** Simple

**Cooldown:** End of Scene

Miss Hetty summons one of her cats and tells it a wish she wants granted. This can only be done at night and requires an offering of food. If satisfied, the cat returns to the Fair Folk who then do their best to grant the wish, subject to their own whims and interpretations. Treat this Flair similar to Curse, but with the ability to grant benefits as opposed to only inflicting negatives. While they will not turn a wish against Miss Hetty as they enjoy their bond with her, the Fair Folk are also not above being very literal when it suits them, and so Miss Hetty words her wishes carefully.

In addition, each wish exacts not just a Tension cost but also a physical toll on Miss Hetty, proportionate to how powerful, immediate, and obvious the wish is — something that can happen gradually or easily be explained as an accident only inflicts a little stress, while more overt displays of power inflict real injury in the form of illness or "accidents" around the house. The Storyguide should gauge the cost accordingly.

and her friends to get to the bottom of the situation, which is no easy feat in a small town living in fear of the old woman at the edge of the woods, where feline eyes always seem to be watching every move.

- Miss Hetty is an old friend to one of the Scions or their family and comes to them desperate for help one night. While at first it seemed the cats were granting her wishes, as their numbers have grown it feels as though she's losing control of this power. Wishes are being perverted and interpreted in increasingly cruel and capricious ways, and what's worse, Miss Hetty feels as though the cats are sapping her strength. Each day she has a little more trouble waking up, a little more trouble remembering who she is or what she's doing, and she's terrified. However, the Fair Folk aren't about to let her out of her deal, and simply telling them she didn't mean to make one isn't good enough. Attacking will risk a major magical showdown and put Miss Hetty in danger, so it seems like quick wits and a quicker tongue are called for, but can they really beat the Fair Folk at their own game?

## MISS HETTY

**Archetype:** Rival

**Qualities:** Willful, Unseen (not literally true, but she receives these bonuses against all attempts to research her, do surveillance on her, or otherwise dig into her past or current activities)

**Flairs:** Curse (conditional: must be voiced to her cats and accompanied by an offering), Wishing Cats

**Drive:** To balance things out so that people get what they truly deserve.

**Primary Pool (9):** Socializing (+1 Gossip), Local History, Gardening

**Secondary Pool (7):** Occult Research (+1 Fair Folk), Cooking

**Desperation Pool:** 5

**Health:** 3

**Defense:** 3

**Initiative:** 6

**Extras:** Wishing Cats

## MISTER WHISPER

Everyone whispers things when they think they're alone. Secrets, of course, are popular, as are oaths of vengeance and pleas for mercy or deliverance. Unrequited love gets its share too, as would-be lovers murmur grand declarations that flow freely enough under their breath but somehow never fit through their teeth at full volume. And, of course, there's always the rambling of the inspired and the deranged, if those two really count as separate categories. Sooner or later, everyone whispers something to themselves, if only for the thrill of saying things they'd never share with others.

Sometimes, though, when you say something out loud, you suddenly don't feel so alone. Your hair stands up, your stomach knots, your eyes catch something moving at the far corners of your vision. There's nothing there, of course, nothing to explain that feeling... except this lingering sense that you didn't just deliver a soliloquy, but rather uttered a confession.

Mister Whisper can't claim credit for every such occasion, what with all the phantoms and spirits and other invisible creatures roaming the world, but he's certainly responsible for a more than fair share. He likes to project the image of being all-knowing when it comes to whispers and secrets, and his ability to collect the gossip and rumors that cling to others like lint aids in creating this perception. If you've ever uttered something under your breath, alone or to another, he can potentially sniff it out, and that makes him both an extremely valuable ally and profoundly dangerous enemy.

Like many other Fair Folk, Mister Whisper delights in meddling in the affairs of the World, and while he gives the Gods and their Scions their due respect, he has no qualms about interfering in their plans or hiring his talents out to someone else who wants to do the same. When not actively

engaged in one arcane pursuit or another he amuses himself by adopting a mortal guise and stirring the pot in a community, fanning the flames of rumor and gossip and then enjoying the resulting destructive chain of events. If he has a moral compass the needle has long since rusted away, though perhaps that's not terribly surprising given his long-term exposure to all manner of sordid and hateful secrets.

Those of his fellow Fair Folk who can be persuaded to speak of Mister Whisper seem to be sharply divided in their opinions. Those of their kind reckoned young by the standards of the Fair Folk are generally fond of him and quick to call on his services. Older Fair Folk almost universally shun him, however, and have been known to refer to him as a "usurper" on more than one occasion, though to date none have explained the reason for naming him thus. Mister Whisper refuses to clarify the matter and attempts to press him on the subject are met with icy politeness and eventually stony silence.

While capable of shifting his appearance to better blend in with his surroundings — or go unnoticed altogether — when left to his own devices Mister Whisper's preferred appearance is that of a tall, gaunt man dressed rather like a private detective straight out of an old noir film: pinstripe suit, sharp tie, and a broad-brimmed fedora that always seems to shade his eyes. Regardless of his shape, however, Mister Whisper has a telltale sign that carries over: He always keeps his mouth covered, whether it's with a wrapped scarf, a doctor's mask, a high collar coat, or some other means. He only uncovers his mouth when feeding on secrets, and what's underneath is said to be the stuff of nightmares, though since he takes pains to hide his mouth even that is merely speculation.

When it comes to Scions and other supernatural beings, Mister Whisper greatly prefers to avoid their notice, if possible, or pose as a humble yet well-connected information broker if he's discovered. He may even act the part for a time, assuming those doing business with him have suitably interesting information to trade or are willing to owe him favors for his information. However, his information invariably comes with strings attached, even if they're not immediately visible, and whatever he shares always furthers his own agenda. He doesn't lie — some have even speculated that he can't, though this remains unproven — but he has no problem playing dumb if sharing what he knows would put him at a disadvantage. Like many Fair Folk, he's also fond of deceptive partial truths, especially in response to poorly worded questions, such as sharing the location of an enemy's hideout but conveniently neglecting to mention that it also houses an innocent family.

Mister Whisper makes an excellent mastermind antagonist, particularly if the Scions are accustomed to resolving problems by throwing lightning first and asking questions never. He shuns combat and rarely takes the field directly, preferring to operate his schemes using a web of agents and accomplices — some unwitting, most not. Blackmail and extortion are obvious tools to motivate his pawns, given his powers, though he also enjoys sharing destabilizing secrets and letting people simply follow their natural inclinations. For example, by simply slipping knowledge of her wife's



infidelity to an influential CEO he might not only break up their marriage, but also delay a crucial company initiative that interfered with his plans or even open it up to a hostile takeover by one of his other agents. Likewise, why send thugs to attack the Scion and almost certainly fail, when he can reveal a dark secret about her checkered past to her innocent son and watch her suffer more from the emotional fallout than any bullet wound?

One essential trick to making Mister Whisper scary, but not *overwhelming*, is to remember that while his power of learning whispered secrets is potent, he is far from omniscient. It can still take him time to dig up information on those he's interested in. If it seems like he knows absolutely everything all the time and nothing the Scions can do will ever surprise him or get the better of him, the players will get frustrated or even give up. If it seems like things are heading that direction, remind them of the limits of his powers (the whisper part is quite literal), or even ways to subvert them (such as whispering misinformation to trick or distract him). If still more help is required, perhaps the Scions can discover a ritual or superstition that prevents Mister Whisper from hearing them, though it should be noted that using such a rite will move them to the top of his threat list!

Another key to using Mister Whisper well is to make sure he has a clear objective and always works toward it — while he will occasionally make moves solely to disguise his intentions and confuse his enemies, his actions shouldn't seem totally arbitrary to those willing to examine them carefully and search for patterns. He also rarely targets powerful enemies directly, preferring to strike at weak points instead — targeting families, friends, and other

aspects of a Scion's life they can't easily protect. He delights in making such individuals into his agents, typically through blackmail, and having them report back on his enemy's movements or even turning them against the Scion by revealing something hurtful. Such leverage is also useful if he finds himself cornered — sure, the Scions could unleash their wrath on him, but if they do, he has plans in place to release information that will ruin not only their lives but also of those closest to them. And what kind of victory is worth losing everything you live for in the first place?

It's amazing what people whisper when they think they're alone, after all.

## STORY HOOKS

- Mister Whisper comes to the Scions with an offer of information regarding a mystery that has them stumped, or perhaps vital intelligence they need to take down a serious threat. All he wants in exchange is a little personal secret from each of them, nothing which seems to have any real value — a secret love of bad action movies, for example, or a childhood shoplifting experience that was never repeated. It must be too good to be true, right? The Fair Folk aren't known for making bad deals, after all, but the information would be so useful, and the cost really does seem minor. What could possibly go wrong?
- Following a notable triumph over a particularly nasty enemy, each Scion's personal life starts coming apart at the seams. It's like everyone they care about is going through hell: marriages breaking up, friendships ending, people losing their jobs, children running away, perhaps even an unsuccessful suicide attempt. There's no obvious culprit, and the only thing in common is that all these events are related to nasty secrets coming to light. With some digging, the Scions learn that the enemy they defeated was a favored pawn of Mister Whisper, and this is his payback for their interference in his schemes. He offers them a solution — take over for the enemy they eliminated, and he'll use his talents to undo the damage he's done to the lives of the people they care about most. Do they become part of his plans, or fight him and watch those they love suffer?
- After one of the Scions learns an impressive bit of lost lore or potentially transformative secret, Mister Whisper formally presents himself and offers his services in return for sharing the information with him. Before a deal can be struck, however, another one of the Fair Folk appears and demands the information. She calls herself the Duchess of Wistful Days Long Past and she is seemingly obsessed with keeping this secret out of Mister Whisper's hands. Both would seem to be bad enemies to make, and yet giving the information to one invariably involves angering the other. Refusing to share at all might work, but also might incur the ire of both parties, which is even less desirable. Is there a way out without making a new enemy, or better yet, securing some future advantage in the process?

## 💀 MISTER WHISPER

**Archetype:** Nemesis

**Qualities:** Diplomysthic Immunity, Disembodied (he does not possess living bodies but creates a body from pure magical energy as needed, letting it dissipate afterward), Obligation, Unseen (conditional: when not using a created body)

**Flairs:** Hypnotic Charm, Mastermind, Mirror Mirror, Retcon

**Drive:** To gain power and cause havoc by keeping and selectively releasing secrets.

**Primary Pool (11):** Digging Up Dirt, Lying, Misdirection

**Secondary Pool (9):** Hasty Retreats, Legal Reasoning

**Desperation Pool:** 6

**Health:** 5

**Defense:** 4

**Initiative:** 9

## RUTHANA “RUTHIE” REDHAIR, LEADER OF THE SIDHE DEVILS

What would you rather offer for your freedom: Your soul, or someone else's?

This is a question all Sidhe Devils know too well, and Ruthie better than any of them. Small in stature but possessed of an outsized personality that fills any room she's in, Ruthie talks loudly and lives louder, radiating the sort of good-natured swagger that naturally makes others want to follow her. She takes lovers of all genders and descriptions with casual confidence, and even those left in her wake when she invariably moves on find it hard to hate her. True, sometimes her smile shows just a few too many teeth to be comforting, and there are rumors she's bitten off fingers when she's roused to violence, but she dismisses most of those stories with a laugh and another round of drinks.

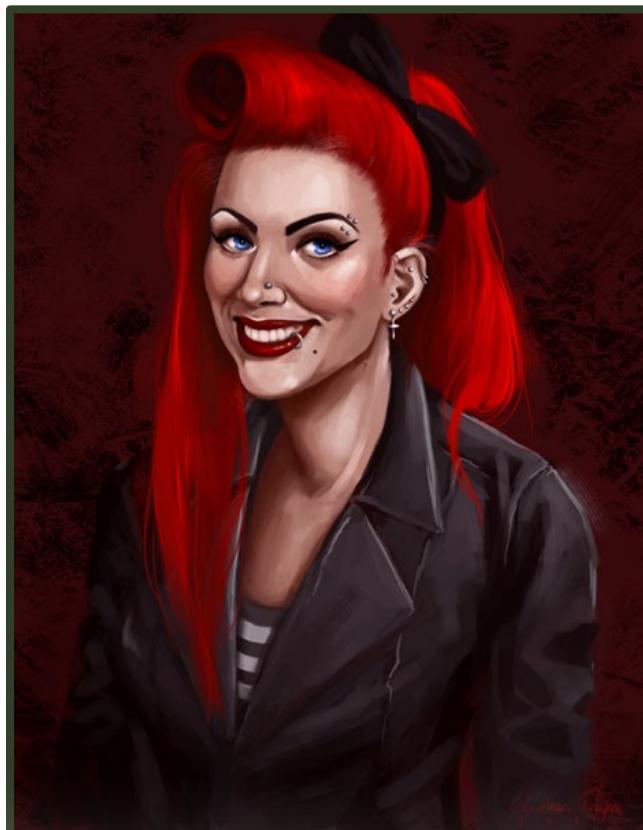
Unless you insult her girls, that is.

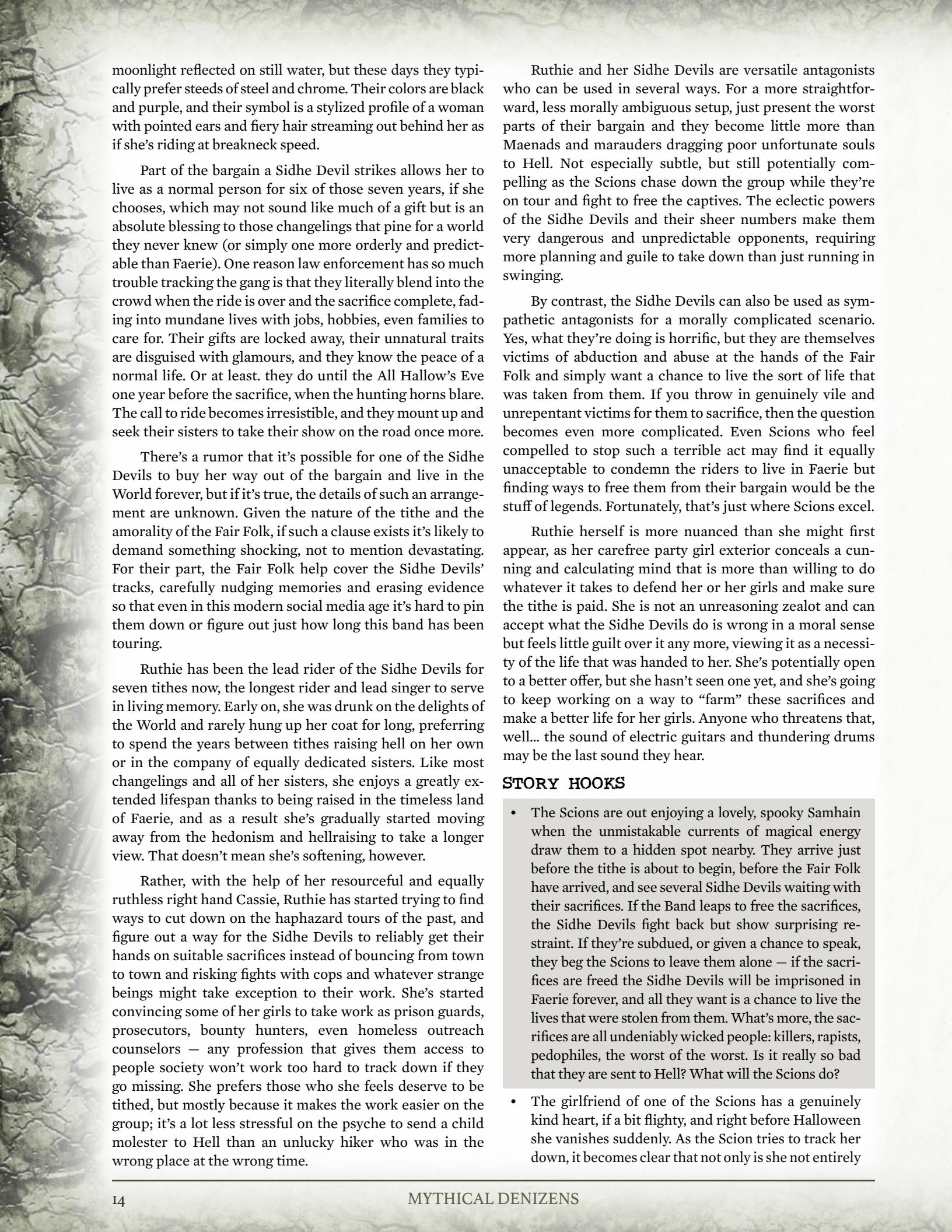
Ruthie is the leader of the Sidhe Devils, who are themselves something of an urban legend to law enforcement around the World. Although they've taken many forms in the past, they're currently an outsized punk rock/psychobilly band. Featuring a rotating roster of fierce, mysterious women who ride gleaming silver bikes, put on wild shows, indulge in some serious carousing and debauching and seducing along the way, and then disappear, often taking some of the locals with them as they go. On any given night, between three and nine members may be onstage playing various instruments, not to mention others riding herd as their roadies and fans, or simply enjoying some local company. Sometimes the Sidhe Devils stay a single night, other times they put down stakes for months at a time. Occasionally, those who vanish with them stumble back home months or years later — some looking not a day older

despite being gone for decades — while others are simply never seen again. Those that do return are typically at a loss to explain where they've been or what they've done, recalling only unearthly music, breathtaking colors, sensual delights, and a profound sense of narrowly avoided disaster.

What law enforcement doesn't suspect is that the Sidhe Devils aren't just carrying off locals for kicks — they're hunting for victims to pay an ancient debt owed to a Queen of the Fair Folk. Every seven years a tithe must be paid to the hungry fires of the Hell, and in return for being allowed to return to the World they lost, the Sidhe Devils are charged with collecting souls to pay the Queen's debt. Each band member must bring at least three souls to the sacrifice, which is attended by elder members of the Court and takes place in a secret and solemn rite on Samhain. Those that fail to bring enough souls are pulled back to the land of the Fair Folk forever, while those that bring more offerings are accorded extra honors and even supernatural blessings. The foolish and unfortunate few who try to run, or otherwise break the deal, are hunted down by their sisters and given over as part of the next tithe.

Despite a wide range of personal differences, all members of the Sidhe Devils are changelings in the classic sense of the term — human children stolen away and raised by the Fair Folk. This unusual upbringing doesn't elevate them to the level of true Fae, but it does grant them some magical talents as well as unusual and striking physical traits. One Sidhe Devil might have hair that constantly moves in a breeze no one else can feel, for example, while another has slitted eyes like a cat, and yet another looks perfectly normal except for her powder blue skin. Once they rode stallions the color of





moonlight reflected on still water, but these days they typically prefer steeds of steel and chrome. Their colors are black and purple, and their symbol is a stylized profile of a woman with pointed ears and fiery hair streaming out behind her as if she's riding at breakneck speed.

Part of the bargain a Sidhe Devil strikes allows her to live as a normal person for six of those seven years, if she chooses, which may not sound like much of a gift but is an absolute blessing to those changelings that pine for a world they never knew (or simply one more orderly and predictable than Faerie). One reason law enforcement has so much trouble tracking the gang is that they literally blend into the crowd when the ride is over and the sacrifice complete, fading into mundane lives with jobs, hobbies, even families to care for. Their gifts are locked away, their unnatural traits are disguised with glamours, and they know the peace of a normal life. Or at least, they do until the All Hallow's Eve one year before the sacrifice, when the hunting horns blare. The call to ride becomes irresistible, and they mount up and seek their sisters to take their show on the road once more.

There's a rumor that it's possible for one of the Sidhe Devils to buy her way out of the bargain and live in the World forever, but if it's true, the details of such an arrangement are unknown. Given the nature of the tithe and the amorality of the Fair Folk, if such a clause exists it's likely to demand something shocking, not to mention devastating. For their part, the Fair Folk help cover the Sidhe Devils' tracks, carefully nudging memories and erasing evidence so that even in this modern social media age it's hard to pin them down or figure out just how long this band has been touring.

