

# FIRST FABLE



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## GUIDE BOOK

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to **FirstFable**! If you’re reading this, odds are you’re doing it because you want to introduce your children to the joy of roleplaying games. As roleplayers get older, have kids see them grow, it’s only natural that we’d want to introduce the people we love most to the hobby we love most. But is it really that simple?

It can be. Children are natural roleplayers because they play pretend intuitively. The benefits of free play—that is, play with no rules or expectations—are indisputable. Free play helps children work through anxiety, practice (rehearse, even) social situations, and perhaps most important, it helps them communicate. Young children should—must—be given opportunities to engage in free play, which is one reason that adults that fill their children’s schedules with lessons and activities of all kinds are overdoing it a bit. (Not to say that signing your kids up for piano lessons or a painting class or summer camp is a bad idea—far from it! Just make sure they get some unstructured time, too.)

As kids get older, their desire for play doesn’t abate, but it does grow more sophisticated. As children of roleplayers, they’ve probably watched their moms and dads roll odd, sparkly dice on big tables or move what look like little toys around a map, and they’ve probably been intrigued. But the sad truth is, a lot of roleplaying games, especially the older ones that are closest to the war games that gave rise to the hobby, are complex, arcane and, to a child, a bit tedious. And the newer story-based games, though easier in terms of rules, don’t provide enough of a structure. For a typically developing child, someone with a decent vocabulary and an age-appropriate grasp of numbers, is there a game on the market that will work?

Well, yes, there are actually several. This is one of them. **FirstFable** is specifically designed to be played with children ages 8 to 12, but you could probably go as young as 6 (there’s no upper age limit on an RPG, as we know). Stories in **FirstFable** are meant to be

## A What-Playing Game?

While **FirstFable** is written on the assumption that you’re a roleplayer hoping to introduce the hobby to your children, it’s also possible that you’ve picked this game up in hopes of sharing a fun activity with your kids, but that you’ve never actually done any gaming. Don’t fret. Here’s the quick version of what you need to know.

First, in a roleplaying game, the players take on the roles of characters in a story. They try to accomplish goals as defined by the kind of story you’re all telling. In “The Hunt for the Wild Guffin,” for instance (which is found at the end of this book), the goal of the story is to track down a mythical animal that no living person has ever seen before.

Second, most roleplaying games (including **FirstFable**) have a way to

resolve challenges involving some random elements. Many such games use dice, though some use cards. The system for how the dice or cards are read and interpreted varies widely, but **FirstFable** is pretty simple—roll six-sided dice (which are the cube-shaped dice you find in most board games) and count up any dice that come up as 4, 5 or 6.

Finally, the roleplaying community is large and diverse. If you go online, you will find websites devoted to gaming as a hobby, and if you look you’ll find a lot of parents who will be happy to discuss their experiences gaming with their kids. It’s a wonderful way to play with your children, to introduce them to books and reading (by encouraging a love of stories), to introduce some basic math skills and, most important, to help them be creative and communicate. Welcome!

played in two hours or so, and the game is designed for the “Game Master” to be an adult while the players are children. The title for the Game Master in **FirstFable**, in fact, is simply “the Grown-Up” (GU, if you like).

**FirstFable**, like most roleplaying games, doesn’t have a way to “win.” The game is cooperative, not competitive, and everyone “wins” by having fun. In this way, roleplaying games bear much more resemblance to the unstructured free play that I mentioned above than to board or even playground games that have defined rules.

The rest of this book explains how to customize characters and how the game system works. We also provide advice for running the game, keeping the players engaged, and making sure everyone has fun. Finally, we finish off with “The Hunt for the Wild Guffin,” a quest for four players involving the discovery of a mythical beast. To run a game of **FirstFable**, you’ll need this book, a handful of six-sided dice (you can get these at many “big box” stores for very little money, or you can buy cool-looking colored dice from game stores — the love of multicolored dice starts early!), copies of the Character Book, and the Handouts.





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# CHARACTER CREATION

In order to play **FirstFable**, every player needs a character (the GU doesn't have his or her own character; instead, the GU gets to play all of the supporting characters, including allies, enemies, passers-by and even animals). Making a character is quick and easy, and has four steps. Under each step, we explain what to do, and address any questions that are likely to come up.