Ruthie has been the lead rider of the Sidhe Devils for seven tithes now, the longest rider and lead singer to serve in living memory. Early on, she was drunk on the delights of the World and rarely hung up her coat for long, preferring to spend the years between tithes raising hell on her own or in the company of equally dedicated sisters. Like most changelings and all of her sisters, she enjoys a greatly extended lifespan thanks to being raised in the timeless land of Faerie, and as a result she's gradually started moving away from the hedonism and hellraising to take a longer view. That doesn't mean she's softening, however.

Rather, with the help of her resourceful and equally ruthless right hand Cassie, Ruthie has started trying to find ways to cut down on the haphazard tours of the past, and figure out a way for the Sidhe Devils to reliably get their hands on suitable sacrifices instead of bouncing from town to town and risking fights with cops and whatever strange beings might take exception to their work. She's started convincing some of her girls to take work as prison guards, prosecutors, bounty hunters, even homeless outreach counselors — any profession that gives them access to people society won't work too hard to track down if they go missing. She prefers those who she feels deserve to be tithed, but mostly because it makes the work easier on the group; it's a lot less stressful on the psyche to send a child molester to Hell than an unlucky hiker who was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Ruthie and her Sidhe Devils are versatile antagonists who can be used in several ways. For a more straightforward, less morally ambiguous setup, just present the worst parts of their bargain and they become little more than Maenads and marauders dragging poor unfortunate souls to Hell. Not especially subtle, but still potentially compelling as the Scions chase down the group while they're on tour and fight to free the captives. The eclectic powers of the Sidhe Devils and their sheer numbers make them very dangerous and unpredictable opponents, requiring more planning and guile to take down than just running in swinging.

By contrast, the Sidhe Devils can also be used as sympathetic antagonists for a morally complicated scenario. Yes, what they're doing is horrific, but they are themselves victims of abduction and abuse at the hands of the Fair Folk and simply want a chance to live the sort of life that was taken from them. If you throw in genuinely vile and unrepentant victims for them to sacrifice, then the question becomes even more complicated. Even Scions who feel compelled to stop such a terrible act may find it equally unacceptable to condemn the riders to live in Faerie but finding ways to free them from their bargain would be the stuff of legends. Fortunately, that's just where Scions excel.

Ruthie herself is more nuanced than she might first appear, as her carefree party girl exterior conceals a cunning and calculating mind that is more than willing to do whatever it takes to defend her or her girls and make sure the tithe is paid. She is not an unreasoning zealot and can accept what the Sidhe Devils do is wrong in a moral sense but feels little guilt over it any more, viewing it as a necessity of the life that was handed to her. She's potentially open to a better offer, but she hasn't seen one yet, and she's going to keep working on a way to "farm" these sacrifices and make a better life for her girls. Anyone who threatens that, well... the sound of electric guitars and thundering drums may be the last sound they hear.

## STORY HOOKS

- The Scions are out enjoying a lovely, spooky Samhain when the unmistakable currents of magical energy draw them to a hidden spot nearby. They arrive just before the tithe is about to begin, before the Fair Folk have arrived, and see several Sidhe Devils waiting with their sacrifices. If the Band leaps to free the sacrifices, the Sidhe Devils fight back but show surprising restraint. If they're subdued, or given a chance to speak, they beg the Scions to leave them alone — if the sacrifices are freed the Sidhe Devils will be imprisoned in Faerie forever, and all they want is a chance to live the lives that were stolen from them. What's more, the sacrifices are all undeniably wicked people: killers, rapists, pedophiles, the worst of the worst. Is it really so bad that they are sent to Hell? What will the Scions do?
- The girlfriend of one of the Scions has a genuinely kind heart, if a bit flighty, and right before Halloween she vanishes suddenly. As the Scion tries to track her down, it becomes clear that not only is she not entirely

human, but she's part of the Sidhe Devils. The group is constantly on the move and picking up more and more mortals as they go. If the Scion confronts her lover, the girlfriend tearfully recounts her changeling upbringing and swears that she wants to get out of the bargain, but she's terrified of asking the Fair Folk what it will take to be released. If the child of a God were to stand with her, though, it might go a bit more easily for everyone. Will the Scion help her girlfriend break free? And what will the terrible cost be?

- A loved one vanishes in the wake of a visit by the Sidhe Devils, and it's only a few days before the tithe comes due. The Scions must race against the clock to track down the Sidhe Devils, and when they do, Ruthie claims that the loved one committed a serious wrong that deserves the punishment of sacrifice. She produces proof, but can any agent of the Fair Folk really share the whole story? And even if the loved one is guilty, can the Scion stand by and watch this punishment? Taking on the whole group is long odds, especially if they have adoring fans and grizzled roadies on their side. Might there be another way?

## 💀 RUTHANA "RUTHIE" REDHAIR

**Archetype:** Nemesis

**Qualities:** A Thousand Ships, Apocalyptic Presence (conditional: Ruthie must sing a particular fae song to call forth this form and if silenced reverts to her normal self), Tough As Nails, Vengeful Blood (angry tithed spirits are loosed from Hell to speak of horrors [treat as the Swarm Quality])

**Flairs:** Hail Eris! (conditional: must sing to use this Flair), Hypnotic Charm, I Have Friends, Second Wind

**Drive:** To pay the tithe and protect her girls at all costs.

**Primary Pool (11):** Lying to Authority, Hedonism (Seduction +1), Owning the Stage, Tolerating Extreme Intoxication

**Secondary Pool (9):** Bite Attacks, Daredevil Riding, Intimidation (Wicked Grin +1)

**Desperation Pool:** 6

**Health:** 5

**Defense:** 4

**Initiative:** 9

**Extras:** Sidhe Devils Ride Again!

When it comes to writing the Sidhe Devils up as Antagonists, treat most of them as Foes, each with one or two Qualities related to their upbringing in Faerie. These blessings are typically reflected in a member's look and/or attitude, and so astute Heroes can often anticipate potential powers just by watching a particular Devil for a short time. Ruthie's second in command, Cassie, should be treated as a Rival, and the Storyguide should assign her Qualities and Flairs that anticipate some of the Scions' key strengths.

## NIKKORI-TANUKI

Known, like so many of her kind, by a descriptor rather than a proper name, Nikkori-tanuki (literally, “bright smile tanuki”) is a bake-danuki: a shapeshifting Japanese raccoon dog trickster. She tends toward the “(mostly) harmless tomfoolery” end of the trickster spectrum, in the grand tradition of more renowned tanuki who do things like turn into wine bottles that roll away from anyone trying to drink from them, or shave people’s heads in the blink of an eye when they cross a given bridge. She knows the stories of bake-danuki who play far crueler “pranks” – like those who beg for a ride on a mortal’s shoulders and then beat them mercilessly, or even deceive passing unfortunates into hanging themselves – but she wants no part of that kind of wickedness.

Like most other bake-danuki, Nikkori-tanuki has her own preferred form of prank: She likes to get people amazingly drunk, only to have them wake up in humorous circumstances that force them to gradually reconstruct the previous night’s events in order to, say, recover some Relics, figure out why they’ve got a mobster’s suitcase full of cash, or even just get an especially embarrassing photo deleted from someone’s phone. She never lets people get into more trouble than they can handle – though she’s happy to let them *believe* they’re in too deep, at least for a little while – and she always takes a given person’s or group’s abilities into account when setting them up for the hungover reveal. If someone seems like they’ll react violently, rather than playing along, she won’t set them up this way, though. The point is to give folks some (slightly embarrassing) fun, rather than to get them into deadly brawls over humorous slights.

In her animal form, Nikkori-tanuki looks like an ordinary raccoon dog; which is to say, she looks an awful lot like the adorable product of a one-night stand between a raccoon and a Pomeranian. She can also take on a more bipedal shape, in which she retains almost all her animal features but walks about upright, with her front paws acquiring a configuration somewhat more like nimble little hands. Sometimes, she wears a little tanuki-sized kimono in this latter shape. For modesty’s sake. Probably. Or maybe because it’s just painfully cute.

Additionally, Nikkori-tanuki can take on the form of an attractive young Japanese woman with an especially winning smile. In this shape, she enjoys wearing both modern and traditional fashion, or sometimes, a blend of both. She finds the number of things that mortals need to keep track of to be somewhat troublesome, sometimes, and is known to just randomly leave behind possessions (umbrellas, backpacks, boots, etc.) when they become a burden, reasoning that she can always find replacements. Being adorable helps her to get away with this “eccentricity,” and she makes use of that for all it’s worth.

Nikkori-tanuki is a jolly, free-spirited sort, who approaches life as a joyous adventure to be savored. She loves to laugh, play, and socialize. She has no shame about vulgarity and considers crude humor to be perhaps the highest of art forms. She can put away booze like its water and it takes a



truly heroic amount of alcohol to get her so much as tipsy, let alone drunk. Some folks may well be inclined to think of her as something of a “manic pixie dream girl,” but she finds that notion hilarious. She’s been like this for *much* longer than such an idea has existed, and she’s not in it to help any man “find himself.” She just sincerely enjoys being this way. That said, the guy who tries to have a rewarding art-film rom-com experience with Nikkori-tanuki is in for one hell of a wacky ride, and it’s not going to end up anything like he hopes.

## STORY HOOKS

- Traditionally, *bake-danuki* own eight objects which are part and parcel of their power to influence the World. Some of these (like their bright eyes and big tails) are inherent parts of them, while others are items that they carry on them: a wide-brimmed hat for keeping out the elements, a sake bottle, and a promissory note. Nikkori-tanuki recently woke from a long, drunken night out on the town (during which she drank so much with some especially festive Gods that even *she* got sloshed) to discover that her promissory note is missing! Though it may be a Relic of small account to even the average Scion, it contains the trustworthiness and self-confidence of a tanuki. Nikkori-tanuki is devastated (and much diminished) by the loss of the note, but it is *also* the sort of thing that could be used to wreak terrible havoc if it fell into the wrong hands. Even a mortal huckster could enhance their abilities as a conman to nigh-Legendary levels with the note, and poor Nikkori-tanuki is left a shadow of her normally bold and enthusiastic self until it’s returned to her.

Nikkori-tanuki has struck again! The characters wake up sprawled across a penthouse hotel room with maybe half their clothes among them, and no way of paying for the room. And that’s just where their troubles begin. Items (or even people) precious to them are missing, and they have no clue where to even begin looking. As they blunder their way through recreating the events of last night, new friends, antagonists, and spectators to the whole curious affair arrive on the scene to credit them with and/or accuse the characters of all manner of bizarre things. No great harm has been done to anyone or anything, of course — that’s just not Nikkori-tanuki’s style — but the characters will hopefully have an enjoyable time piecing together the progress of their drunken escapades, and perhaps even get a good chuckle at their own expense out of the whole experience.

### NIKKORI-TANUKI

**Archetype:** Rival

**Qualities:** A Cage of Words

**Flairs:** Give Me Another (as per the Satyr Knack), Revels (as per the Satyr Knack), Shapeshifter (human and tanuki-human hybrid forms)

**Drive:** To have fun and get others into humorous situations

**Primary Pool (9):** Carousing, Give Me Another, Shenanigans

**Secondary Pool (7):** Socializing, Escaping Consequences

**Desperation Pool:** 5

**Health:** 3

**Defense:** 3

**Initiative:** 6

**Extras:** Cut Loose

Nikkori-tanuki’s ability to get people sloshed is, literally, Legendary. Any alcohol distributed in her presence (whether or not she’s the one pouring) is treated as being given by a being of two Tiers higher than herself, for the purposes of the Epic Stamina Innate Power.

## QGMUNDR

When Freyr was first given dominion over the *álfar*, not all of them were exactly thrilled with the decision. Some claimed that he was one of their kind and always had been, promoted to Godhood in the whole mess between *Æsir* and *Vanir* — thus, an acceptable candidate for the job — while others were less certain, and disputed his right to rule over them. Qgmundr was one *álf* who didn’t hold with the *Vanir-cum-Æsir*’s supposed authority. Rather than submit, he retreated from his home-world of *Álfheimr* with others who held his beliefs, to the mortal realm of *Miðgarðr*, and from there to the island that would, with the coming of the Norse, eventually be known as *Snæland* — later, *Iceland*.



Somehow, despite the change that otherwise invariably overcomes ljósálfar (“light elves”) who leave Álfheimr, Qgmundr was able to stave off the transformation into a dökkálfr (“dark elf”) or svartálfr (“black elf” or dwarf). Those who followed him into exile believe that it was his powerful will (or, perhaps, some strange sorcery known only to him) that enabled him to hold onto the sublime and radiant beauty of the world of their birth, even amidst the squalor of the mortal realm. Other álfar maintain that he discovered some way of bringing a small fragment of Álfheimr with him, containing only *just* enough power to sustain his own existence as a ljósálf. Whatever the case, he is certainly an anomaly among the elves of Miðgarðr.

In truth, Qgmundr’s reasoning for retaining his light elf shape was simple enough: He found that mortals were more likely to heed the will of a radiant and otherworldly being than one that looked like a gnarled goblin fresh from the smithy. It was merely a matter of practicality, for he knew that the mortals were growing ever more numerous, even then, and it was merely a matter of time before the then-uninhabited island sanctuary he’d found was overrun with them. While he wasn’t able to make any kind of pact with the Christian Papar monks who were the first mortal settlers (indeed, he found them to be hostile boors, their only virtue was that they were relatively few in number and therefore easily ignored), the Norse proved to be more accommodating and eventually drove off the cloistered interlopers at the direction of the elves.

Qgmundr looks like what someone with a modicum of knowledge upon the subject might describe if someone asked them to guess at the appearance of a wingless Norse

angel. He is a beautiful being of light as much as, if not more than, flesh, with waves of radiant, faintly luminous silvery-white hair that wave eternally as though in a breeze, regardless of the presence or absence of wind. His features are angular and as lovely as they are handsome, with a clean-shaven face and eyes that gleam like jewels of white winter sunlight. He speaks in a soft voice that nevertheless resonates with unearthly authority and power, and he is garbed in armor that looks to be spun of pallid yet bright moonlight, with a sword of the same belted at his hip. Although he seems as if he should *almost* be translucent, there is a fierce solidity to him — a feeling of gravity that goes somehow beyond the crass material substance of the World.

Despite his profound eloquence and ethereal majesty, Qgmundr is rather insular and antisocial. His words are poetry and his expressions art, but they are poetry and art of self-imposed isolation. He wants as little to do with mortals as possible, and he remains at best coolly indifferent to the Æsir and their progeny. He might receive the children of other Gods with more grace... or he might not, depending on his first impression and the reason for the meeting. He treats other sorts of Fair Folk — and, at times, other creatures of Legend — with courtesy, but always makes clear that his primary concern is the wellbeing of those álfar who followed him into exile, while everything else is, at best, a far-distant second. More than anything, he wants to live as closely as is possible to the way his people did before the struggles of the Gods imposed a new order upon the elves. If someone can offer him *that*, he’ll be inclined to hear them out, no matter what manner of creature they might be.

#### STORY HOOKS

- Long ago, Qgmundr cut a deal with the mortal settlers of Iceland, one that endures to this day: He and his folk will (for the most part) leave the local mortals alone, so long as the mortals show the expatriate álfar the same courtesy. In modern times, this has translated to — among other things — the Icelandic legal tradition of making certain that no civil engineering project disturbs the dwelling-places of the elves. When a powerful earthquake rattles the island nation, and people are forced to hastily erect structures in places considered the territory of the álfar, Qgmundr is not inclined to be understanding. Indeed, on top of the woes the people already face, he intends to punish these impudent mortals for their trespass. Can eloquent arguments (or, failing that, force of arms) convince him to change his mind?
- Freyr wants to patch things up with Qgmundr and get to the bottom of the elf’s grudge against him. Hell, he doesn’t even *rule* Álfheimr, anymore. While Freyr knows he could certainly just force his way into the álfar’s court and demand an explanation, the Bringer of Joy also understands well that friendships rarely start with one party barging into the other’s house to bark demands. Thus, he’d like to send a delegation to open talks with Qgmundr, in the hopes that an accord can

be reached and the band of rogue álfar can finally be allowed to return home to Álfheimr, if they so choose. In order to do that, they must first acknowledge that Freyr did (previously, anyway) hold the right to sovereignty over them. Given that Qgmundr and his people have spent long millennia in exile explicitly refusing that claim, anyone trying to broker a truce between the two parties really has their work cut out for them. Between an elf-in-exile and a God, who will prove the more stubborn?

- The press of the local mortals has become intolerable, even with Qgmundr's arrangement with them. He has resolved to lead his people to a new home: the abandoned world of Vanaheimr. Sure, he's heard rumors that there are various creatures of Legend squatting there, but that's nothing a determined band of álfar can't work around. All other factors aside, he likes the symmetry behind the notion of swooping in and taking up residence in Freyr's former homeland. However, Qgmundr isn't ready to just pack his people up and drag them off on what's potentially a fool's errand (for all he knows, Vanaheimr is a complete shithole, these days), so he needs to send someone ahead to scout the place out for him and let him know if it can provide the sort of stable new homeland his people need. He's willing to pay lavishly, in elf-crafted goods, and he might even be willing to enter into a pact of mutual protection with a neighboring young Band of Scions looking to establish their own otherworldly base of operations somewhere nearby.

## QGMUNDR

**Archetype:** Titanspawn

**Qualities:** Apocalyptic Presence, By Divine Right, Heavily Armored, Honor Bound, Invulnerability (light-based attacks), Mystic Arsenal (sword of light, representing Sun)

**Flairs:** Blinding Glory (as the Sun Boon, but Qgmundr spends Tension rather than Legend), Molon Labe, Radiant One, Sorcery (Forge)

**Drive:** To live as did the álfar of old did, before the Æsir complicated everything, and to lead his people with dignity and honor

## RADIANT ONE

**Cost:** None

**Duration:** 1 round

**Subject:** Powerful external light source

**Range:** 100 yards

**Action:** Reflexive

**Cooldown:** 1 round

**Prerequisites:** Titanspawn or higher Archetype

Ljósálfar are creatures of radiance itself. They are light given form and will, and the more powerful among the light elves can draw strength from potent sources of illumination. Once per round, the ljósálfar can cause a source of light at least as powerful as the noonday sun (and which is not created by the light elf) to visibly dim in their presence, drinking in the power of that radiance to gain +1 Enhancement to any roll before the end of the next round. Floodlights, searchlights, lasers, and the like are all viable light sources, as are any powers (like those of the Sun Purview) that create especially brilliant flashes. When attempting to siphon the energy off another character's Flair, Knack, or Boon, this Flair provokes a Clash of Wills. If the ljósálfar wins, the power fizzles out and they gain their Enhancement; if the other character wins, the power activates as normal.

# GIANTS

In ancient times, giants dominated the countryside as their very stride shook the ground they walked on. Today, giants have found new ways to dominate The World.

## ISCHYRÓ

Back in what he's come to call "the bad old days," Ischyró was an anthropophagic terror, much like many of his kin. He preferred the goats of his vast herd, of course, but wouldn't pass up the odd mortal to throw in the stewpot or to spit over an open flame if the opportunity presented itself. That was the ancient way of the cyclopes, after all: maneaters of convenience, more or less.

But time passed and times changed, and Ischyró came to find that mortals were many and strong in their numbers — strong enough, perhaps, to slay even one of his kind — and he decided that maybe it was time to let go of the old ways. He made peace with that and moved on from the tiny Mediterranean islet he'd long called home. For years thereafter, he used the natural gifts of his people to make a living as a craftsman, forging fine metal and raising great structures of stone. It was a good life, and one that he quite enjoyed, but the press of mortals all around him became difficult. It wasn't that he felt the old hunger, anymore, so much as that there was always the tinge of fear among the mortals, wondering when — not if — this seemingly helpful giant in their midst would turn on them.

And Ischyró couldn't really say that he blamed them for that perspective. Once, he'd been exactly the thing they dreaded, and what assurances could he give that he wouldn't become so, again?

His years of labor earned him a good-sized fortune, and the cyclops opted to go somewhere far away from the people who knew of his kind. He purchased a great swath of wide-open land, far from prying eyes, and a different sort of herd to tend: cattle. He found that he liked the big beasts, as they generally didn't require quite as gentle a touch as did goats. The old memories and skills of watching over a herd came back to him, and Ischyró readily learned the differences inherent to properly caring for his new animals. In time, he even started a family of his own.

Ischyró enjoys the comparative solitude of his cattle ranch, with only his wife, his little ones, and a few trusty hands to help with driving the herd from one pasture to the next. Still, he's hospitable enough when people are passing through. The centuries (and his transition to family man) have mellowed him out quite a lot, and he wouldn't think twice before helping someone who seemed to be in need — whether that meant letting them use his phone or (easily) pushing their vehicle out of a deep roadside ditch. When he thinks back now on the dread he used to inspire in mortals, he feels more ashamed than anything else. So he tries not to put too much thought into all of that these days, focusing instead on the positives of the present and the possibilities of the future: socking away for his kids' college tuition, idle thoughts about what kind of grandfather he'll be (they grow



up so fast, after all; especially when you're an ageless creature of Legend), and the like. He's spent long enough in the wide grasslands that he's adopted some of the local turns of phrase and figures of speech, which makes for a particularly strange blend with the occasional florid outburst in ancient Greek when he's kicked by a bull or accidentally drops a cinderblock on his foot.

Physically, Ischyró is a fairly normal example of a Hellenic cyclops, if a bit on the small side. He stands about eight-and-a-half feet in height and has a muscled fit to put an ox to shame. His dark brown hair has a tendency to get shaggy and unruly if he lets it grow too long, so he tries to keep it short and neat, and he's often as clean-shaven as he can manage (which usually means a growth of wiry stubble on his cheeks and chin). He's covered in old battle-scars, though most of those have faded with years, such that one really needs to look to pick them out these days. All his denims and flannels need to be custom-made for him, naturally, but he's got the money for that. The same goes for some good pairs of giant-sized boots and sturdy broad-brimmed hats that accommodate the positioning of his large central eye while keeping the sun off his face. The years have certainly done nothing to diminish the scope of his appetite: He can easily pack away a dozen pounds of steak in a single sitting and still have room for sides.

### STORY HOOKS

- A Scion of one of the Gods of the Theoi, Netjer, or Yazatas is instructed by their divine parent to take revenge upon a cyclops who, long ago, devoured a mortal precious to them. The giant disappeared from his original haunt, and his current location has only

just come to the God's attention — better late than never for vengeance, right? But, the Ischyró of today is nothing at all like the cruel brute he once was. He's got a wife (maybe mortal, maybe not) and kids, and he's done an awful lot over the centuries to make amends for his former depredations. Once the Scion finds out that Ischyró is a decent guy, nowadays, will they defy their Godly parent — regardless of the potential consequences — and refuse to murder someone who's long since reformed his ways?

- What happens when the characters run into Ischyró on the warpath, after he returned home from a long cattle drive to find his family murdered? The killer left a calling card to let the cyclops know that the slaughter was "justice" for Ischyró's own ancient crimes, but the giant doesn't see the scales as balanced, and he wants revenge for the innocents who died in his stead. His ranch hands — who knew and loved the cyclops' family — tried to come with him, but he knew they'd be no match for whomever it is he's up against, now. Ischyró's more bestial nature has been brought back to the forefront by the savagery inflicted on his family. When the characters cross paths with him, can they keep him from inflicting a whole lot of collateral damage in the process of avenging his loved ones?
- The characters become caught up in a territorial dispute between Ischyró and a herd of centaurs. Development has gradually forced the latter off their traditional stomping grounds, and the only place they can think to go involves intruding upon the cyclops' expansive property and the pastures where he grazes his herd. Unsurprisingly, the cattle don't much care for the thundering of scores of hooves when the centaurs gallop for the sheer joy of racing the wind, but the centaurs are less concerned with that than with their custom of running free wheresoever it pleases them to do so. Ischyró's not a bad guy, and he doesn't want things to escalate, but he also can't have the centaurs encroaching on his lands and tearing up the pastures his cattle need for fodder. One way or another, something — and someone — has to give.
- As far as Ischyró could tell, the guy seemed like he was on the up-and-up; a real straight-shooter. And the stud bull he was offering was *magnificent*. Truly, a beast who might sire the greatest herd the World has ever known. The problem is that the bull was stolen and belongs to the Graeco-Roman mystery cult God Mithras, to be used in the divine reenactment of the ritual *tauroktonos* ("bull killing"). What, exactly, happens if the slaughter of the bull doesn't take place at the appointed time and location? Mithras isn't willing to say: It might have something to do with the sun and/or stars, or perhaps with the harvest. It's only the sort of thing he discusses with the inner circles of his faithful. But he's adamant about getting back that bull, and he doesn't care whether a cyclops rancher *thinks* he bought the animal "fair and square."

## STAMPEDE!

**Cost:** 1 Tension

**Duration:** Instant

**Subject:** Summoned Professionals

**Range:** Self

**Action:** Reflexive

**Coldown:** 5 rounds; or the summoned Professionals are all defeated.

**Prerequisites:** Nemesis or higher Archetype

Provided he has at least part of his herd close at hand, Ischyró can draw upon his masterful skill as a herdsman to call some of the beasts to his defense in time of need. By commanding the members of the herd to attack his enemies, he can gain the support of one such animal (each of which is treated as a Professional) per foe to rush to his aid.

More powerful cyclopes — Titanspawn, in particular — may have the ability to call upon even more potent herd animals; perhaps even Nemeans, though the Tension cost of such a Flair is liable to be higher.

Mithras is willing to pay quite handsomely to have the bull back, so long as the people he sends understand the need for discretion — both to do the job quietly, and never to mention that the animal was taken from him, in the first place. He'll pay even more to learn the thief's identity and still more than that to have the man brought to him, alive. For Ischyró's part, the cyclops *also* wants a piece of this swindler who got him caught up in a mess with a warrior God not precisely known for his sense of understanding. In fact, Ischyró might just insist on accompanying the characters until the culprit is found.

## ISCHYRÓ

**Archetype:** Nemesis

**Qualities:** Heavily Armored (thick hide), Mystic Arsenal (giant-sized shotgun), Unstoppable, Vulnerability (cycloptic: rather than the normal effects of a Vulnerability, any damaging attack that successfully targets Ischyró's one eye blinds him completely — either temporarily or permanently, depending on the nature of the damage, increasing all his Difficulties by 2 until the injury is healed)

**Flairs:** I Have Friends (conditional: this only works if Ischyró is in an environment in which his ranch hands can rush to his aid, though he'd be loath to call upon them — save perhaps to help his family), Stampede!

**Drive:** To live in peace with his family, his workers, and his herd

**Primary Pool (11):** Combat (+1 Close Combat, +1 Firearms), Feats of Strength, Tending the Herd

**Secondary Pool (9):** Craftsmanship, Farm Work

**Desperation Pool:** 6

**Health:** 5

**Defense:** 4

**Initiative:** 9

**Extras:** Stampede!

## RÆÐNUR

Harken! Well over a millennium ago, the mighty Geatish Scion, Beowulf, slew the brutish Grendel and his monstrous mother to give peace to the Danes of Heorot, gaining his own immortal Legend in the process. King Hrothgar and his folk considered the two slayings to be an end to the matter, for no longer did children of the “race of Cain” come out of the dark wilds beyond the dominion of men to trouble them in their mead-hall.

But who is to say whether Grendel’s mother bore other children, whether sired by the same father or by another? Perhaps such a child would have learned the importance of greater subtlety from the bloody end to which befell their brother and mother alike. That is the origin of the monster called Ræðnur, and whence her sad story begins.

Ræðnur was young yet when Beowulf slew her family. She realized that she was no match for the powerful Scion, so she chose to hide in the unexplored subterranean depths of her mother’s den rather than perish in some futile attempt to avenge her kin, a battle in which there could be no victory. Perhaps Ræðnur caught some small glimpse of the Geat’s wyrd and knew that he would — Scion or no — die in battle in years to come, and the World would be rid of him. Then again, maybe the creature just didn’t want to die and so chose the better part of valor, not caring what would become of Beowulf, so long as he left Denmark in due time. Sure enough, Beowulf soon returned home to his own people, leaving the Danes to their own devices and giving Ræðnur the opportunity to eventually escape into the wilderness, far enough from mortals to evade the curse of her kind, where no living man would trouble her for many years.

Though without her mother to educate her, Ræðnur understood by instinct that there could never be peace between her race and that of normal men; indeed, for all she knew, she was the last of the former — for she never, in all the centuries between then and now, found another being that she could clearly identify as her own kind. During those first few centuries after Beowulf’s life and death, too many heroes were abroad in the land, forging their own Legends, and Ræðnur had no desire to become just another fallen foe in such a tale. Thus, she journeyed ever deeper into the unpeopled places, growing in strength and cunning as she came of age. Whether she became mightier than her ill-famed brother, she would never know (nor, especially, would she care), but she was certainly strong enough to deal with the rare mortal

— and even rarer creature of Legend — who stumbled upon whatever forlorn lair she inhabited at the time.

As history marched ever on, though, mortals became entirely too numerous. At times, Ræðnur felt herself pressed on all sides by their thronging numbers and was forced into long flight in search of some new hinterland, lest her nature compel her to a frenzy of slaughter that she felt could only inevitably end in her own destruction. When the Age of Reason finally dawned, she was tired — exhausted in spirit by the need to forever stay a few steps ahead of a race that could not be content until it dwelt *everywhere*, all at once. By stealth and cunning when possible, and force when necessary, she had crossed untold expanses of land and had even navigated her way to foreign shores, where she hoped to find escape from the curse of ill-favor by which her race was known. But never did she find any lasting surcease.

The rage kindled in her by the blood of Cain was too strong to ignore, and still she held a burning hatred for those cast in the fair form of the shapelier Gods. Any time people encroached too closely on whatever fastness she had chosen, she had to choose between butchery and flight. The formative lesson of the creature’s youth taught her that the latter was the wiser option, and so she never stayed anywhere for especially long before the onrushing waves of humanity forced her into exile once more. In modern times, she clings desperately to any lonesome place she can find, dreading the inevitability of having to move on once more, lest her uncontrollable bloodlust draw attention that she cannot hope to survive. Beneath the endless churning fire of hatred that burns within Ræðnur is the profound weariness of a creature hounded and hunted across the length and breadth of a millennium and more, for no crime greater than the ill omen of the blood to which she was born.

Ræðnur is a great, hairy brute, towering well over seven feet in height, with thick, heavily bowed legs, and long, gangling arms draped in ropes of muscle as hard as steel cable. Her thick skull sports a massive shelf of sloping brow, and coarse dark hair hangs in greasy tangles from her scalp, while her nose is a thick, flaring snout. Her teeth seem a little too large to fit in her broad, almost ape-like mouth. Her canine teeth, in particular — both top and bottom — look more like small tusks than fangs. Her breasts sag flatly against the knotted muscle of her broad midsection. Her long fingers and toes end in hard yellow-brown nails like jagged claws. The giant’s weird orange eyes catch even the dimmest nighttime illumination to smolder like dying embers. For all her great size and seemingly awkward frame, however, Ræðnur can move as silently as a shadow when she wishes. She wears a ragged, reeking shift of scavenged cloth, not as a concession to anything like modesty, but instead as a means of protecting the somewhat less hairy front of her torso against the elements.

Above all else, Ræðnur is a bloody-handed savage whose heart is filled with seething hatred. She only knows a handful of words in various mortal tongues, learned through exposure rather than any kind of deliberate effort at education, but she sees little value in them. Such speech is for creatures that cannot *take* what they want, whether by force or by guile. She is also a profoundly lonely being;



indeed, much of her rage is fueled by a desire for companionship that is forever denied to her on account of her brutish and ill-favored shape, and by the ancient grief of losing her only kin to someone who simply proved to be better at violence than they. Like Frankenstein's monster, it is — at least in part — misery that has made her a fiend. If she were capable of finding any kind of joy, Ræðnur might put aside her monstrous rage. As things stand, however, there is no room in her tormented soul for anything other than a desire for absolute isolation; or, failing that, for wanton murder, until the pressing horror of mortal joy no longer threatens to remind her of her eternally wretched state.

### STORY HOOKS

- It had to happen, sooner or later: Ræðnur has run out of places to go. She made her way to a lonesome wilderness that seemed like it could hide her for at least a century or two, but construction forced the people of the surrounding towns to switch to what was an otherwise largely unused road that passes through her territory. As work has lingered on with no signs of finishing anytime soon, someone got the bright idea to open a bar along that winding forested roadway, and it's become the closest thing this area has to a hot nightspot. With the wilderness being cut back and mortal cities and towns on all sides of the shrinking forest, Ræðnur finds herself poised to repeat her brother's slaughter of the Danes in their mead-hall.
- After a millennium and more, Ræðnur finally finds others of the so-called "race of Cain," similar enough to herself that she recognizes them as her own. Like her,

## RACE OF CAIN (PERSISTENT CONDITION)

Creatures such as Ræðnur, of the so-called "Race of Cain," suffer from this Condition, which makes them react to the presence of mortals with rage and hatred. Whenever mortals are within one mile per Tier of the creature with this Condition, it suffers an increased Difficulty equal to its Tier on all rolls. Any roll failed specifically on account of this added Difficulty causes the creature to lash out in fury, destroying anything and everything within arm's reach. Further, if one or more mortals are within the range of any of the creature's senses, it will try to kill them all. While thus enraged, the creature benefits from one level of Enhancement per Tier for all rolls to kill or destroy. Those mortals who flee while the creature is in this berserk state might escape its wrath if they're far enough away by the time it finishes with any other victims that it can no longer easily track them down. Likewise, if the creature is reduced to half its Health boxes, it will instinctively attempt escape by the most expedient means.

they are monstrous outcasts from humanity, forced to wander far from their homes in search of someplace where they need not be tormented by the presence of mortal joy. Moving together in a pack as they are, they're certainly a terrifying threat to any mortals they might encounter and killing them may be an option (even a preferred option) for some characters. However, monsters though Ræðnur and her kind might be, they're monsters by nature and not volition. Could it not be that they, too, deserve a place that they might consider their own? More compassionate sorts might, therefore, instead offer to help these shunned brutes find a "paradise" of their own, in which they'll no longer have to deal with the encroachment of those whose mere presence drives them to savage fury. There's a problem, however: where does one go to completely get away from humanity these days, and never have to see them, again?

### • RÆÐNUR

**Archetype:** Nemesis

**Qualities:** Natural Weapon (Nails and Teeth), Sure Footed

**Flairs:** Making Space, Long Arm, Seeing Red

**Drive:** To find companionship among her own kind; or, failing that, to be alone and to slaughter anyone who — even if unintentionally — threatens her isolation

**Primary Pool (11):** Combat, Feats of Strength, Survival

**Secondary Pool (9):** Intimidation, Stealth

**Desperation Pool:** 6

**Health:** 5

**Defense:** 4

**Initiative:** 9

**Extras:** Race of Cain

## MADWEZIGOSHKAA, ANCIENT WENDIGO

Madwezigoshkaa dreams of years long past when winters were longer, and prey was more plentiful. When he wakes, something is always different about the World, but he has spent too long looking at it through layers of ice and a clouded mind to understand what has changed. All he knows is that it is confusing to him. The confusion makes him angry. The anger drives him to hunt until, exhausted, he sinks back into sleep for years at a time.

Once upon a time, he thinks, he was a man. He can't remember how he became what he is now. Maybe a sorcerer cursed him, the way they still curse people to become wendigoag. Maybe he gave in to hunger (long before he knew what truly gnawing hunger was) and ate the flesh of... someone. His friend? His wife? His child? He can't remember if he felt the wendigo sickness growing in his mind and making everything look like meat to consume or if he just took that first bite without thinking.

It was a long time ago. Long enough for Madwezigoshkaa to have grown, layer after layer, a skin of ice over his own withered body. Long enough for him to look more like a snowy hill that walks and howls through the winter storms than a man. When his mind lets him, he sometimes thinks that it's better not to think about what he once was.

The last time Madwezigoshkaa fell asleep was in the lands of a provincial park on the western shores of James Bay, Ontario. Not many people come near to him to disturb him now. The ones that do — hikers, campers, drifters — travel in small enough numbers that no one notices if they disappear. The government warns visitors to the park that it's a hunting ground for polar bears and that the whole area is subject to unpredictable cold weather, but they know the real reason why it keeps happening.

The first sign that the wendigo is nearby and awake is the snowstorm. It comes out of nowhere with blinding intensity, all whirling around Madwezigoshkaa himself. He is not a subtle hunter: He roars and howls, and throws whatever is at hand even before he knows exactly where his prey is. As he gets closer, he covers everything around him with ice that he walks on without difficulty. Only then does he make his final lunge to rip apart the shivering, falling target of his hunger. Then he moves to the next, and the next, until he decides he has eaten enough.

### STORY HOOKS

- Jack "Wolf" Derry and his film crew went to the park a month ago to film the fourth season of his popular

## WENDIGO SICKNESS

The Manitou warned their people about the wendigoag, but they may have warned them too well. "Wendigo sickness" develops in people who grow obsessed with the fear that they are becoming a wendigo, whether it's true or not. At first, they start eating unusual things as food, things like bark, twigs, or dirt. Then everything they look at starts to resemble food, especially people. Finally, they become wendigo.

Or they don't. Sometimes, the sickness only exists in the sufferer's mind. The Manitou know that they, in part, caused this problem through their constant warnings about horrifying wendigoag. They know they put the seed of the fear in their people's dreams, and accidentally let it spread. But they are caring and responsible, so they have shared in other dreams the prayers and rituals to heal the victims of wendigo sickness. So long as the sufferer knows what is happening, and so long as she has not yet eaten human flesh, it's not difficult to find a cure.

survival TV show, "Against the Wilderness." Neither he nor his eight-person crew have been heard from since, and efforts to contact them have all failed. While his production company has managed to keep the news from spreading more widely, they know that if they can't find him soon, keeping his disappearance secret will only hurt them more. What's worse is that they only just learned about the stories of the wendigo in the park and are in a complete panic at the idea of their star becoming some sort of cannibalistic monster. All they need is for a group of Scions with experience in the Canadian wilderness to find Wolf Derry and bring him back intact. There is a small catch, however: They also want to send a small secondary film crew with the heroes to document their adventures, which they are sure they can turn into a special "Against the Wilderness" must-see television event regardless of success or failure. It pays well, and the fame that would go with it can't be ignored.

- A burst of especially cold winter weather descends into western Ontario, bringing with it road-closing blizzards and icy storms that knock out electrical power. Suddenly, dozens of small communities become even more isolated than usual. In that isolation, wendigo sickness spreads. Although some of the local Cree and Ojibwe people know enough of the traditional rituals to stave it off, they cannot travel from place to place themselves and must call for help to the Manitou. They need heroes to turn back the cold and just as importantly, heroes who can bring healing to their people before anyone transforms into a wendigo.



- The ice that makes up Madwezigoshkaa's outer body can melt as well as grow, even if it melts much more slowly than natural ice. Trickles of the water enter local streams, and from there end up in bottles of Polar First Spring Water™, ready to be stocked in hotel rooms throughout eastern Canada and the northern United States. This leads to reports of wendigoag in cities that are usually too far south for them to appear — and in the hot summer months. The only thing that they have in common is that they all stayed at the same hotel chain recently. While finding that connection and identifying the immediate cause of the transformation may not be difficult, the heroes must then trace it back to Polar First Co., determine whether they knew about it, and find the ultimate source.