**FirstFable** includes Character Book, which help the players through the steps of character creation. The Character Book include questions and character-building steps that aren't covered here in the Grown-Up book, because they don't have any immediate bearing on the game system (they're to help the players flesh out characters a bit more). The Grown-Up should definitely read the Character Book, though, and help the players out answering questions as necessary.

## STEP ONE: CHOOSE CHARACTER TYPE

This book includes four character types: the Knight, the Faerie Princess, the Animal Keeper and the Pirate. Every player chooses a Type. A character's Type determines his or her ratings in Strong, Fast and Smart.

Type	Strong	Fast	Smart
Animal Keeper	3	2	4
Faerie Princess	2	4	3
Knight	4	3	2
Pirate	3	3	3

**What if there are more than four of us?** Multiple people can have the same type. In fact, it might be fun for two players to create Knights who grew up and trained together, or Pirates ashore from the same ship. Type is just a starting place.

**What if I want to play a girl Knight, or a boy Faerie?** Girls can absolutely be Knights or Pirates, and boys can certainly be Faerie Princes or Animal Keepers. We just presented them this way in the book because they're easy to recognize, but you should absolutely make the characters you want to play!

**What if I want to play a Ninja (or some other Type that isn't represented here)?** Hopefully, we'll be producing new character Types for **FirstFable** in the near future. Until then, though, choose the Type that closest to what you want to play ("Ninja" is probably closest to "Knight," though you could also make an argument for "Pirate") and have the GU help you change any rules that don't make sense.

**What if I want to play a smarter Knight or a faster Animal Keeper?** One way to make up the difference for a low Stat is with Shines (below). But if you want to adjust the numbers, go ahead. The three Stats total nine points, just don't go over that, and don't go below 2 in any Stat.

## STEP TWO: WHERE DOES YOUR CHARACTER SHINE?

Each player gets to pick three things that his or her character is *great* at. These are skills that the character is known for. These "Shines" should be things that the player wants to see happen in play. For example, a Pirate might be really great at swabbing the decks of a ship, but that probably isn't something that a player should take as a Shine, because it's not something that's going to come up in the context of a story.

On that subject, does a Pirate need to take "Knows All About Boats" as a Shine? Or even "Swinging from Ropes," for that matter? The character is a Pirate, after all, so don't all Pirates know how to do those things? Yes and no; a character can do anything that, based on the character's Type, the player and the GU would agree that the character *should* know how to do. A Pirate knows how a boat works, an Animal Keeper knows how to recognize bird calls, a Knight knows how to ride a horse and a Faerie Princess knows her way around the forest. But if that Knight can stand on a charging horse and leap into a surging mass of enemies, or if that Animal Keeper can cock an ear and know exactly what kinds of birds are nearby and what they're chirping about, that's a degree of skill that probably demands a Shine.

Shines are attached to Stats. "Ride a Horse" is probably under Fast or Strong, while "Knows about Birds" goes

under Smart. That doesn't mean that you can't use those Shines with the other Stats, though. We'll get to using Shines in Rules. For now, just write them where they make the most sense.

**Can I Shine at fighting?** Of course! But be specific. Does your Knight Shine at Jousting, or Sword-Fighting, or Wrestling? Does your Faerie Princess use a rope to ensnare her enemies, or an enchanted rapier (that's a thin sword, in case you didn't know)? Fighting isn't necessarily the best way to get what you want, though, so be careful about picking it as a Shine!

**What if I can't think of three?** No problem! Just decide on one or two right now, and then when the game starts, and you play your character a little, you can figure out where your characters Shines. It might be that your character hasn't even discovered where he or she Shines yet, and it would be a lot of fun to discover that!

### STEP THREE: WHERE IS YOUR CHARACTER SLOW?

No one's good at everything. Our favorite characters in movies, books and TV shows are fun not because they're always good, fast, strong and clever, but because they get the job done and do the right thing even when they're scared, weak, silly or confused. Each player picks one Weakness for the character.

A Weakness is something that the character might be called upon to do, but that she or he just isn't very good at. Almost anything that can be a Shine can also be a Weakness. For example, a Knight be Weak in Horse-Riding. He can do all the other things a Knight can do — fight, behave well in court, and so on — but when he gets on a horse he has trouble staying on.