## MADWEZIGOSHKAA

**Archetype:** Titanspawn

**Qualities:** Vulnerability (Fire), Heavily Armored (included in Health and Defense totals), Natural Weapon, Regeneration

**Flairs:** Apocalyptic Presence, Weather Tyrant (snow-storm), World Shaking (icy landscape)

**Drive:** Eat. Sleep.

**Primary Pool (13):** Throw rocks and trees. Devour flesh.

**Secondary Pool (11):** Sniff out prey. Terrifying howl.

**Desperation Pool:** 7

**Health:** 14

**Defense:** 5

**Initiative:** 10

**Extras:** Madwezigoshkaa has Scale 2 size, gaining extra successes for lifting, throwing, or breaking smaller things and for intimidating others. His senses are dimmed when trying to distinguish edible things of roughly the same size apart. Make a Difficulty 2 Desperation Pool test the first time he attacks a target who is close to something else edible: if he fails, he chooses the wrong one.

## BICHO PAPÃO

The oni called Bicho Papão has no name for themselves. They have bags full of identities that they have collected over the years since they arrived in the Japanese community of São Paulo in the 1950s but aren't attached to any of them. They aren't attached to the community, either (too many memories of a world they left behind), but they haven't found any substitute yet. So, they live as Bicho Papão, the local boogeyman, trying to find their place while consistently ruining any chance to keep it.

Their feeling of isolation isn't unique to them. While calling a creature an "oni" is about as useful as calling someone a "sorcerer" — fine for getting a very general impression, utterly unhelpful for understanding its power or motivations — they all have a heritage of being outsiders. Oni can have strength to match the Kami, but no one will build shrines to them. They can force themselves to take on human shapes, but no mortal will ever mistake them for one of their own. It's a lonely existence accompanied by an ever-growing anger and being kept out of communities they want to join. There's a reason why some oni abandon the World for Jigoku, where they can at least unleash their inner pain and rage on souls deserving of punishment.

Bicho Papão hasn't taken that path. Not yet, at least. They drift from place to place in Brazil, always using new identities and new faces, returning to old haunts only after the people there forget the damage they did during their last stay. Experience has taught them that they can't resist finding the people they once knew. Even when the oni looks completely different, they aren't very good at hiding that former connection. It's better to stay away for years at a time than see the look of pain in the eyes of someone they considered a friend before whatever tragedy followed. There always is one, it's always violent, and it's always traumatic to the mortal involved.

In their natural form, Bicho Papão is tall and heavily muscled, with a mane of coarse black hair, eyes like burning coals, a pair of twisting horns sprouting from their temples, jutting tusks in their mouth, and skin the color of fresh blood. When they fight, they cause as much havoc as possible: Their favorite technique is to throw people around the room hard enough to break whatever is in there, then to beat them to death with the rubble. The aftermath of their brawls is indistinguishable from a grenade explosion.



At the moment, Bicho Papão is in a dangerously directionless state. They've only just arrived in their most recent neighborhood, a poorer part of São Paulo well away from anywhere they have lived in the past and are already feeling the itch to make connections. They watch for children they think have been abandoned, hoping they can become their new parent. They watch for adults bearing the marks of abuse, so they can become their avenger. Unfortunately for Bicho Papão, they haven't found anyone yet. Unfortunately for those around them, this means that their anger will continue to grow until it finds an outlet.

With the right guidance, however, the oni could turn from an adversary to an ally. It's not an easy process: They will always feel like an outsider, always grow restless, and always overstep boundaries that even their friends ask them to maintain. If they feel they have been abandoned, their wrath will be as powerful as the pain they suffer. They can't help it. On some level, they will always push others away and, when they succeed, use it as a reason to release their violent impulses.

## STORY HOOKS

- The oni joins a group protesting logging practices in the Amazon rainforest. It begins well enough. The group is a welcoming mix of political idealists, environmentalists, students, and advocates for the local indigenous people; Bicho Papão believes their cause is just (though they really know very little about it) and travels with them without hesitation. It doesn't take long before confrontations between the protesters and guards working for the logging company turn heated and draw media attention in Brazil

and beyond. The oni knows they should keep their temper, but when the guards injure one of their new friends, even being caught on camera isn't enough to make them stop. Bicho Papão flees into the forest after murdering one guard in broad daylight but isn't going to abandon their friends yet. Night after night, unless they're stopped, they will return for increasingly gruesome acts of revenge. Meanwhile, the media portrays the protesters as eco-terrorists who deliberately brought a monster with them, the protesters loudly denounce their former friend, and the local people that they planned to help are horrified. If the oni learns about any of this, their attacks will only become more indiscriminate.

- After a night of heavy drinking in São Paulo, Bicho Papão wakes up in the wreckage of an autoshop surrounded by pieces of what was once a small-time local gang member. They don't remember anything about the night before and only vaguely recognize the corpse whose head is now mounted on the wall with the help of a crowbar. They definitely don't know that while their victim (who, they are sure, must have done something to deserve their fate) was no one of importance on his own, his aunt is a major figure in the criminal world and she will not allow this attack to go unpunished. If the oni flees the area, they know that the rest of the local community will have to answer for the murder. At the same time, they can't fight *everyone* the aunt might send into the neighborhood, and so they need help. The only clues they have about what happened are an empty bottle of imported sake and two cups. Were they drinking with the victim? Was there someone else there? Who brought the sake (because Bicho Papão is sure they didn't), and why? What they're most worried about is the possibility that there's another oni in the area that's deliberately trying to ruin their precarious life there, but they haven't seen any others in years.

- Mateus Silva, a recently Visited Brazilian Scion of Ogum (Ógún), is looking for a fight. That's not unusual; he generally is, and he's always disappointed by the lack of enemies who could provide him with a good one. When he hears that there may be an oni in the area near him (perhaps because of either of the story hooks above), he decides that he's finally found a monster worth giving a good beating to and goes off in pursuit. The problem is that Mateus is even less subtle than the oni when it comes to doing any sort of investigation. Very quickly, it becomes less detective work and more the plot of an action movie as he moves from place to place to conduct his interrogations. He knows that oni can change their shape, so he's ready to punch first and ask questions later. He assumes they hang out in the worst parts of whatever town he happens to be in, so he storms bars and strip clubs as part of his monster-hunt. He's not stupid, or even misguided, really — an oni in a large city is

a legitimate threat to the local people — just inexperienced and mistaking his relentless determination to get the job done as a sign of his seriousness as a Scion. If he crosses paths with Bicho Papão, they'll probably flatten a city block during their fight. If he doesn't, he'll still cause immense collateral damage to the people and businesses around him, making everyone's lives worse.

- In a moment of sentimentality, Bicho Papão returns to the Liberdade district of São Paulo, the place where they first lived after arriving from Japan. Taking on the shape of an elderly Japanese woman, they revisit the places they remember, only to find that they've changed beyond recognition over the past decades. They've also picked the same shape that they wore so long ago, and someone remembers it. Mario Toshio was a boy when he met the oni, but has nothing but happy memories of the encounter: He was lost on a stormy night, but received shelter from a humble widow who told him exciting stories about Japan until he fell asleep and vanished in the morning. He's over seventy years old now but has spent his whole life believing she was a Kami, and now that he's alone and struggling with the first stages of dementia, he's seen her again. He works up the courage to speak to her and, for a short time, is as happy as he was as a child. It doesn't bother him that no one believes him about his kindly Kami. It only starts to when he notices that people who cross him in any way, from adolescents making fun of his confusion to shop owners taking advantage of him, start to have serious accidents. Afraid that he has done something to offend the Kami, he visits a local temple to pray for guidance, which is when the Pantheon realizes that something very wrong is going on. They ask allied Scions to find out just who or what is haunting Mario, restore the peace, and offer the old man a resolution to the situation that doesn't destroy his happy memories of the past.

### • BICHO PAPÃO

**Archetype:** Nemesis

**Qualities:** Collateral Damage, Martial Artist (included in Health and Defense totals)

**Flairs:** Seeing Red, Thousand Faces

**Drive:** Find a community by destroying its enemies

**Primary Pool (11):** Close Combat, Lurk in Crowds

**Secondary Pool (9):** Survival, Intimidate

**Desperation Pool:** 6

**Health:** 5

**Defense:** 4

**Initiative:** 9

**Extras:** Bicho Papão gains a +2 Enhancement with barehanded attacks or attacks with a staff.

## ATHERIANTHROPIES

Therianthropes — the so-called “werecreatures” — shapeshift between human form and animal form. Everything from ancient myths to modern films tap into the body horror and dread we have of such creatures.

### OZOMATI

When the Teōtl made a grand fucking mess of their various Suns (until they finally got it “right,” the fifth time out), rather a lot of living things suffered for the sake of the Gods’ slapdash rough drafts. The so-called “Monkeys of the Second Sun” are one such group that got the especially short shrift. When their Sun was declared a failure, they were left in absolute darkness and abandoned, so that the Gods might tally the mistakes of that world and then go on to screw up, twice more, before arriving at a situation they were finally willing to accept: the least-worst of their designs, as it were.

Unlike the Giants of the First Sun, the Monkeys of the Second Sun learned patience and cunning. They *had* to, lacking as they did the raw physical might of the former. But, cleverness and introspection have arguably served them far better than brute force. They have, through painstaking diligence, gradually blundered out the parameters of the endlessly night-black Terra Incognita in which they are trapped. In so doing, they have learned that cracks exist in the failed world which was made their prison by default — cracks that could be, with much time and great effort, widened just enough to permit some of the smaller and nimbler



## BLEAK HOWL

**Cost:** Variable (see below)

**Duration:** Variable (see below)

**Subject:** Self

**Range:** Self

**Action:** Reflexive

**Cooldown:** End of Scene

**Prerequisites:** Foe

Some say that the People of the Second Sun became howler monkeys when their version of the World fell to darkness, and it is true that they howl. Ozomati can howl forth a cloud of freezing darkness. A single Monkey may summon an approximately five-foot sphere of the stuff that lasts for 2 rounds by spending 1 Tension. An opponent within suffers a level-1 Complication from the cold and the dark, though Ozomati can function perfectly within it. It is, after all, the cold and the dark of their native land.

Monkeys of the Second Sun working in concert can create even bigger and more dangerous clouds of darkness. Three Ozomati together can spend 2 Tension to create a 10-foot sphere, lasting for 4 rounds, in which opponents suffer a level-2 Complication, and so forth: six Monkeys make a 15-foot sphere for 3 Tension, lasting for 6 rounds and creating a level-3 Complication; 10 Monkeys make a 20-foot sphere for 4 Tension, lasting for 8 rounds and creating a level 4-Complication; and 15 Monkeys make a 25-foot sphere for 5 Tension, lasting for 10 rounds and creating a level-5 Complication. If there are ways for Ozomati to make bigger, more dangerous spheres of the frigid shadows of the ruined Second Sun, the youths who have thus far escaped into the World don't know how to do so.

of the Ozomati ("Monkeys," as they call themselves — they don't need to be reminded to which Sun they belong, as that particular horror has been their constant companion for the three ages following their own).

Thus far, only young and yet-inexperienced Ozomati are able to wriggle their way into the World, as their elders are simply too big, dexterous though they may be, to worm through the cracks. Expanding them to the point that all the Monkeys can get out will take far more time. Unless, of course, the escapees are able to find some way of hastening the process from the outside. It is this task, above all else, with which the fugitive Ozomati are charged, so that their people might finally escape the bleak, cold hellscape in which they are confined; to overtake the good world of the Fifth Sun and claim it for their own.

In their natural form, the Ozomati look like heavily furred albino monkeys, about half the height of an average human adult and slight of build. Their irises are nearly white, tinged with just a hint of lavender, and brightly reflect even the dimmest light. Their fingers and toes are all equally dexterous, and they use both hands and feet as grasping limbs, along with a long, prehensile tail. Even at rest, their pinkish-ivory colored faces (which have an eerily human aspect about them) look cruel, better-suited to teeth bared in rage than any expression of joy. Many of them are covered in the scars of a lifetime of vicious fights, both among their own and against the other survivors of their failed world. Ozomati shun bright light, as untold millennia in the abject blackness of the forgotten ruins of the Second Sun have left them ill-adapted to the brilliance of proper daylight. Likewise, they shy away from hot environments, having been left in the freezing dark of the Second Sun for time out of mind.

For reasons perhaps known only to the Teōtl, some Ozomati have the ability to shapeshift into turkeys — a skill that they might have learned in desperation, even as the age of their Sun crumbled around them. How this ability served them is uncertain, though it does seem to have facilitated the survival of a larger number of them than would have naturally made it through the end of the world. The turkey form of the Ozomati is strangely lovely for such a bird, with brilliant, jewel-toned feathers (though, as with their natural monkey shape, still crisscrossed with scarring). Even while wearing this shape, the Monkeys of the Second Sun cannot conceal the spark of malevolent intelligence that burns in their gaze, displaying a cruel thoughtfulness that unsettles any who happen to meet their gaze.

Most are also capable of resuming human shape, though they have little reason to do so amidst the ruins of the Second Sun. This ability certainly serves them better in the present World than in their homeland. Given the youth of any escapees, they tend to look much like teenaged pre-Columbian indigenous Mexicans — the appearance originally given them by the Teōtl. Cunning as they are, they will likely be quick to find ways to blend in among modern mortals, stealing appropriate clothing and adopting haircuts that enable them to fit in well enough to go about their business largely uninterrupted. Even in this shape, however, they carry their scars of the savage Terra Incognita of their origin.

Ozomati have a hard time suppressing their natural tendency toward brutish meanness, though they can make their best effort to do so when the situation calls for such. Still, those with any modicum of sense for such things can easily discern that the Monkeys of the Second Sun (no matter what form they wear) conceal their all-consuming hatred for the children of the Fifth Sun poorly, at best. Even when acting the part of accommodating politeness, they give the distinct impression of wishing they could just savagely murder the person to whom they're speaking. For the youth, this is a matter of impatience with social niceties, though the situation is similar with their elders, who have existed in nightmarish torment so long that they've

half-forgotten how to pretend not to long for bloody vengeance, even for a little while. While clever, the Ozomati can be very impatient, as experience has taught them that anything they desire will be quickly lost to them if they fail to pounce upon it as soon as possible.

## STORY HOOKS

- The young Monkeys of the Second Sun stalk the World on the orders of their elders, with explicit instructions to do absolutely anything necessary to widen the cracks in their native Terra Incognita enough to allow *all* of the Monkeys to escape into the Fifth Sun. Naturally, this sort of thing requires tremendous power, of one sort or another. Getting their hands on a sufficiently potent Relic might prove near-impossible. It might just be easier to find, say, one of the World's six nuclear weapons confirmed lost and never recovered, and then bring it to the right place and somehow set it off.
- Young monkeys, in particular, tend to be mischievous. Who's to say that the Ozomati are any exception? Perhaps now that they've got their freedom from the Second Sun, they're not terribly keen on releasing their elders and going back to being bossed around. Maybe some of them didn't even volunteer for this job, so much as they were pressed into service? In the Fifth Sun, they have freedom from those older and more powerful than themselves. Why shouldn't they use that newfound liberty to raise some consequence-free hell? They've never been able to have anything even approaching fun, and they mean to make up for lost time. Of course, the Ozomati idea of "fun" involves an awful lot of what most mortals would consider abominable cruelty, but who cares what these people think? *They* never had to endure the torments of the end of the Second Sun, after all.

## ozomati

**Archetype:** Foe

**Qualities:** Sure Footed

**Flairs:** Bleak Howl, Shadow Step, Shapeshifter (human and — in some cases — turkey forms)

**Drive:** To steal the World of the Fifth Sun for themselves

**Primary Pool (7):** Acrobatics, Stealth, Survival

**Secondary Pool (5):** Combat

**Desperation Pool:** 3

**Health:** 1

**Defense:** 1

**Initiative:** 4

**Extras:** Elder Ozomati may instead use the Rival or Nemesis Archetypes.

## MEEGWUN

Long ago, he lived at the foot of a mountain around which the Animikii liked to fly. His brothers warned him to move away from there, because it was an unwise spot to make a home, but Meegwun was stubborn, and he refused to budge. Better, he thought, that the thunderbirds should leave. The elders counseled him as well, but he spurned their advice, too. Even his wife pleaded with him to find a new place to live, but Meegwun would not be moved. He had chosen his place, and he would not depart from it for any man or Manitou.

When the Animikii flew overhead, they often brought great storms with them that broke upon the mountainside. They flooded away everything Meegwun tried to plant, often ruining anything he attempted to build. The crashing of their thunder scared away much of the game, as well, so that there was very little for him and his family to eat. He and his wife and children spent many cold, wet, miserable nights huddled together, unable to find any warm place out of the driving rain, while his little ones flinched each time the thunder roared overhead, afraid that the mountain itself might fall on them. In his heart, Meegwun came to hate the Animikii, for he believed that he had as much right to be there as they did, and resented that they would not let him live in peace in the place he had chosen.

One day, he left his wife and children in a cave near the bottom of the mountain and told them that he was going to solve the problem. Meegwun's family feared the terrible look in his eye, and so they did not try to stop him. He journeyed far, seeking a weapon that could end his troubles, and heeded the advice of a sorcerer, who told him how to make an evil poison that could slay even a thunderbird. Armed with this awful concoction, Meegwun returned home, and when another storm came lighting up the night, he bade his family continue to wait for him in the cave and to keep the fire burning.

Shouting up at one of the Animikii, Meegwun caught the creature's attention, causing it to fly down to see what this strange man wanted. When it came within range, Meegwun let his arrow fly, piercing the majestic bird through the heart. The poison on the arrow coursed through its veins, and it fell to the ground, dead. Meegwun laughed and used his knife to carve meat from the beast's body, bringing it back to his cave. He offered the meat to his wife and told her to cook it for all of them.

Meegwun's wife had glanced out of the cave and seen what her husband had done, and she was horrified by it. She threw the meat back at him and said that she and the children would rather starve than eat what he had brought them. Straightaway, she gathered up the children and fled into the storm, happier to take her chances in the darkness and the rain than with the monster she had married.

Undeterred, Meegwun cooked and ate the thunderbird's flesh, and felt no remorse for his wicked act. Indeed, he thought himself better off that his family had left, for now there would be more food for him. He woke in the night, however, to find Muzzu-Kumik-Quae standing over him, glaring in anger. Earth Mother cursed Meegwun



doubly for his monstrous deed: She afflicted him with a twisted mockery of the shape of the Animikii, so that all might know his crime, and she imparted upon him an unnatural longevity, so that he might have a long time, to contemplate the magnitude of his offense. Now, whenever thunderstorms come, he changes, and the thunderbirds look down on him in anger for slaying one of their own. It is only for Muzzu-Kumik-Quae's sake that they hold their rage in check, to deny him the release of death.

Meegwun is almost invariably equal measures of angry and glum. Scowls of irritation come far more easily to him than smiles, or even neutral expressions of disinterest. He perpetually looks like one who is personally, grievously affronted by everything in the world all at once. If circumstances absolutely force him to display some small degree of graciousness, he can sometimes manage the ruse. The only ones fooled, though, are typically those who want to be; there's just something intrinsically dangerous and hateful in him, and he has a very hard time concealing it. In truth, he'd much rather address every minor setback and small irritation with violence. He knows, however, that acting upon his darkest impulses (the ones that truly reign in his heart) is a sure way to attract the attention of powers whose scrutiny he is not yet ready to contend with. One day, perhaps, but not yet. Until then, he is a tightly knotted mass of murderous urges, only just barely held in check behind a paper-thin veneer of humanity. When he's able to do so without consequence (or when the beast takes over), he sheds that fragile mask and indulges the worst of his nature with absolute abandon.

In his human shape, Meegwun appears as a tall man of Ojibwe heritage, perhaps in his late 20s to mid-30s. He looks

ragged and desperate at the best of times, forever scanning the horizon and grimacing whenever he sees black clouds. His clothing is modern but generally threadbare and dirty, unless he's stolen something better recently. He stays on the move too much to worry about appearances, so his hair is tangled and unkempt, and he often smells as though he's in dire need of a bath. Worse still, some vague carrion stink clings to him, reminiscent of a breeze wafting over a days-old pile of roadkill. He's learned the hard way that he needs to keep a weapon of some sort on him while in his (more limited) human form, so he tends to carry a knife and/or handgun on his person, whenever he can manage it.

When the thunderbirds roll in and the rain starts to fall, Meegwun undergoes a nightmarish transformation. He collapses in agony, his gargling screams swiftly transitioning into horrid squawking. Greasy, dark feathers emerge through his skin, as his neck stretches and his face painfully distends into a ghastly beaked head, blood red and wrinkled, like some especially grotesque caricature of a vulture. His arms lengthen, sprouting still more feathers, and his fingers shrink into vestigial nubs on his wings, barely capable of grasping anything. His legs become scaly and digitigrade (with his knees snapping audibly backward in the process), bearing long, jagged talons at the ends of his splayed toes — three in front and one in back. A fan of ragged tailfeathers sprouts from the small of his back.

## STORY HOOKS

- A powerful Scion of Wisakedjak is hunting Meegwun down, with the specific intent of killing him, and the characters receive a messenger from Muzzu-Kumik-Quae who asks them to save Meegwun's life — without inflicting serious harm on the one who seeks him. Meegwun's punishment was meant to *last*, after all, and he hasn't yet suffered enough for his vile trespass. Allowing him to die now would mean granting him a mercy that he hasn't yet earned. Earth Mother also doesn't blame the one who wants to end him because Meegwun *is* a monster, and it's only natural for Scions to want to slay such creatures. Of course, the Scion of Wisakedjak won't be easily swayed from this quest, and the characters will likely need to exercise some creativity in persuading the hunter to abandon the pursuit. If they can figure out a way, however, Muzzu-Kumik-Quae will reward them for their work.
- All on his own, Meegwun is pretty horrible. What would be *far* worse, however, is if he figured out a way to spread his curse to others. Doing so isn't easy: It requires him to get his hands on the feather of a thunderbird and to befoul that feather with carrion and waste before burning it and smearing his hands and face with the ashes. After doing so, his curse becomes infectious for the next full lunar month. During this time, mortals struck by his beak or talons who somehow manage to survive the experience become condemned to share in Meegwun's terrible affliction, changing into monsters when in the presence of thunderstorms.

## THUNDER'S MOCKERY

Mortals who look upon Meegwun (or one cursed by him) in his shapeshifted form are subject to a level 2 Complication of terror and disgust and will almost certainly flee from him in horror. Characters with appropriate Knacks can attempt a Clash of Wills against Meegwun to suppress this reaction in nearby mortals (including themselves, if applicable).

- When transformed, these unfortunates become, essentially, lesser versions of Meegwun, using the Rival template, rather than Nemesis (and likely with somewhat different primary and secondary pools, depending on whom they are and what they do in their normal lives) but possessing all his Qualities and Flairs. They cannot pass on the curse, themselves. Meegwun is delighted whenever he learns that he has spread his curse, though he never bothers teaching his victims anything about their new state; he's just that kind of asshole. Still, a few of them eventually do figure out how to track him down. Some seek to emulate the one who has "blessed" them with this evil power, while others hope to kill him — either in the belief that doing so will set them free, or just because Meegwun really does have it coming. He doesn't especially give a shit about any of them.

### MEEGWUN

**Archetype:** Nemesis

**Qualities:** Flight, Natural Weapon (beak, talons; only when transformed), Thunder's Mockery

**Flairs:** Shapeshifter (horrible vulture-human hybrid), Unleash the Beast, Wary Beasts

**Drive:** To stay ahead of the storm as much as possible and to sow misery when he can't

**Primary Pool (11):** Combat (+1 Close Combat, Firearms), Wilderness Survival

**Secondary Pool (9):** Intimidation, Thievery

**Desperation Pool:** 6

**Health:** 5

**Defense:** 4

**Initiative:** 9

**Extras:** Thunder's Mockery

## PRATAVAS, CONTENDER FOR THE THRONE OF LANKA

The politics of Lanka have been a mess since the death of Ravana and the decision by Vishnu to make Ravana's brother, Vibhishana, both king of Lanka and an immortal.



It was to be Vibhishana's duty to turn the rakshasas from their traditional ways to a more humane dharma, and this, combined with the fact that he had sided with Rama against his own brother, turned much of the population against him. Now Vibhishana is missing as well — either in exile or in quiet meditation somewhere — and the city is divided between Loyalists who still respect his authority, Traditionalists who look for a new ruler, and "Ravanites" who search for a new incarnation of Ravana to take the throne.

Every few years, a rakshasa rises to try to seize the vacant throne of Lanka, only to be overthrown by rivals within a month. In the past decade, three have been assassinated (including one by her own children), two fled into exile before ascending, and two more simply disappeared. As hungry as rakshasas are for power, they realize that declaring oneself ruler of Lanka is an invitation to destruction, so the ones who want it the most spend their time circling each other and crafting schemes instead of acting.

Pratavas is young compared to most of the rakshasas who fight for power, at just over a century old. He spent most of that century away from Lanka, too, mingling among humans to build his fortune as an arms dealer, observe mortal politics, and gather information on his prospective competition. Wealthy, handsome, urbane, and charming, he blends in quite well among mortals. Unlike some of his rakshasa subordinates, he doesn't sprout fangs and claws or eat house pets when he's angry. His natural form is exactly as he appears normally; the only clue is the flash of restrained power in his gaze when he sees something that could help him further his political ambitions.

Since quietly returning to the island in 2010, he has offered his services — weapons, training, and political advice — to more than half of the failed rakshasa monarchs, but no one has yet made the connection between his counsel and their sudden downfall. He goaded weak but eager candidates into making displays of force that drew assassins. He persuaded Vinilaka, the strongest contender in the past forty years, to go searching for the blessing of Vibhishana instead of seizing power immediately. Vinilaka has yet to return, but Pratavas has dedicated significant resources to make sure that he never does.

Fortunately for him, a rakshasa in the World beyond Lanka's shores can always be made a target for Scions. Once Pratavas knows that Vinilaka has arrived in a city, he sends minor rakshasas — the flesh-hungry Night-Walkers — to terrorize the locals blatantly enough to draw attention. Then it's a matter of creating a trail that leads from them back to his enemy or even, when he grows impatient, having some of his own contacts leak information about Vinilaka's location. If the Scions fail, there are always more of them out there to try again, and in the meantime, it drives Vinilaka further and further from Lanka.

At home in Lanka, Pratavas wrestles with his desire to be king and a secret that he has kept even from his closest confidants. As reward for spending most of the early 2000s in yogic meditation, he has gained a measure of invulnerability: He cannot be defeated until he becomes king, which is why he spends so much of his time ridding himself of potential threats instead of trying to claim the throne immediately. While he tries to convince himself that he must be patient, the ever-present rakshasa hunger pushes him closer and closer to eliminating the last of his rivals and finally tasting the power he craves. If he gives in to it, he knows his position must be unassailable.

## STORY HOOKS

- Keeping Lanka's factions at each other's throats (literally and metaphorically) is how Pratavas ensures none of his enemies can challenge him, but he can't control everything, at all times. When he discovers that members of the Traditionalist and Ravanite factions plan to meet in Bali to negotiate an alliance and propose a candidate for the throne, it's too late for him to stop it himself. Instead, he plans to have his contacts in the World let it slip that there is going to be a large and dangerous gathering of ferocious monsters somewhere in Indonesia. Their supposed goal? To carry out a mighty tantric ritual "empowered by the heart-blood of forty thousand mortals." He doesn't care whether the meeting ends in slaughter or not. All he wants is for it to be disrupted enough for him to be able to suggest to the surviving delegates that their would-be allies were behind whatever happens.
- When pirates off the Lakshadweep islands hijack one of Pratavas' arms shipments bound for Lanka, he has no choice but to intervene. He presents himself as a rakshasa Loyalist and devotee of Vishnu to a band of Scions he thinks have the fighting ability to return the

## PRATAVAS' MINIONS: NIGHT-WALKER RAKSHASAS

Eat flesh. Drink blood. Make the night a horror. The common rakshasa doesn't have elaborate desires, but that doesn't mean it isn't cunning. It chooses its shape from whatever is most likely to frighten its victims and strikes without mercy. It prefers to go after the most vulnerable targets first, whether that means those who can't fight back physically or those who are too isolated from the rest of their community to call for help and won't be missed. If it can eat a beloved house pet before attacking a family, it will.

**Archetype:** Foe

**Qualities:** Unnatural Hunger (raw flesh), Natural Weapon, either Shapeshifter (either one predatory animal or one human form, both with the Imperfect Disguise Quality) or Unstoppable

**Drive:** Eat until the hunger goes away

**Primary Pool (7):** Gruesome attack, Stealth

**Secondary Pool (5):** Mimic voices

**Desperation Pool:** 3

**Health:** 1

**Defense:** 1

**Initiative:** 4

ship to him. He's careful enough not to approach any group with a Scion of the Devá but is confident in his ability to lie to anyone else. If they take him up on his request, he promises in return to keep them informed of dangers coming from Lanka in the future (which, of course, means using them as his instruments against his rivals). What Pratavas doesn't know is that the pirates' leader is a Scion who intends to use the weapons to arm a people's uprising in a nearby country, which makes retaking the ship harder than it would first appear.

- Vinilaka, Pratavas' charismatic rival for rulership of Lanka, is dead. At least, Chinese authorities report discovering the corpse of a rakshasa matching his description (extraordinarily handsome, golden-skinned, seven feet tall) just inside Tibet's border with Nepal. The location alone is enough for the death to become an international incident. The fact that he appears to have been shot to death raises the question of who, exactly, would want to murder him. Was he mistaken for a common monster? Was it an assassination? Is it even Vinilaka at all? The Shen do not want outsiders interfering in their handling of the matter. The Devá want to make sure he's truly dead. The only solution — although opposed by both sides — is to call in a third-party group of investigators to find an answer

to the mystery. They must be quick, however, before news reaches Lanka and Vinilaka's Loyalist supporters descend on the area to get revenge.

## PRATAVAS

**Archetype:** Nemesis

**Qualities:** Fated Defeat (see below), By Divine Right (rakshasa bodyguards), Perfected Soldier (included in Health and Defense totals), Sorcery (Yoga)

**Flairs:** Illusions

**Drive:** Claim the throne of Lanka

**Primary Pool (11):** Athletics, Close combat, Compelling advice

**Secondary Pool (9):** Occult, Negotiate alliances

**Desperation Pool:** 6

**Health:** 8

**Defense:** 6

**Initiative:** 9

**Extras:** Fated Defeat. Pratas takes Health damage as normal but can only be Taken Out after he becomes king of Lanka.

## DAMASCUS HANOVER

It's been said that folks can get by without faith in gods, but never without belief in devils. And while the Gods have a chuckle at the first part, the latter part still rings true. All too often it seems like mortals just aren't happy without someone — or something — to blame for their misfortunes. Sometimes, all the hate and suspicion and malice in an entire community seems to pool in one place or one family. It's a truth that the Hanover family knows only too well — and which the current patriarch, Damascus Hanover, wields to his full advantage.

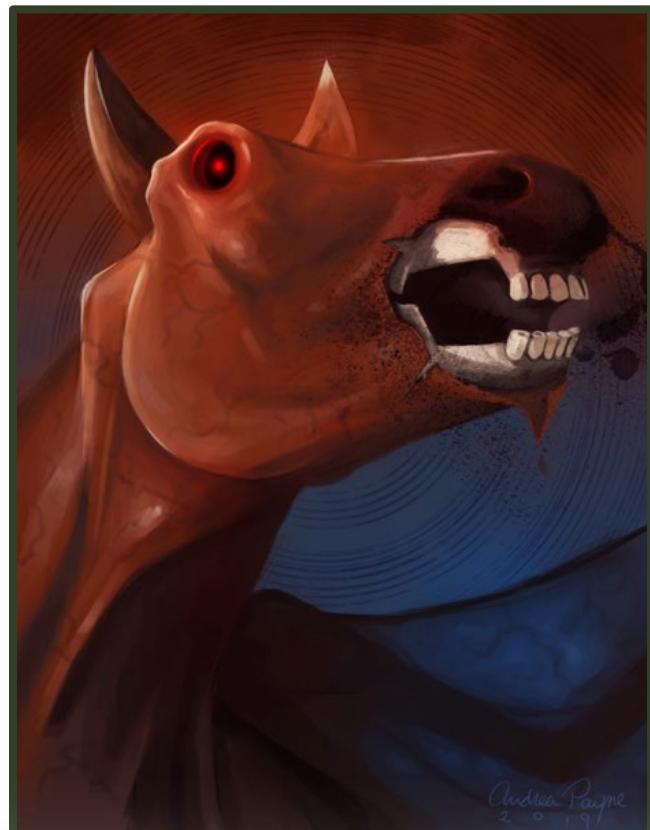
First rising to prominence in the wilderness of southern New Jersey during the colonial era, the Leeds were a wealthy, influential Quaker family for a time, noted for their close relations with the British officials who governed the colony. However, the family's reputation darkened amid accusations of witchcraft and occultism and far from shying away from those fields, they took the daring and unusual step of embracing the notoriety. Political clout combined with arcane talent kept the witch hunters at bay and prevented angry mobs from gathering, until the family name was uttered with fear and superstitious awe by the local population.

According to Hanover oral history, it was during this time that the Hanover branch broke from the rest of the Leeds family and changed their name to avoid being tarnished by the darkness surrounding their family. Their spurned kin cursed them for this "betrayal", placing a malediction on the bloodline no amount of prayer or spell-work or even divine intervention itself has been able to lift. It is an irony not lost on the Hanover clan that while the

Leeds family is famed to this day for their connection to the Jersey Devil, it is the Hanovers who endure the curse that fuels the legend.

The curse itself is insidious, manifesting both socially and physically. Branded as betrayers by their kin, the Hanovers naturally exude a menacing and suspicious air, which often leads others to interpret their speech and actions in the worst possible way. A smile in passing is perceived as a leer, a firm handshake feels aggressively crushing, a playful tease sounds like a cruel insult. While they can overcome it for a time, in the long run it means the family has learned they can only truly rely on each other, which of course only adds to their sinister and reclusive reputation. Most of the family lives on several large compounds deep in the Pine Barrens, surrounded by walls and fences and bristling with "NO TRESPASSING" signs, as well as modern security technology.

As bad as the social branding is, the physical is even worse. Each generation receives different inhuman traits and downright unsettling talents. A child might have patches of scaly skin and the forked tongue of a snake, for example, or the ability to track any creature whose blood they've tasted (and a need to consume copious fresh blood to survive). These "gifts" are always more of a curse than a blessing, however, leading many family members to live reclusive lives out in the Pine Barrens, only showing their true selves to their own kind. Once every generation or so, a true monster is born to the family — a hellish creature with only feral intelligence and the head of a horse, the wings of a bat, great clawed hands, cloven hooves for feet, and a long serpent's tail. These unholy beings invariably wind up



caged and hidden away on family land, to be used as guard dogs and shock troops as the need requires.

Bringing “fresh blood” into the family seems to dilute the curse, at least for a generation, but between their unsettling looks and dark reputation it is difficult to find outsiders willing to marry into such a blighted lineage — draw what conclusions you will about how the family has continued.

This has been the family’s reality for almost three centuries, but Damascus Hanover has other plans. He’s made it his life’s work to study the family curse, and while he is far from the first Hanover to do so, he took a different track than his ancestors. Most of his predecessors focused on curing the curse, but Damascus saw how the family’s bloodline invariably tainted others it encountered, and that gave him an idea. Instead of trying to cure the curse, he’s become obsessed with transferring it to others — and his research has borne fruit.

The first research Damascus perfected was how to use blood magic and long, painful rites to transfer cursed traits between family members, allowing one person to become “normal” by moving their curse to one of their kin. By selectively moving cursed traits, Damascus has not only created family members who can interact normally with others and pass unnoticed in society but also combined specific traits to create highly effective, if increasingly inhuman, agents brimming with supernatural powers. He also uses these rites to punish disobedient family members by allowing those kin he favors to heap their curses on the offender, which at once solidifies the loyalty of those who no longer need labor under the curse while inflicting unspeakable agony on those who cross him. Kept caged and isolated, shunned by their family, most such poor souls go mad from the torment, becoming little more than feral horrors that Damascus can unleash on trespassers.

More recently, Damascus has begun practicing what he calls “infusions”, a cross between crude blood transfusions and demonic rites that can bestow the blessings of the bloodline on outsiders. Realizing early on that direct transference of traits only seemed to work between blood relatives, Damascus worked on creating temporary alchemical enhancements combining tainted blood with certain mystical components. Those dosed with an infusion gain the cursed powers of the family member whose blood was used, as well as enhanced senses and a heightened sense of aggression. The effects only last a week or two at most, and the process remains expensive and difficult to perform, limiting the number of agents Damascus can create at one time. Yet, he continues to refine the infusion and is confident that in time he will be able to empower a number of people on a regular basis.

Damascus is territorial and considers the entire Pine Barrens his family’s birthright, and in recent years has used his family’s cursed gifts to blackmail and intimidate many local communities into submission. He has also begun placing his kinfolk into positions of power, those whose curses have been transferred away, where they serve as sleeper agents and observers. While highly territorial, Damascus is canny enough to avoid rushing into direct confrontation

with Scions and other powerful beings and prefers to watch them and bide his time to see if they are putting down roots or just passing through. Should violence become necessary, he waits until an opportunity arrives to ambush them with overwhelming force, using his caged devils and infused agents to swarm and devour his foes. This strategy has allowed him to amass quite a bit of wealth and influence in a short amount of time, as well as secure several potent mystical sites in the deep woods and forlorn bogs of the Pine Barrens. He has also worked to dominate, drive out, or destroy local supernatural beings, and enjoyed considerable success thanks to his knack for strategy. So far, Damascus has not moved far beyond the family’s ancestral territory, but once his hold is secure, he has grand plans for the region and intends to announce his bloodline’s long overdue return from exile in a very big way.

Damascus is an excellent example of an occult mastermind antagonist, who works behind the scenes and takes care to avoid attracting attention until it’s time to make his move — crushing his enemies utterly and without mercy. He has transferred several useful gifts to himself from his family members, making him an unpredictable enemy, though he prefers not to demonstrate any supernatural powers unless he must. He uses his infused agents to tackle lesser threats his ordinary kin cannot handle alone, keeping the caged devils in reserve for desperate situations or shock tactics. His knowledge of the supernatural side of the World is extensive, thanks to his family’s considerable occult library, and he uses it to his full advantage to keep his foes off guard and strike where they’re weakest.

Scions are likely to run across Damascus’ family members long before they encounter the patriarch himself, though they may not even realize they’re being watched for some time. Threatening the family’s control of local communities will not draw an immediate response unless a Hanover is physically harmed and may lead the Scions to initially believe they’re up against a mundane crime family or perhaps a strange cult. When retaliation comes, it is as swift and overwhelming as Damascus can manage. Taking the fight to the Hanovers is no small task either, as the family compounds are hidden deep in the wilds of the Pine Barrens and guarded with both mundane and supernatural defenses.

## STORY HOOKS

- A road trip down to the Jersey shore — or perhaps heading out for a wild night in Atlantic City — takes a literal wrong turn when the Scions stop in a small town for some food or a tank of gas, only to find the town is eerily quiet and subdued. Everywhere they turn, they feel as if they’re being watched, and talking to the locals only seems to frighten them. When the Scions see an infused agent using her powers to punish someone she suspects of telling the characters too much, it becomes clear there’s a larger supernatural threat at work, but will they grasp the scale of the problem before it engulfs them? And if they do discover the Hanover family’s reach, how will they wage war when a whole region turns against them?