Characters don't have to know about their Weaknesses. Players do, of course, but the character in question might think that he or she is great at something, when in fact, it's really a Weakness. An Animal Keeper might love to sew and make clothes, but all the clothes she makes are too small or too big or have an extra armhole. Or, the character might be very much aware of the Weakness, and be ashamed of it or scared that other characters will find out. How the character responds to the Weakness is just as important as the Weakness itself.

**Why do I have to have a Weakness?** Because no one is perfect. Everyone has something that they just don't

do well. It might never come up in play, but then, it might, and then your character has a chance to beat the Weakness and save the day.

**Can my Weakness be that I'm allergic to cats?** It's better if Weaknesses are skills that your character just doesn't have, rather than physical problems or personality traits. But that said, if the GU agrees and you want to apply a penalty whenever a Weakness like an allergy would occur, then sure, you can take an allergy (or something similar) as a Weakness.

### STEP FOUR: PICK ONE SPECIAL THING

All characters get one Special Thing. It might be a magic item, an animal companion, a spell or a guardian angel of some kind. Special Things have limits on how often they can be used to help with Challenges, but they can be part of the action any time. For example, a Faerie Princess might have Faerie Magic as a Special Thing. Her magic might make things light as feathers, and that might help the characters out of a Challenge if they're trapped in a cave by a heavy rock. But using the magic to lift another character a few feet off the ground (because it's funny) or to help the Knight's grandmother move some furniture (because it's not a Challenge) doesn't count against the uses of the Special Thing for the adventure. Special Things that players pick during character creation have five Stars (you can read about what this means in the Rules section).

**Can I have more than one?** Your character only starts with one Special Thing, but you can get more during play. Some Special Things will only be around for one adventure, others stay with you.

**Can I have an animal companion if I'm a Pirate, or a Magic Spell if I'm a Knight?** Of course! It's easy enough to imagine a Pirate with a pet monkey or parrot, and maybe the Knight studied under a wizard for a while when he was young, but only learned one spell. Or maybe the Knight has just always been able to cast the spell and doesn't know why — that would be a fun thing to discover in an Adventure!

### EXAMPLE CHARACTER: RUBY

Teagan is going to play a game of **FirstFable**, so she needs to make a character. She sits down with her dad (the GU for the game) to create one.

**Step One — Choose Character Type:** Teagan picks the Animal Keeper. She wants her character to have a big, tiger-like cat to be her friend. The GU tells her to remember that, because she'll get to pick a Special Thing later. Teagan names her character "Ruby." She writes down the numbers on her sheet: Strong 3, Fast 2, Smart 4. Teagan isn't crazy about the low score in Fast, but the GU tells her to wait until the next step.

**Step Two — Where Does Your Character Shine?** Teagan decides that her character is really fast, even when running through the woods. She takes "Scampering" as a Shine. She also wants Ruby to be good with animals. The GU asks what she means by that — what does she want to do with animals? Train them? Talk to them? Take care of them? Teagan thinks about this (remember, Ruby can actually *do* any of those things, since they make sense for an Animal Keeper),

and decides Ruby really Shines at Taking Care of Hurt Animals. For her last Shine, Teagan wants Ruby to be able to Throw Things. That sounds fine to the GU, so he helps Teagan write all of this down in the right spaces on the character sheet.

**Step Three — Where Is Your Character Slow?** Teagan thinks for a while about where Ruby might have trouble. She decides that Ruby just can't get the hang of Camping. She always gets splinters when she tries to build a fire, that sort of thing.

**Step Four — Choose One Special Thing.** Teagan has already chosen her character's Special Thing. Ruby has a pet forest cat, like a tiger only with pretty gray and black fur, named Blaze. Blaze is a big softie, but she can roar loudly and scare people off.

Teagan finishes filling in the character sheet, and she's ready to go!



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# RULES

The rules for **FirstFable** are simple. Anything that a character might want to do in the game is either a Task or a Challenge. The dice only get involved when a character enters a Challenge, so we'll talk about Challenges first.

## CHALLENGES

A character enters a *Challenge* when he or she tries to do something important that has the potential to change how the story goes, and that has a reasonable chance of going wrong.