# CURSED

**Cost:** None

**Duration:** Varies

**Subject:** Self or infused individual

**Range:** Touch

**Action:** Special

**Cooldown:** Special

This Flair represents two things. First, how Damascus can use infusions from his relatives to change the Flairs or even Qualities he has access to; by infusing himself with the blood of a relative who possesses the desired power, requiring an occult ritual of at least two hours in length, Damascus may temporarily acquire up to one new Flair and one new Quality in addition to his normal ones. The Storyguide has the final say on which traits are available in this fashion, but it should be noted that between his research and his extensive, carefully groomed family, there isn't much beyond him. Damascus may only possess one extra Flair and one additional Quality at a time from this power — acquiring new ones simply replaces the previous ones. In addition, he must receive a fresh infusion from the subject at least once every three days, a process lasting two hours. The target loses access to the Flair or Quality while Damascus enjoys it.

This Flair also represents how Damascus may infuse others with his blood or the blood of other Hanovers to grant a favored subject new powers, or saddle them with a terrible curse. Treat beneficial augmentations the same as Damascus receiving powers outlined above, including the need for regular infusions to maintain it. Cursing someone as a punishment is similar to the Cursed Flair, with a heavy focus on physical deformity and mental instability. This curse passes and the victim reverts to normal if they are not infused regularly as outlined above.

Infused mortals are at least Foes, and sometimes Rivals, if they are trained and practiced in their abilities, while the family's stable of feral "devils" are Rivals and not fielded or expended lightly. The Storyguide should feel free to assign these creatures brutish and fearsome Qualities and Flairs, along with some cunning hunting and stealth talents.

- One of the Scions gets a frantic call for help from a loved one who's vacationing at a remote cabin in the Pine Barrens. All they hear before the call cuts out is the location of the cabin and that "some sort of monster is outside," followed by inhuman roaring and terrified screaming. By the time the Scions arrive, the cabin has been torn apart by monstrous claws and there are strange tracks all around; it looks like their loved one escaped into the woods, but they left a blood trail behind as well. Can the Band find the missing wounded before the uncaged devil does? And why were they targeted in the first place — was it just the beast's hunger, or is there something more going on?
- Damascus Hanover hires the Scions to act as couriers for some valuable occult relics he wants delivered; as far as they're concerned, he's little more than a reclusive old sorcerer with a bit of money, certainly not any kind of a player. However, when they arrive at the drop off point, Damascus attempts to capture them — he's become convinced that Scion blood will take his alchemical processes to the next level, turning his family's curse into incredible power. If the Scions escape, they face a harrowing chase through the dark woods and sucking bogs of the Pine Barrens, hounded by uncaged devils and infused agents, as well as well-armed hunting parties. And those who are captured face an even more trying ordeal as they struggle to

fight off the effects of his potent concoctions and escape with their minds and bodies intact.

## 💀 DAMASCUS HANOVER

**Archetype:** Nemesis

**Qualities:** Baleful Touch (conditional: skin to skin contact), By Divine Right (conditional: New Jersey and nearby areas), Life Drain, Perfected Soldier, Regeneration

**Flairs:** Cursed Blood, I Have Friends, Mastermind, Plague Touch, Rage of Herakles

**Drive:** To raise the Hanover name to glory and crush those that have mocked and shunned them.

**Primary Pool (11):** Business Sense, Intimidating Presence, Occult Lore (+1 Blood Magic), Veneer of Normalcy

**Secondary Pool (9):** Grappling, Wilderness Survival (+1 Pine Barrens)

**Desperation Pool:** 6

**Health:** 5

**Defense:** 4

**Initiative:** 9

**Extras:** Cursed

# LEGENDARY WARRIORS

Throughout history, there are stories of warriors who have done the impossible. But even in The World of today, warriors abound to fight on a wide variety of battlefields.

## NEBET (DR. MARYAM ABOUD)

When Dr. Maryam Abboud found the amulet, it was after a long, unpleasant meeting with yet another of the old bastards who ran the museum. Chauvinist fucks who constantly disregarded her contributions and belittled her work, they generally made her feel unwelcome as anything other than maybe a bit of eye-candy. To clear her head from the red fog of rage swirling through her thoughts, she decided to lose herself in some mindless, meticulous work and stumbled upon the uncanny object. It was in an old box in one of the back rooms of the museum; a container filled with nothing else other than tiny (and all but worthless) shards of ancient Egyptian pottery. It did not belong there — the head of a lioness, crafted exquisitely of solid gold, clutching a strangely lustrous, spherical, blood red jewel in its mouth. It hung upon a series of gold chains, adorned with precious stones. The skill with which it had been made was unprecedented, and she delicately withdrew it from the box to inspect it, only to nearly drop the precious artifact when a husky, almost purring, voice whispered all around her: "You are the one for whom I have waited."



Others had been through that very box on many occasions, and Dr. Abboud knew as much. There was no possible way anyone with eyes to see could've missed such a find, and, yet, here it was, in her hand, *speaking to her*. When she found her words, she asked the disembodied speaker its identity, it replied, "I am the *nebet* of Sekhmet — the lady in her service. I am her champion. And, now, I wish to be *you*, Maryam Abboud." She had only a moment to take this in when the voice commanded, "Don the amulet. Take up your power."

It seemed crazy. It *was* crazy. But, she did as she was bidden, and slipped the amulet around her neck, only to feel supernatural energies suffusing the entirety of her being, making her more than merely human. Staggering back a pace on suddenly too-long legs, Maryam almost tripped but caught hold of herself and looked down to behold a powerful body clad in the armor of lost ages of the World. She fumbled in her purse to find a compact and studied her face in the mirror, seeing a smooth-shaven head and the fierce eyes of a lioness, lined in kohl, staring back at her. In a voice she did not recognize, and yet which was unmistakably familiar, she intoned the words, "I am Nebet."

From the next day onward, no one at the museum questioned where Dr. Abboud had acquired her new necklace. Indeed, it was almost as if the men who had formerly denigrated her feared to look directly at it, or to look Maryam in the eyes, for that matter. And that wasn't all that changed. Local crime — nocturnal crime, in particular — began slowly dropping off. Sometimes, the cops would find a trembling perp blathering on through a mouthful of broken teeth about "cat eyes in the dark," while clutching a broken arm or holding a torn-off sleeve against a set of deep slashes across the abdomen. The police started trying to figure out who this woman was — some "Nebitt" or "Nabut," or something like that.

In her natural shape, Dr. Abboud is a woman of Egyptian heritage, in her early 30s, of average height and build. She wears her black hair in a pixie cut and tends to dress conservatively, in her capacity as an academic. Even as a mortal, she projects confidence, speaking authoritatively upon her areas of expertise and unwilling to be pushed around by others. When Dr. Abboud dons the form of Nebet, she stands about six feet in height, with a clean-shaven scalp, the sculpted build of a warrior-athlete, and the slit pupils of a cat set in golden irises. Her garb transforms into shining armor of an ancient Egyptian style, with a lion's mane mantle for her shoulders. In this shape, she radiates strength and otherworldly power.

Regardless of her present form, Dr. Abboud won't idly abide when injustice is done, whether great or small. She won't stand for a man trying to speak over others in a conference or taking credit for her ideas in a staff meeting, just as she won't allow a helpless person to be attacked by a mugger. That warrior spirit is why Sekhmet chose her, after all, and permitted her to don Nebet's sacred amulet in the first place. She may not be a Scion, but she *is* a chosen champion of the divine, nonetheless.

### STORY HOOKS

- One of the more malicious and deceptive of the Gods has pitted Nebet against the characters for reasons all

## GIFT OF THE LIONESS

This amulet is set with a jewel crafted from a drop of Sekhmet's own divine ichor. When donned by a mortal woman chosen by her, it enables the wearer to transform into a fearsome warrior and hunter. This transformation is a reflexive action and upgrades an otherwise normal mortal to the level of Nemesis. While in this form (the Nebet — Lady — of Sekhmet), the wearer also possesses the Natural Weapon (Claws) and Super Soldier Knacks and the Dread Gaze Flair.

**Flairs:** None (see below)

**Drive:** To bring justice; particularly against those who profit by the suffering and subjugation of women.

**Primary Pool (7/11):** Athletics (Nebet only), Egyptology, Combat (Nebet only)

**Secondary Pool (5/9):** Archaeology, Intimidation, Tracking (Nebet only)

**Desperation Pool:** 3/6

**Health:** 2/5

**Defense:** 2/4

**Initiative:** 5/9

**Extras:** Gift of the Lioness (Relic • • • • )

their own, using a series of false clues and clever lies, delivered through seemingly trustworthy intermediaries. Depending on who and what the characters are, this could mean a challenging fight, or it could be a one-sided ass-kicking against our pulp vigilante. But, even in the latter case, Dr. Abboud is doing good with the power with which she's been blessed, and she surely deserves the opportunity to keep on fighting the good fight, right? Can the characters find a way to convince her that she's been snowed and get back on her good side? If they can't, even if they spare Nebet, they might find themselves in Sekhmet's ill-favor. Of course, if they do, they could very well have earned the ire of a wicked trickster among the Gods for foiling some carefully laid plan.

- For characters counted among extraordinary mortals and lesser creatures of Legend, Nebet could become a founding member of some manner of divinely powered crime-fighting team. Some say, after all, that superheroes are the Gods of modern Legend. Either Dr. Abboud can seek out her potential new compatriots and try to convince them of the justness of her cause, or else they can search for her — and others — to build a network of extraordinary individuals capable of defending the innocents of the World against the forces of evil. What threatens one or two of them cannot hope to defeat in isolation, many of them working together can perhaps overcome, even as they build their (individual and collective) Legend in ways that the Gods themselves never quite imagined. Of course, as Nebet considers it her duty to mete out justice, she isn't likely to take kindly to "vigilantes" who refuse to join her mission and instead dispense justice she doesn't approve of.

### NEBET

**Archetype:** Professional (Dr. Abboud)/Nemesis (Nebet)

Numbers before the slash are for Dr. Abboud in her mortal form, while those after represent her radically enhanced ability as Nebet.

**Qualities:** None (see below)

## MR. OLSEN, THE OLD MAN IN APARTMENT SEVEN

Mr. Olsen moved into his apartment 33 years ago, not long after the death of his husband, but as far as most people in the building now are concerned, he has always been there. Not a single other family remains from before his arrival. The property itself has changed hands more than once, yet he remains in his small, rent-controlled one-bedroom, untouched by events around him. Other residents guess his age to be at least ninety by now, but if pressed on the question, will readily admit that they're only making up a number that signifies "old" to them, because that's all he is to them: The old man in apartment seven. The possibility that he has been dead for a decade never crosses their minds.

Twelve years ago, when Krister Olsen realized that his health was failing, he refused to accept it. His home was everything to him — a perfectly curated museum of his life and memories — and he knew that no one else would care for it the way he did once he was gone. He had outlived his brothers and sisters, his cousins, his husband, everyone who had ever mattered. This place, which he had turned into something of a shrine for his beloved husband and the life they had together, would simply be cleared out to make room for strangers. When the time came for him to prepare his will, he became suddenly and painfully aware that there was no one in the World that he wanted to leave anything to, so instead he chose to imitate the stories of the haugbúar that he remembered from his childhood.

A haugbúi is much like a draugr: A person who has transformed themselves into one of the undead through sheer force of will. Spite and anger drive a draugr to refuse to surrender its hold on the World, while a haugbúi wants never to let go of its possessions. Where draugar wander abroad at night to cause trouble, haugbúar never leave the place where they are interred. For Mr. Olsen, his tomb is his apartment.

Accompanying haugbúar in their tombs are traditionally one or more *trémann*: life-sized wooden effigies that act as substitutes for sacrificial victims, and who are meant to provide company to the creature through the centuries. Given that the *trémann* are inanimate and incapable of



conversation, the degree to which they accomplish anything useful is debatable, but an isolated haugbúi can still develop a fondness for them. It might give the figures names, dress them, carry on conversations with them, and protect them as fiercely as it does any of its other possessions. Mr. Olsen's are a pair of salvaged department store mannequins that he dresses in men's suits and has named Jon and Einar, after his late husband and his favorite cousin. Threatening a *trémathr* can be a good way to gain leverage over a haugbúi. It is also an excellent way to get murdered.

Like all haugbúar, Krister is enormously strong. He appears to be a doddering old man nearing the century mark, but his frail appearance shouldn't fool anyone. As long as he is in his home, he cannot be lifted or moved by mortal strength unless he wants to be, which is never. His blue-black skin is as strong as iron, though he takes pains to make sure no one sees his true form. With one hand, he can choke the life from someone or fling them across a room, but doing that would make a mess, so he tries to avoid acts of violence unless an intruder sorely tests his patience. Over the decades, a handful of burglars and a couple of extremely pushy salesmen have discovered too late that trying to take advantage of this "sickly old man" is quite literally the last mistake they'll ever make.

People still see him in the building from time to time, not realizing that it's only his image that's next to them in the elevator or the hallway by his door. No one can recall a specific time when they've spoken with him, although the superintendent and the other residents of his floor are certain that they've had interactions at some vague point in the past. That's how they know to pick up and deliver any envelopes

he slips out from under his door, and to pass along what little mail he receives in the same manner — the biggest items are boxes of books he exchanges with various reading services, though no one can recall seeing him open the door to take them in or put them out. They can't remember when they were told to do these things, but it's now one of the unspoken rules of the building to do them for him.

His home itself is cozily decorated, even if it's cold and dimly lit. The walls are lined with framed watercolors that his husband painted, as well as faded but lovingly framed photographs from their extensive travels around the world. The little place is also positively crammed with reading material, with old magazines scattered on the tables and old books stacked here and there around well-stuffed armchairs. In the bedroom are his *trémann*, but he spends little time there, preferring to listen to records on his stereo in the front room while he reads. His bed is immaculately made but covered in a thin layer of dust, as he doesn't sleep anymore. He has a passion for the classics and is deeply versed in a variety of world literature — after all, he has nothing but time on his hands.

Mr. Olsen isn't unpleasant as such, especially for one of the undead. His personality is more that of a stern, independent grandfather who's accustomed to getting his own way and has lived too long to be bothered with what other people think of him. He is fully aware that his *trémann* are not alive in any sense but enjoys talking to them just the same, having created something of an imaginary second lifetime in his conversations with them. Interacting with him boils down to a simple principle — if others treat him with respect and politeness, he will do the same for them. He'll even forgive a minor annoyance, especially if it's caused by someone he feels is too young to know otherwise, but only once.

There are always more people looking for rooms to rent, after all.

## STORY HOOKS

- For pre-Visitation or newly-Visited Scions without a lot of money, Mr. Olsen's building makes for a perfectly good home. The apartment building itself is some sixty or seventy years old, so it lacks a lot of modern features, but at least the rent is cheap and the other families living there mind their own business most of the time. It doesn't take long before a new tenant notices other people in the building absent-mindedly picking up mail addressed to the haugbúi and leaving it by his door. They're happy enough to explain that they do it as a favor for the old man. It's what they've always done there. Later, characters spot him in the hallways, watching them in his image-form. He'll carry on conversation if he has to but prefers to play the part of a kindly if somewhat befuddled grandfather to avoid long talks with strangers. All in all, the encounters are quite ordinary — until they do something to upset him. Loud parties, arguments in the halls, pitched battles against supernatural creatures when he's trying to listen to his music — at that point, he starts sending nightmares over and over until the offenders either move out of the building or change

## ROOTED

So long as a haugbúi is in its tomb, it cannot be pushed, lifted, or otherwise moved by any physical force that would not move its entire tomb. If an opponent attempts to grapple it, it immediately gains control (*Scion: Origin*, p. 117) on the first round and is immune to the Pin, Takedown, and Throw stunts.

## IMAGE SENDING

The haugbúi can project an incorporeal apparition of itself outside of its tomb. The image can speak and looks like it did when it was alive but cannot interact physically. Mr. Olsen can send his image anywhere in his building or the street immediately outside, but no further.

their behavior. If someone connects the nightmares to their source and confronts him, he curtly informs them that they were being rude and must learn to behave. If they do, he's a good ally to have.

- Rumors that the apartment building is haunted have circulated in the area ever since Mr. Olsen became a haugbúi. Angry in his first year as one of the undead, he drove several tenants away with nightmares before realizing that he was only drawing attention to himself. This year, on Halloween, the hosts of a *very* amateur ghost-hunting web series (the unfortunately named “Nekro-Filez,” audience: 204 subscribers) decide to take up the investigation again. They come armed with cameras, EMF meters, EVP recorders, a shoebox full of religious trinkets, and absolutely no awareness that their presence is an irritation to the building’s living inhabitants as much as it is to its dead one. Mr. Olsen isn’t familiar with any of their technology but does find the intrusion grating. He knows there’s nothing he can do about it unless they either fall asleep or enter his apartment, so he puts up with them right up to the point when they start knocking on tenants’ doors asking for interviews about the building’s ghost. If the heroes already live in the building, their job for the night is to steer the ghost-hunters away from him, while Krister’s irritation spreads nightmares and terror to those managing to sleep. If they don’t, they will only hear about the aftermath: The next day, police find several mangled bodies in an alley outside the apartment, where he threw them from his window.
- Change is inevitable, especially in a city where real estate is a profitable investment. A new owner of Mr. Olsen’s building has plans for extensive renovations to bring its style and amenities into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While

the new landlord’s motives are rooted in financial gain, he’s not a caricature of greed: He also wants to make the building eco-friendlier, energy efficient, safe, and secure. At the same time, he also wants to attract a younger, more affluent, set of tenants and if that means making the process of renovation and construction uncomfortable enough for the people there now that they move out, he’ll do it. Heroes with an interest in protecting their neighborhood, even if they don’t know the building itself, will hear about the situation well before the haugbúi decides to take matters into his own hands. While most tenants put up with the inspections and “renovations” with grumbles and complaints, some serious accidents have happened, all in the apartment occupied by a single old man.

### MR. OLSEN

**Archetype:** Rival

**Qualities:** Keystone (his apartment), Unnatural Behavior (remain in apartment), Heavily Armored (included in Health and Defense totals), Rooted (see below), Willful

**Flairs:** Image Sending (see sidebar), Curse (recurring nightmares)

**Drive:** Keep his home exactly as it is.

**Primary Pool (9):** Classic Literature, Close Combat, Grandfatherly Intimidation

**Secondary Pool (7):** Deceptive Appearances, Good Manners, World Travels

**Desperation Pool:** 5

**Health:** 5

**Defense:** 5

**Initiative:** 6

**Extras:** Rooted

## ELPENOR, SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD

Although Odysseus enjoys a great deal of fame and respect for his quick thinking and legendary adventures, one thing that often gets overlooked is that while he survived Poseidon’s curse and lived happily ever after, the curse claimed the lives of his entire crew. Despite the pleading of his men, Odysseus simply had to get the recognition he deserved, and his hubris doomed them all. Elpenor was one such sailor, killed by his famous leader’s pride, who famously perished on the island of Circe the sorceress. His body not properly buried, his spirit pleaded with Odysseus to return and give him the rites he needed to be at peace. The legend tells that Odysseus did in fact return and give Elpenor a proper burial, even leaving an oar on the grave as a sign of respect.

What the legend got wrong, however, is that Elpenor’s story did not end at Circe’s island. The youngest man in the

crew, Elpenor survived the Trojan War due to Odysseus' cunning leadership and had all but worshipped his clever, resourceful commander. He trusted Odysseus to guide them all safely home, just as he had brought them through the war; instead, they found only an ignominious death thanks to Odysseus recklessly incurring Poseidon's wrath and bringing doom on his men. Although Odysseus did eventually return to properly bury Elpenor, the fact that he at first couldn't be bothered to search for Elpenor was a grave insult in the young man's eyes.

When Elpenor finally reached the Underworld, he could not let go of his feelings of anger and betrayal. He refused the numbing forgetfulness of the Lethe, and instead fixated on the injustice that had been visited on him. The arrival of the souls of his fellow sailors only stoked his fury higher, and while most of them eventually let go of their former lives, Elpenor refused. Eventually Hades himself took notice of the strange shade of the furious young man and called on him to explain why he refused the peace of forgetfulness. Elpenor replied that he could not rest until the so-called "heroes" faced justice for the consequences of their actions, especially all the collateral damage inflicted on those around them in their pursuit of glory.

Intrigued, Hades made the young man a deal: Elpenor would be allowed to return to the land of the living to deliver justice to reckless heroes. Shining Odysseus was beyond his reach, unfortunately, but there were others — many others — cut from the same cloth, whose careless actions and heedless ferocity caused misery and ruin. Elpenor would be the voice of those innocents who perished due to a hero's actions, a reminder of the lives that it costs to build a Legend. When a hero received justice, Elpenor would return to the Underworld and comfort the souls of those who died due to the hero's actions until he was needed again.

Of course, Hades did not grant such a boon from a place of benevolence. Ever calculating, the God realized that such a single-minded champion could be put to good use against the heroes and Scions of his rivals, and for centuries that is precisely what he did with young Elpenor. Hades would call up his "champion" and send him back to the World to bring justice to a reckless or callous hero, then recall him until the next target acquired his attention. Elpenor would listen to the shades of the departed and hear their cries and complaints about the supposed hero who caused their death, and armed with that knowledge, figure out how to destroy the wayward champion. Hades enchanted his armor to resist all but the most powerful magic and fashioned the oar into a stout staff of sacred wood that bypassed armor and magical defenses alike.

Countless would-be icons fell at Elpenor's feet, and, for a time, the work satisfied his need for vengeance. Hades employed him sparingly and named him the Hand of Hubris for his work punishing the arrogant and the reckless. It was a name spoken in whispers, the stuff of campfire frights and dark retellings among beings who themselves stood tall in the nightmares of mortals. After nearly a millennium of meting out bloody justice, however, Elpenor found his once inexhaustible fires flickering, his seemingly boundless

resolve wavering. He began to question whether his actions were doing any more good than those of the heroes he punished and found he could no longer turn a blind eye to the self-serving pattern in Hades' choice of targets. All the same he was no fool and knew questioning Hades or asking out of the bargain would be dangerous in the extreme.

So instead he waited, and the next time Hades sent him back to the World, Elpenor refused to fulfill his duties. Instead of slaying the wayward Scion he was sent to kill, he spoke to the young man instead and convinced him to see the error of his ways. Instead of piling death on top of death, he offered the foolhardy hero a chance to atone and make a better life for others and found it suited him. When it was done, he melted down his armor, using a portion of the remains to fashion a ring and a broach. He snapped his staff over his knee and fashioned one half into a humble bowl and the other into a simple cup. Although this diminished the power of these items significantly, it also meant Hades could no longer track him as easily, nor compel him to come when he called.

Eventually Hades realized something was amiss, and, when Elpenor did not reply to his summons, the cold lord of the Underworld did not rage but simply banned Elpenor from his kingdom. Thus, Elpenor was cursed to be not *truly* alive, nor able to attain the peace of the Underworld. No matter how hollow his belly or parched his throat, no matter how wasted with disease or ravaged with injuries he might be, Elpenor would not know the peace of death again. He remains cursed to heal from any state, bit by agonizing bit, until he is whole once more. Only his broken neck would never fully mend, a reminder of the injury that delivered him to the Underworld for the first time. Supposedly, there



is a way to be released from the curse, a condition that kind Persephone persuaded her furious husband to include, but if anyone knows other than Elpenor and the Gods involved so far, they're not telling.

Elpenor has wandered the world ever since, forever in pain from his neck and a hundred other hurts but doing his best to humble the proud and teach the careless the cost of their folly. Aside from his ability to heal back from most any injury, given time, he has no special supernatural powers, though his repurposed relics still provide some potent advantages. His ring lets him sense the presence of supernatural beings, while his broach renders him highly resistant to many of their powers. Those who share a meal with him from his bowl are bound to hear him out peacefully, while the spirits of those who've died as a result of their actions appear in the surface of his wine cup and whisper their secrets to him, giving him insight into the lives and minds of those he feels he must confront.

The Speaker for the Dead is an unusual antagonist in that he doesn't attack his enemies, he reasons with them. He genuinely wants to help reckless heroes acknowledge the damage they leave behind, to see the cost to innocents as well as those they care about, to put faces to the nameless casualties that are all too often lost to "hero's work." He is a committed pacifist and will not defend himself if attacked, though he will intercede to save innocents if he sees them put into harm's way. Even then, he uses nonviolent means when possible, nonlethal ones when not, and never inflicts more than the minimum amount of harm required to end a conflict. He is not cruel, but he is also unstinting in his devotion to his cause and is not afraid to speak harsh truths that force others to confront dark secrets and old traumas — if that's what is required to make them see the extent of what they've done.

With all this in mind, Elpenor is best used to show a band of reckless and/or arrogant Scions the true cost of their actions. His involvement naturally creates opportunities for intense, dramatic roleplaying, as well as a way to revisit to events from earlier in the story and show they have real, long-term consequences. However, it is also important to recognize that Elpenor is there to make the *characters* feel a sense of guilt and remorse, not to make the *players* feel bad for the choices they've made. It's a subtle distinction but a very important one, as making the players feel like you're rubbing their noses in past choices can make them feel set up and frustrated, especially if they weren't offered any other options at the time. Make it clear it's about the characters, always.

## STORY HOOKS

- Not long after a major battle they're involved in leads to a lot of property damage and innocent casualties, the Scions find the Speaker for the Dead on their doorstep. He asks if they would be willing to speak with him, in his role as the voice of the innocents who've suffered as the result of their actions, as it will

help their restless shades find peace. However, doing so will involve facing a lot of unpleasant truths about the lives they've changed — or ended — and it may lead to some serious social and psychological consequences. Do the Scions have it in them to face those they've hurt?

- A rash of strange and inexplicable suicides and suicide attempts rocks the Scion community. Upon investigation, it becomes clear that all of the victims spoke to Elpenor shortly before killing themselves. Alarmingly, he's acting out of character: much more aggressive than normal, psychologically breaking people and driving them to extremes instead of trying to lift them up. It turns out that a rival Scion has located Elpenor's original grave and is using that connection to control his actions, turning him once more into a weapon. Can the Band defeat this sinister manipulator, and free Elpenor from their control? Or, will they use this knowledge to turn him into their own weapon? How will he react when he realizes what he's done?
- Battered and staggering, Elpenor approaches the characters for help. His relics have been stolen by an unknown attacker, and he fears they will be put to nefarious use before long. In exchange for their help, he offers to connect each of the Band with a lost loved one for a final conversation, or if they already have such a capability, to watch over their living loved ones for a time and keep them safe from harm. Can the Scions locate the missing items before they vanish for good? Do they want to help the Speaker for the Dead, or keep the relics for themselves?

## ELPENOR

**Archetype:** Nemesis

**Qualities:** Mystic Arsenal (his bowl, cup, broach and ring), Regeneration (Elpenor does not heal at an accelerated rate, but he also cannot be permanently slain without Hades' willing consent, and thus will eventually, if very painfully, heal back from any injury — including total disintegration), Willful

**Flairs:** Reflected Intent (cannot be used to inflict harm, only incapacitate), Touch of Asclepius

**Drive:** To show Heroes the cost of their actions

**Primary Pool (11):** Convincing Sincerity, Empathetic Listener, Pantheon Expert (Theoi +1)

**Secondary Pool (9):** Historical Lore (Greece +1), Sailing, Storytelling

**Desperation Pool:** 6

**Health:** 5

**Defense:** 4

**Initiative:** 9

# CENTAURS

Half man, half beast — even half machine. Centaurs, both classic and modern, live their own lives in The World.

## CLASSICAL CENTAURS

Centaurs are imposing figures. Roughly eight feet long, seven-and-a-half feet high, and weighing more than eleven hundred pounds, centaurs take up enormous amounts of space. They range in color from black, brown, sorrel, palomino, gray, and white, with markings comprised of various spots, streaks, and patches. These colors, considered their hereditary traits, cover their entire body including their upper half. Centaurs do wear clothing on their human-like torsos for modesty, and they sometimes wear blankets to cover their equine bodies. Their garments often match the occasion from customized black and white tuxedos to riot armor.

According to lore, Ixion, king of the Lapiths, and Nephele, a cloud nymph, gave birth to centaurs. This would prove ironic as, in later years, the Lapiths and the centaurs would war against each other during an event referred to as the Centauromachy. Theoi propaganda suggests this occurred because the centaurs attempted to kidnap the women of Lapith. They painted the centaurs as belligerents with a reputation for heavy drinking, debauchery, and bouts of wild violence. During the Centauromachy the great hero, Theseus, sided with the Lapiths and together they destroyed or drove off the centaurs.

The truth is, despite their attempts to integrate with their bipedal neighbors, society never treated centaurs as equals. Centaur resentment grew into contempt, and contempt eventually resulted in outright bloodshed. This defeat pushed the centaurs out of their ancestral home of Thessaly and forced them to wander the World. While small patches traveled north into Europe or south into Africa, most of the population traveled east into the Eurasian steppe. These migrants (or refugees, depending on who explains it) settled in sections of the Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Mongolia. There, they kept to themselves, separating from mortal society after a few early attempts at integration ended in disaster. From their relative isolation, they continued to fight against the Theoi while hunting alongside the Tengri of Mongolia and trading with the Pantheons of Russia.

In the early 19th century, a group of political advocates lobbying the United States government on behalf of turnpike operators, stagecoach owners, and wagon drivers convinced a few officials to work with a Band of Theoi Scions to capture and transport several thousand centaurs to North America. They intended to use the centaurs' natural ability to revolutionize the transportation of cargo across America and save the industry from the ever-growing railroad. As railroad tycoons exploited Chinese workers, so too did these drivers exploit the centaurs.

When it became obvious this coalition would never treat them as anything other than work horses, the

centaurs refused to cooperate and openly rebelled. The experiment ended, and when the dispossessed centaurs settled throughout the Great Plains, they quickly become a nuisance to local ranchers and pockets of civilization.

After the Civil War, as General George Crook attempted to pacify the Native Americans who populated the West, the army sent a special cavalry detachment to deal with the renegade centaurs. However, the ferocity and mobility of the centaurs crushed the woefully unprepared cavalry. Frustrated with the situation, President Grover Cleveland dispatched a diplomatic envoy to handle the situation, which resulted in a small patch of land in eastern Montana being "gifted" to the centaurs. They founded the town of New Thessaly, located on the Missouri Plateau, and remain there to this day.

Centaurs tend to travel in herds with a linear dominance hierarchy. There is a clear leader and an established pecking order. Herds are comprised of several separate bands, which share a given territory. A culture born out of the patriarchy of Ancient Greece, a band once consisted of one or two males, several females, and their offspring. However, modern American life has erased these gender divisions. The strongest leads; the rest follow, with the composition of the band changing as young centaurs marry into other families or challenge their superiors for dominance.

With a top speed of 55 miles per hour, centaurs are stronger and faster than any mortal human. They have a talent for archery, which eventually led to an uncanny mastery of firearms. This, coupled with their natural mobility, proved lethal on the battlefield. Less effective in thick



jungles or dense forests, centaurs prefer flat lands or hilly terrains.

Domestically, their homes are massive in size, more akin to wooden forts, with wide hallways and ceilings. Sometimes, their inability to integrate with the rest of society has more to do with architecture and less to do with temperament. How is a centaur expected to work on the sixth floor of an office building? What about walking down narrow streets, going through turnstiles, or even a revolving door?

Centaurs also have a susceptibility to alcohol. While many do not drink to excess, some have used alcohol to cope with their struggles. This has proven dangerous, and the centaurs have even gone so far as to establish their own quadrupedal branch of Alcoholics Anonymous.

## STORY HOOKS

- The most famous centaur was Chiron who, unlike the reputation given to his species, was intelligent, civilized, and chaste. He was the personal tutor of various Greek heroes, including Achilles, Ajax, Heracles, Perseus, and Theseus. However, Heracles nearly killed him. Having struck a bargain with Zeus in order to save the life of Prometheus, Heracles shot his former tutor with an arrow dipped in Hydra's blood. Legend also suggests, Zeus took pity on Chiron, sparing his life and granting him a place among the stars. Or, as some centaurs would say, imprisoned. Fast forward to the twenty-first century and this story prompts a series of assassination attempts against Theoi Scions, each in some shape or form connected to the heroic Heracles. Dubbed a terrorist organization, the Chiron Liberation strikes at property and personnel, wreaking havoc on the Theoi. While greater centaur society distances themselves from the radicals, they also refuse to lift a finger to hinder them. That said, with the right argument or leverage, the centaurs may be persuaded to assist in the capture of Chiron Liberation militants.
- Located in the Thessaly region of Greece, the port city of Volos erupts in political violence. Centaurs seeking to regain their ancestral home have returned to the land, running for political office and attempting to enact pro-centaur legislation ranging from the widening of sidewalks to equal rights. Propaganda circulates on national television painting the centaurs as drunken lechers. As anti-centaur sentiment grows, counter campaigns cast the protesters as right wing extremists. The results are clashes in the streets between the two groups with armed riot police in the middle. Further protests erupt in the neighboring cities of Karditsa, Trikala, and the capital, Larissa. If the two sides can reach some manner of compromise, the country might avert outright civil war.
- David "Dasher" Demoleon is a famous modern centaur in America. Part of the Sagittarius Racing Competition, the SRC is a private racing club pitting

the fastest centaurs against each other for cash prizes. Organized by wealthy Scions, the events are by invitation only, occurring in empty stretches of desert, abandoned airports, and famous racetracks during the off season. At one minute and twelve seconds for a single-mile sprint, Dasher holds the US title for fastest centaur alive. This has prompted a series of interviews, sponsorships, and advertising opportunities. Unfortunately, Dasher also has a not-so-secret drinking problem and an arrest record longer than his hind limbs. After a drunken bender and an altercation with police caught on social media, Dasher sits in a Los Angeles jail cell surrounded by story-hungry journalists. His agent has put out the word for assistance, hoping and praying for someone to save both Dasher and his failing reputation.

## CLASSICAL CENTAUR

**Archetype:** Professional

**Qualities:** Group Tactics, Natural Weapons (Hooves), Twitchy

**Flairs:** Here I Come

**Drive:** Eat, drink, and be merry!

**Primary Pool (7):** Agility, Archery or Firearms (+1 Enhancement), Creative Pursuits

**Secondary Pool (5):** Kicking, Endurance, Survival

**Desperation Pool:** 3

**Health:** 2

**Defense:** 2

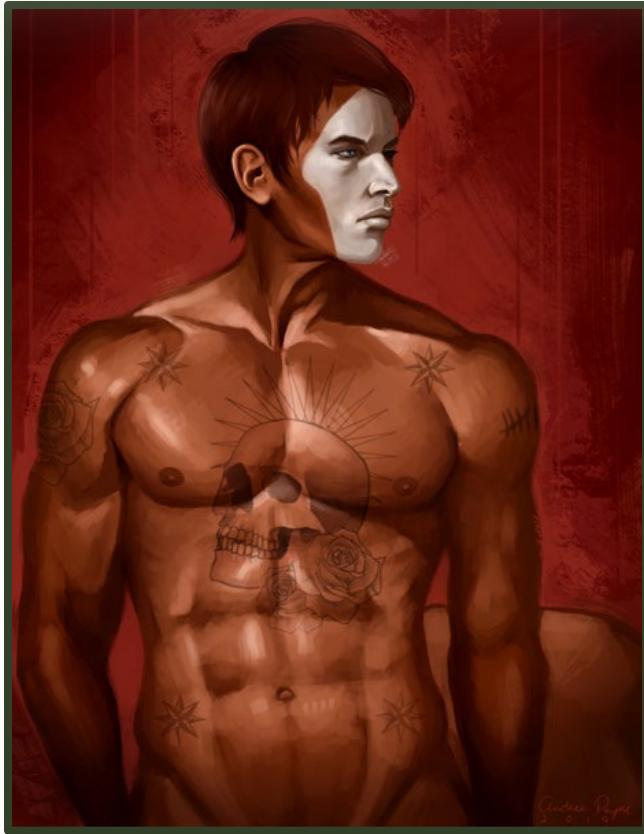
**Initiative:** 7

**Extras:** Classical Centaurs have Scale 2 speed on unpaved ground or Scale 1 on paved roads.

## THE POLKAN

Distant descendants of the classical centaurs expelled from ancient Greece, the Polkan are Russian centaurs. They settled along the Eurasian steppes, traveling in small bands that occasionally clashed with locals. When they encountered the Tengri, the Mongolian Pantheon proved sympathetic to the equine refugees and granted them a wide berth. As the Russian empire grew, it slowly enveloped the territories of the Polkan and unofficially adopted them into their ranks. Over the course of several generations, the Polkan urbanized, settling in southern cities such as Krasnodar, Volgograd, Rostov, Saratov, Samara, and Orenburg.

The Polkans, being strong and resilient, worked the farms alongside the peasants in peaceful coexistence. But, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as Russia fought in the Napoleonic, Crimean, and Russo-Japanese wars, the empire demanded more of its citizens. The government diverted food and supplies to the soldiers while the masses starved.



Disease and poverty were rampant, and an unlikely band of folk heroes emerged. The *Vorovskoy Mir* emerged, stealing from government entities and handing the bulk of their profits to the starving populace. The Polkans were obvious recruits for the *Vory* and were instrumental in creating what would eventually become the Russian mafia. As full members of the *Vory*, the Polkan attacked government supply lines, defended local communities, and assassinated agents of the Czar. These tactics continued through the Russian revolution of 1917, persisting until the rise of Joseph Stalin, General Secretary of the Soviet Union.

Stalin succeeded in cracking down on the *Vory*, placing the majority of their ranks into gulags. Here the *vorami v zakone*, or “thieves-in-law,” were truly born. These criminals developed intricate shows of status through complicated tattoos. A knowledgeable member or outsider could learn all they needed to about a *Vor* through the symbols depicted on their body. The Polkan did the same when sent to a specialized labor camp in Siberia along with other mythical creatures. During World War II and into its aftermath, the Polkan fought various gangs within the gulags including rival yeti, minotaurs, and trolls.

After the death of Stalin in 1952, the Russian government released millions of citizens from the gulags along with the bulk of the *Vory*. The *Vory* quickly returned to their old ways, establishing a syndicate that remains to this day. Having modernized their criminal activities, the Polkan are deeply involved in information warfare, weapons smuggling, extortion, hijacking, and the drug trade. Their targets and profitable interests have expanded far beyond attacks on the government.

The Polkan maintain a similar hierarchy to their western cousins with some notable exceptions. A Pakhan, or “Boss” leads them. Under the Pakhan is a pair of *avtoritets*, or “Authorities,” who handle day-to-day operations and command rank-and-file *Vors*. Some *Vors* specialize in short-term tasks including internal audits, spy operations, and diplomatic missions. Any subordinate can challenge the Pakhan for leadership, however, that challenge need not be limited to a physical fight. Among the *Vory*, dominance is not so straightforward.

All Polkan carry an assortment of tattoos, each offering some insight. For example, the image of a single, black stallion means the Polkan prefers to work alone. While the image of several stallions indicate they prefer to work as a team. Polkan are stereotypically stubborn, ruthless, and loyal. This often translates into an absolute rejection of authority both in and out of prison. To betray the Polkan is a universal death sentence and remains the rarest of occurrences.