When the character enters a Challenge, the GU decides which Stat is involved. The player decides if any Shines or Weaknesses apply (though the GU can overrule the player), and the player totals the Stat + Shines – Weakness and rolls that many dice. Every die that comes up 4 or more is a *Star*. The more Stars a player rolls, the better the result. So if the player rolls one Star, the character succeeds on the Challenge, but just barely. If the player rolls three Stars, the character succeeded completely. If the player rolls five or more Stars, the character really amazed everybody.

There's another rule about Stars that is very important. It's called the *Teaching Moment* rule. If you roll a Star on *all* of your dice, you get to add a Shine. You can add a point to a Shine you already have, or you can add a new Shine at 1 point.

If the player rolled *no* Stars, though, the character does not achieve what she or he is trying to accomplish, and something goes wrong, making the situation a little harder on the character.

### Example Challenge

Teagan is playing her Animal Keeper, Ruby. She is chasing a naughty little boy into the woods at the request of the boy's mother (who can't manage to keep up with the little scamp). Teagan says that Ruby is going to run after the boy as fast as she can. This is, obviously, a Fast roll. Ruby also has a Shine in Scampering, which applies, so Teagan adds a die from that. Her dice pool, then, is 3: Stat (Fast) 2 + Shine (Scampering) 1 = 3.

Teagan rolls the dice. She can't do better than three Stars, of course, but she's got a good chance of succeeding. This would normally be a Contest (since

it's a race; see below), but the GU decides that all Ruby is trying to do right now is keep the boy in sight. Therefore, it's just a normal Challenge.

**Result #1 — Failure:** Teagan rolls 2, 2, 3. That's no Stars. She runs into the woods, but the boy is already hiding. Now she'll probably have to make a Smart roll to find him.

**Result #2 — Success:** Teagan rolls 4, 1, 5. That's two Stars, so she succeeds. The boy runs into the woods, and Ruby is close on his heels. She can now yell for him to stop and keep him in sight. He might actually stop, depending on what kind of Adventure the GU has planned.

**Result #3 — Teaching Moment:** Teagan rolls 6, 6, 4. That's three Stars, so Ruby keeps up with the boy, but it's also a Star on every die! Teagan gets to add a Shine. Since this action was pretty clearly a result of her Scampering Shine, she adds one point to that. From now on she'll add two dice to rolls involving Scampering.

## CONTEST CHALLENGES

Contests are Challenges in which one character is directly competing against another. In this case, both players roll their dice, and whoever has the most Stars wins (remember a Star is any die showing a 4, 5, or 6). Count up how many Stars each side has, and then subtract the lower number from the higher to figure out how great the victory is.

### Example Contest Challenge

Blake, a Pirate, gets into an argument with Roland, a Knight, over who is stronger. They decide to see who can hold a heavy rock over his head longest to prove the point. Roland's player rolls Strong 4 + Mighty Arms 1 (5 dice) against Blake's Strong 3 + Sneaky 1 (Blake's player tells the GU that Blake is going to pick up a slightly smaller rock but hold it like it's heavier; the GU says that's good enough to let the Sneaky Shine work). Blake's player therefore has 4 dice. Both players roll:

**Result #1:** Blake's player rolls 3, 2, 4, 5. Roland's player rolls 1, 1, 4, 4, 6. Roland's player wins by one Star, and so he holds onto the rock a little longer than Blake.

**Result #2:** Blake's player rolls 4, 4, 2, 3. Roland's player rolls 3, 2, 4, 1, 5. Both players rolled two successes, so they both drop the rock at the same time. They'll need to have another Contest if they want to determine a winner, or they could just keep arguing about who's stronger, which sounds like more fun.

**Result #3:** Blake's player rolls 4, 4, 5, 4. Roland's player rolls 3, 4, 4, 5, 6. Both players rolled four Stars, so they tie, but Blake's player also rolled a Teaching Moment! Blake holds that rock up there for a long time, even though it's clear that Roland is stronger and having an easier time of it. When they finally drop their rocks, everyone watching congratulates them and they're amazed at Blake's stamina. Blake's player adds Won't Give Up 1 as a Shine under Strong.

## TASKS

A Task is a simple action that pushes the story forward, but that is something that the character could do pretty easily. Since no dice are being rolled, the character does not generate Stars and has no chance to increase a Shine. Tasks can set up Challenges, and they can even help a character with a Challenge. If a character performs a Task that makes a Challenge easier, the player of the character performing the Challenge gets an extra die to roll.

### Example Tasks

Sela, a Faerie Princess, has joined with Blake, Roland and Ruby on their quest to rescue the lost little boy from his goblin captors. The party, in venturing through the Goblin Wood, comes to a patch of briars. Sela is tiny, and can get through easily, but the other characters will need to make Challenges (either Strong to push through, or Fast to slip through deftly). Sela's player asks if she can help guide the characters, taking a Task to find the places where the thorns are lightest. This allows an extra die to either roll to get through the thorns. If the characters were being pursued by a goblin raiding party at the time, that extra few moments while Sela takes her Task might make a difference!

## SPECIAL THINGS

Special Things are versatile, and they're a lot of fun. That means that players might want to fall back on them as often as they can. It's fine to use Special Things to help with Tasks, and a player has no limit on how many times he or she can do that.

Using a Special Thing to resolve a Challenge, though, is a little different. Every Special Thing has a Star rating. The ones that players pick during character creation have five Stars. When the player decides to use a Special Thing in a Challenge, he or she can decide how many of those Stars to use, depending on how much help the Special Thing contributes. The player can decide to roll the dice and add any Stars she or he gets to the Challenge, or just let the Stars from the Special Thing do all the work (sometimes there might not be a choice, and the character *can't* take direct part in the Challenge).

Once a Special Thing's Stars have run out, the player can't use that Special Thing for Challenges during the Adventure. The player can continue using the Special Thing for Tasks, though, and sometimes the character might find a way to "recharge" some of the Special Thing's Stars.

Some Special Things go away entirely once their Stars are gone. Potions are a good example of this; once the character drinks a potion, it's gone and can't be reused.

### Examples of Special Things

**Example #1:** Ruby is out in the woods, looking for the lost child, when a hungry bear approaches. She is afraid, but she knows that the bear won't attack her if she can make herself look scary. She pulls herself up to her full height and screams at the bear. The GU decides this is a Strong Contest. The bear has Strong 5, and Teagan, worried because Ruby only has Strong 3, decides to use Ruby's Special Thing — Blaze, the forest cat with the mighty roar. Blaze has five Stars for the whole Adventure, and Teagan doesn't want to use them all here, but she also really doesn't want to fight this bear. She uses two of Blaze's Stars, and rolls her Strong. She winds up beating the bear's total by one Star, and the bear retreats. Blaze now has three Stars for the remainder of the Adventure.

**Example #2:** Roland, the Knight, is riding through a meadow, carrying a message for his liege. He hears a child crying, and since he is a noble Knight, decides to try to help. He draws his Magic Sword (his Special Thing) and points it at the nearby Goblin Wood, saying "Show me the crying kid!" The GU decides that since the boy is only a short distance into the Wood, and Roland could see him easily if he rode his horse past the trees, that this is a Task. The Magic Sword glows and the branches move slightly, allowing Roland

to see the boy. Roland's player hasn't used any Stars from the Magic Sword.

*Example #3:* Blake, the Pirate, is ashore visiting his mother when his little cousin goes missing in the Goblin Wood. Blake figures he'll find his way back, but his mother warns him that the Goblin Wood is a dangerous and mysterious place. Blake's Special Thing is the Eye of the Sea, a magical pearl that lets Blake see things from far away. Blake holds up the pearl and looks into it, wanting to see the boy's fate if Blake doesn't help.

This isn't something that Blake can do on his own, so he can only use Stars from the Special Thing. Blake's player decides that one Star is probably enough for this. The GU describes the little boy slowly turning into a goblin. Blake, horrified, grabs his dagger and yanks on his boots, and runs out toward the Wood.

*Example #4:* It's been a long and difficult journey for the party, and Sela, the Faerie Princess, has become tangled in the web of a giant spider. She doesn't have any Stars left in her Special Thing (her Faerie Magic), but she found some Flash Paper when the party defeated the Goblin Wizard. This Flash Paper only has two Stars and it burns when used, so when it's gone, it's gone. Sela pulls the Flash Paper out of her pouch and tosses it at the web. Sela's player rolls Strong (2 dice) and adds two Stars from the Flash Paper. A blinding flash of light, a poof of smoke, and the web burns up, freeing Sela. The Flash Paper, though, is gone, and it can't be used even for Tasks anymore.