## STORY HOOKS

- The Devá and the Yazatas continue to war against each other clandestinely. Using Scion and mortal proxies, the two clash in cities throughout Asia, from Tehran to Kashmir. Rumors circulate of a shipment of weapons headed to the Yazatas from the Polkan. They’re being transported from the Volga region of Russia, through Kazakhstan, and into the theater of war. Rumors circulate that these aren’t mortal weapons but ancient Relics of immense power. The Devá mobilize in preparation, while other Pantheons urge caution. Meanwhile, the Yazatas claim ignorance and point toward continued Devá propaganda. While the Scions attempt a diplomatic solution, bringing these two warring factions to the negotiating table, they must also track down the Relics to remove them from use.

- Aleksei Trevelyan, a low-ranking member of the *vorami v zakone*, has committed the unthinkable. Captured by Russian security services, the Polkan has turned on his sisters and brothers, resulting in a massive crackdown on the Polkan within the city of Krasnodar. The Pakhan quickly realizes the traitor among them and issues a massive bounty on the young Polkan’s head. Fearing for his life, Trevelyan escapes police custody and is on the run. Some Polkan rivals, including other organized crime syndicates, extend their hands to Trevelyan looking to exploit the situation for their own ends. But, with such a prize, every Pantheon sends Scions to capture the runaway. If the heroes claim Trevelyan, will they exfiltrate him to safer shores, or will they return him to what will certainly be his death? What happens when the rival crime syndicates offer them a better price?

- Black Bear Prison, located outside Tomsk in Siberia, is also known as the *Myasorubka* — the “Meat Grinder.” Used exclusively for Polkans, engineers

under Stalin designed the penitentiary in the 1930s to house quadrupedal elements of the *Vor*. It still stands and continues to be a brutal, unforgiving facility. The Russian courts sentenced Anna Simonova to 120 years for multiple counts of murder, except she wants to go to her son's wedding in Minsk. She has issued an ask. The ask is to break her out of prison long enough to attend her son's wedding and then return her to the *Myasorubka* without anyone the wiser. It's odd she would break out only to break back in, but there's someone in the prison she can't leave.

## • POLKAN

**Archetype:** Professional

**Qualities:** Stand Tall, Super Soldiers

**Flairs:** Shroud

**Drive:** This is mine.

**Primary Pool (7):** Firearms (+1 Enhancement), Intimidation, Stealth

**Secondary Pool (5):** Athletics, Survival, Technology

**Desperation Pool:** 3

**Health:** 2

**Defense:** 2

**Initiative:** 7

**Extras:** +1 Enhancement when in urban environments (Storyguide's choice).

## NUCKELAVEE

A horse-like demon of Orcadian mythology, Nuckelavee is a merciless, dreadful beast of plague. A natural rival of the Tuatha Dé Danann, Nuckelavee emerges from the waters off the shores of the Orkney Islands and ventures onto land long enough to sicken everything in its path. Crops wither in its presence. Cattle become diseased. Mortal humans grow ill and waste away.

Some believe fresh water could hold off the monstrosity, since rain keeps it in the sea. No one believes Nuckelavee has a care for the weather otherwise. According to Legend, Mither o' the Sea, an Orcadian sea spirit, confined Nuckelavee. The Sea Mither, who was more than likely a Scion of the Celtic pantheons, defended the island inhabitants from the demon. Unfortunately, no one has seen the Sea Mither in some time, which has allowed Nuckelavee to ravage the countryside once again.

Folklorists hotly debate the history and nature of Nuckelavee. Some claim it's a Fomorian in service to a Titanic monarch, using it as a pawn against the Tuatha Dé Danann. Some Æsir claim it's a spawn of Hel, Norse goddess of the Underworld. Yet others believe Nuckelavee is part of a lost Celtic pantheon, a beast or demon that has lost its master and roams the English coasts in search of sustenance.



As a creature of death, it feeds on the essence of the living, which accounts for the blighted crops and fallen livestock. No one has seen two Nuckelavee together and lived to tell the tale. This suggests there is only one in existence. But, several Scions claim to have defeated Nuckelavee in battle. This leaves a few explanations: someone or something is creating Nuckelavee, there is (or can be) more than one, the demon can escape death and regenerate its wounds, or the Scions are lying.

Nuckelavee has a twisted, human torso attached to the back of a horse. At a distance, it can appear to be an innocent horse and rider. But on closer inspection, the human half has extended limbs which end in long razor talons while the equine half has a horse's head with a single eye. Below this eye is a gaping mouth of sharp teeth that expels toxic, diseased fumes. The most horrific aspect of Nuckelavee is its skinless hide; muscles and sinews are openly visible along with bulging veins of black and blood red tissue.

Dangerous on land, Nuckelavee is even more so in its natural habitat. Once inside the salty waters of the Northern Sea, the demon's hind quarters meld to form the tail of a fish. Resembling a cross between a hippocamp and an ichthyocentaur, Nuckelavee maintains its ghastly appearance and razor talons while gaining maneuverability and increased speed. Its feeding habits remain the same in the water as on land, plaguing entire schools of fish or poisoning the occasional whale.

Only during the daylight hours and summer is there peace. Nuckelavee sleeps during the day, resting inside subterranean caves or buried underneath the seabed. During the

summer, it hibernates. However, there is a downside: both in the late spring and in the early fall, Nuckelavee has a frenzied feast; in spring, it eats to prepare for the long summer months, while in the fall, it eats to sate its voracious hunger.

Whether on land or in the sea, Nuckelavee is lethal despite its lack of intelligence. Functioning more like a lone wolf or shark, the horse-demon acts on instinct rather than strategy. Nuckelavee views the world through life-sight and can sense and track anything alive. Once it locates suitable prey, it stalks it, hugging the earth in order to remain hidden, or sometimes encircling the target. Nuckelavee inches forward, closing the distance until it strikes with blinding ferocity to drain the life from its victims.

On rare occasions, the horse-demon will save a snack in the form of a farm animal or foolish mortal, dragging them back to a lair to consume them later. Few have ever been rescued, but those who have never quite recover from the trauma.

## STORY HOOKS

- Kris Hatcher and Britt Albany are C-level celebrities and show runners for the reality television series “Spirit Stalk.” A typical episode consists of them entering a house or hotel suspected of paranormal activity with various traps, cameras, and recording devices. They usually come up empty handed, but the romantic tension between them kept viewers hooked – until they kissed. After that, it was like every other couple who does a thing together on TV, whether that’s redecorating houses, or in this case, ghost hunting. So, they decided to take it to the next level for the new season which they’re calling, “Spirit Stalk: Mythic Monsters”. They go on dangerous investigations and live stream events, like swimming naked in search of Loch Ness or tracking sasquatches in Bridger-Teton National Forest with slabs of raw meat. The pair travel to the island of Orkney in search of Nuckelavee. There, during their live stream, they loudly insult and berate Nuckelavee, daring the demon to appear. The beast obliges them, brutally slaughtering Britt before dragging Kris away off screen. With a hundred thousand live-streaming viewers, word travels quickly, as does the Scion response.

- The crops and livestock of the English countryside are withering, dying both suddenly and inexplicably. The blights appear random, affecting certain farms and ignoring others. Investigation reveals each of the targets is owned by someone of Scottish descent and, specifically, with historical ties to the Northern Isles. Not only are the targets originally from Orkney, they are also familial descendants of Walter Dennison, a 19th century folklorist who chronicled the demon. Has Nuckelavee returned, enacting its revenge on the descendants of the man who told the world so much about it? Or, is someone else using the horse-demon as a smokescreen in order to pursue their own nefarious designs? In either case, farms are dying, and families

are falling into ruin. The descendants of Dennison beg the Pantheons for assistance.

- The Macaria Corporation is a worldwide agrochemical and agricultural biotechnology corporation. In recent years, it has grown in size, reach, and profit share due in no small part to its chief product: Super-Pest-B-Gone. The patented solution is both herbicide and pesticide, targeting weeds and as plant-eating bugs. Plus, it’s cheap. Despite its possible links to cancer and a slew of incoming lawsuits, the chemical has proven so effective that corporate farmers use it liberally. Super-Pest-B-Gone is the R&D dream of the Macaria Corporation, who has secretly captured Nuckelavee. With a specialized prison and years of study, Macaria Corp has managed to extract toxic fluids from the demon and incorporate it into their most popular formula. As a by-product of their research, they have also developed a biological weapon, which the corporation intends to sell on the black market. They’re promising potential buyers an endless supply.

## NUCKELAVEE

**Archetype:** Nemesis

**Qualities:** Natural Weapon (Claws, Teeth), Super Soldier, Vulnerability (Fresh Water)

**Flairs:** Plague Touch, Regeneration, Shapeshifter

**Drive:** Plague bearer!

**Primary Pool (11):** Close Combat (+3 Enhancement), Swimming (+3 Enhancement)

**Secondary Pool (9):** Athletics, Intimidation, Survival

**Desperation Pool:** 6

**Health:** 5

**Defense:** 4

**Initiative:** 9

**Extras:** Nuckelavee is granted one free use of Spray N’ Pray per scene. Appearing as a toxic breath weapon, success causes no damage but instead automatically applies a disease, chosen by the Storyguide. Use the normal rules for disease once delivered.

## THE ALKON MOTORCYCLE CLUB

Even in the World, where it sometimes seems that legendary beings lurk around every corner, there are creatures whose existence is discounted as rumor by those who have never seen them. The Cabeirean centaur is one of these: Generally described as a modern incarnation of the traditional centaur, with the upper torso of a human attached to a motorcycle instead of a horse; the idea that it is real tends to raise more questions than answers. Was the first one born from the ill-advised encounter of a biker and his motorcycle, like how more common centaurs trace their

lineage to Centauros and the Magnesian mares? Do they reproduce? Do they organize themselves into groups based on the manufacturer of their machine parts? Are those parts under warranty?

The answers to these questions are, if anything, stranger than the questions themselves. Among those who believe that these creatures are real, the most common explanation is that Hephaestus created them as an improvement on the original centaur, although no one has yet come up with a plausible reason why beyond “to prove that he could.” The God’s Scions and cults vehemently disagree with this idea, pointing out that Hephaestus has never had any interest refashioning bodies of flesh.

Moto-centaurs, they say, are more likely the product of Hephaestus’ offspring, the Cabeiri. These Demigods both share their father’s skill with metalwork and have had some experience with reassembling living bodies, making them better candidates as creators. As grandchildren of shapeshifting Proteus through their mother, Cabeiros, they have inherited a knack for understanding the complexities of anatomy that their father largely chooses to ignore. They are also more inclined than Hephaestus to keep up with advances in technologies by watching how mortals use them in daily life rather than spending all their time in the forges of Olympus. They even have their own small sub-cults of inventors and engineers that attach themselves to their father’s temples.

The Alkons are a Nebraska-based group of seven Cabeirean centaurs whose job it is to keep the cult supplied with the parts it needs. All of them are ex-American military who were recruited from veterans’ hospitals around the country, just as other teams like them are. When they aren’t working on a job or undergoing maintenance, they keep as low a profile as they can. Less conspicuous members of the cult take care of their daily needs, which includes diverting attention from them. Most of these cultists are mechanics and tinkerers from working class backgrounds who meet in body shops and bars as often as they do in temples of Hephaestus. They share news on the latest developments in their trades, talk about the projects they’re working on, and drink rounds of beer late into the night. Other followers of the Theoi know they exist and know that they’re one of the Pantheon’s dozens of mystery cults but rarely pay any more attention to them than that unless they need their car repaired.

They don’t ask how the cult funds itself or why it is that its members can get their hands on rare and expensive parts so easily. They don’t often notice that it includes paramedics and surgeons in its ranks, along with contacts in the highway patrol and police departments. They definitely don’t see the connection between the boisterous gearheads drinking together on a Friday night and the well-coordinated teams of motorcyclists who steal shipments of machine parts from trucks on the highway. Those who do make the connection are soon either brought into the fold — or handled as quietly as possible.

In combat, the Alkons rely on speed and firepower. They fight as a coordinated team, protecting each other if



one member becomes the focus of attack and using their shots to keep other combatants pinned down behind cover when possible. If they’re not already moving when the fight begins, they will all start riding at full speed. They know they’re not invincible and would rather escape a battle to regroup than take on enemies that demonstrate supernatural abilities. If one of them is caught or too injured to keep up, however, they will stop to provide cover for as long as they can.

## STORY HOOKS

- The Alkons have made a mistake: They hijacked a shipment of parts from Triskellion Shipping and angered the Scion of Manannán mac Lir that owns it. Normally, Triskellion would write the theft off as a bit of good-natured raiding in traditional Irish style, but in this case, the truck carried a pair of Relic wheels empowered by the sea-crossing chariot of Manannán himself. Now it’s a matter of honor to retrieve them and punish the ones responsible. Ordinary channels of investigation haven’t helped Triskellion at all, thanks to cult-allied members of the police departments around where the robbery took place. Abigail Murray, the company’s owner, isn’t prepared to intervene herself just yet and would rather ask others to take care of the problem, but only because she doesn’t know that the culprits are something other than ordinary humans. If she learns who they are, she will happily risk an inter-Pantheon incident by descending on the state of Nebraska without mercy.

- When a hit-and-run accident sent a promising college athlete to the hospital with no hope of ever walking again, it fueled sympathetic local news stories for a few weeks, then faded from the public's attention. Then he disappeared from his room without a trace, inducted into the Cabeirean centaurs by cultists who felt that he deserved a second chance at an independent life, and now he has been sighted at night on the roads around his hometown. He's searching for the person who injured him but can no longer remember all the details of the accident and is in too much pain to listen to members of the cult who tell him to leave the past alone. If the Alkons try to bring him in themselves, it will only draw attention to them. If they leave him free, it won't be long before his anger drives him to terrorize and attack random drivers.
- Breaking the oaths of secrecy around any mystery cult leads to swift reprisal from the group. Breaking the oaths of the Cabeiri and stealing one of their most treasured Relics (a leathery severed penis whose origin they do not discuss) is cause for the Alkons to hunt down the thief. The oath-breaker in question, Wendell Foster, has no idea what prompted him to take the Relic, hide it in a briefcase, and take off on the highway in the direction of California. He knows that it's something he *has* to do, and that if he hesitates even a little, vivid and frightening hallucinations surround him.

When his car breaks down late at night near a roadside diner, he bursts inside in a panic with the briefcase in one hand and a pistol in the other. The Alkons are not far behind him, his nightmares are closing in, and somewhere out there, whatever force it is that's compelling him is still trying to lure him westward.

## 💀 ALKON MOTORCYCLE CENTAUR

**Archetype:** Rival

**Qualities:** Super Soldier (included in Health and Defense totals)

**Flairs:** Spray 'n' Pray

**Drive:** Live hard, ride free

**Primary Pool (9):** Firearms (+1 Enhancement), Motorcycling

**Secondary Pool (7):** Close Combat, Drive Silently

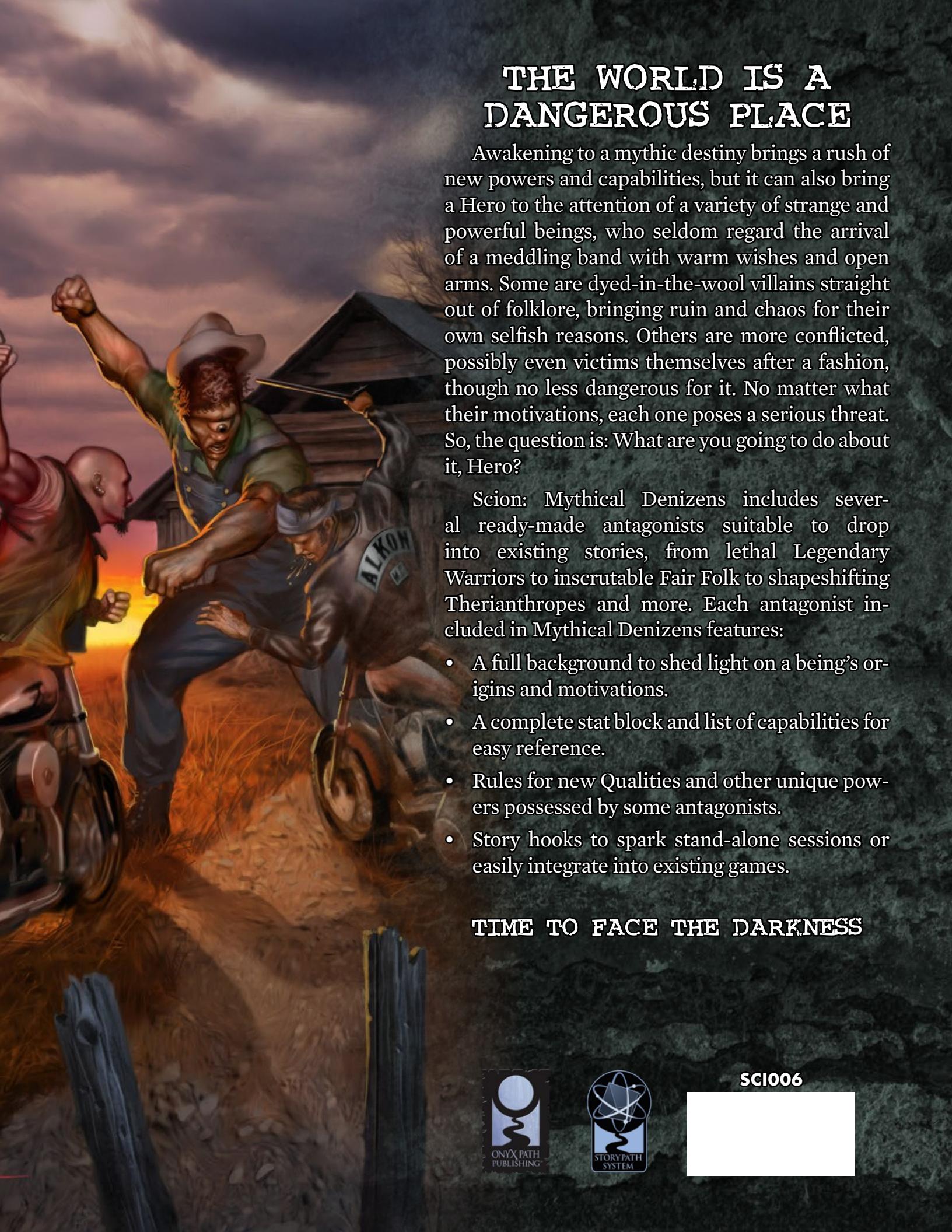
**Desperation Pool:** 5

**Health:** 5

**Defense:** 4

**Initiative:** 6

**Extras:** Alkons have Scale 2 speed on roads, or Scale 1 on unpaved ground. If knocked down, they must make a successful Desperation Pool test to right themselves.



# THE WORLD IS A DANGEROUS PLACE

Awakening to a mythic destiny brings a rush of new powers and capabilities, but it can also bring a Hero to the attention of a variety of strange and powerful beings, who seldom regard the arrival of a meddling band with warm wishes and open arms. Some are dyed-in-the-wool villains straight out of folklore, bringing ruin and chaos for their own selfish reasons. Others are more conflicted, possibly even victims themselves after a fashion, though no less dangerous for it. No matter what their motivations, each one poses a serious threat. So, the question is: What are you going to do about it, Hero?

**Scion: Mythical Denizens** includes several ready-made antagonists suitable to drop into existing stories, from lethal Legendary Warriors to inscrutable Fair Folk to shapeshifting Therianthropes and more. Each antagonist included in *Mythical Denizens* features:

- A full background to shed light on a being's origins and motivations.
- A complete stat block and list of capabilities for easy reference.
- Rules for new Qualities and other unique powers possessed by some antagonists.
- Story hooks to spark stand-alone sessions or easily integrate into existing games.

TIME TO FACE THE DARKNESS



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