## FIGHT

A *Fight* is a special type of Challenge. A Fight happens when a character is trying to hurt someone or protect him- or herself from being hurt.

Fights are almost always Contests. They normally use Strong or Fast (it's not impossible for someone to use Smart in a Fight, especially when using magic, but it's kind of uncommon; usually Fights are about bodies, not minds). Characters in Fights can be either attackers or defenders.

An *attacker* uses Strong if he or she is using a club, a huge ax, or some other big unwieldy weapon, throwing a big rock, or trying to bash or wrestle an opponent. A *defender* uses Strong if she or he is trying to ignore damage and shrug off the hurt, rather than avoid it.

## REAL FIGHTS

As we know, in real fights, people get hurt or get dead. In movies and TV, a little bonk on the head and people get "knocked out," only to wake up later with no problem at all. People swordfight or knife fight or magic-fight and, unless it's suitably dramatic, no one gets *really* hurt.

Things like this are what we call a *trope* of fantasy. That's not the way it really is, and it's a good idea to make sure the players know that. But on the other hand, playing through fight scenes can be fun. Why shy away from that?

We talk a little more about running fights in the Grown-Up Section, below, but for now, just know that our Fight rules are less about *doing damage* and more about *resolving a Challenge*.

An *attacker* uses Fast if he or she is making quick, targeted strikes, throwing small objects, or using a lightweight weapon like a dagger or a whip. A *defender* uses Fast to dodge out of the way of an incoming attack.

At the start of the Fight, every character involved decides how many Stars they'll take in damage before they're out of the fight. This number is called *Damage*. Each player writes down that number on a piece of paper (the top of the character sheet works nicely). During the Fight, if the attacker wins, the defender marks off Damage equal to the Stars that the attacker rolls (after subtracting any that the defender rolled). Once the defender has taken a number of Stars equal to Damage, the defender is Out. That means that characters are knocked unconscious, scared away, gives up, or whatever other reason the player decides is appropriate.

Players can set Damage equal to the value of all of their Stats + all of their Shines. So for a new character, the maximum Stars that can be taken in a Fight is 12 (9 in Stats + 3 Shines). But setting the Damage this high is risky, because if a character takes Damage greater than the value of his or her highest Stat or Shine, that character becomes Hurt.

Hurt characters take a -1 die to *all* Challenges, and they gain a new Weakness based on how they got hurt. Characters can avoid being Hurt, though. If the player sets Damage at 3 (lower than the highest Stat), then the character will drop Out of a Fight after taking 3 Damage. Since that's lower than the highest Stat for a starting character, it's not enough to become Hurt.

A character can choose to drop Out of a fight at any time, but once the dice are rolled the results apply. So a player can't roll the dice to defend, get no Stars and then drop Out with no consequences.

Characters can defend against all incoming attacks, but they can only make one attack per round. A *round* ends when every character in the Fight has made one attack, and any Damage has been figured out and applied. A character with a Special Thing capable of attacking on its own (like an Animal Companion) can make a second attack or have the Special Thing add Stars to

the character's attack. If the Special Thing makes its own attack, though, the defender gets a roll to avoid it.

### Example Fight

Roland, Sela, Ruby and Blake have found each other in the Goblin Wood and are looking for the runaway little boy (who has been revealed to be Blake's cousin). They discovered that the boy has been stolen by goblins, and the characters must find him quickly before the boy becomes a goblin! As they push their way through a briar, they come face to face with a hunched-over goblin in robes — a Goblin Wizard. He waggles his fingers at the characters, and warns them to begone. "The boy is ours now!"

"Ha!" says Roland, charging forward, drawing his sword. The GU asks if Roland is just trying to scare the Goblin Wizard, or if he wants to Fight. Roland's player says that he wants to Fight, so the GU tells the players to decide on their Damage.



Roland's player sets his Damage at 6. That's risky, since Roland could be Hurt. Ruby's player sets her Damage at 3, Blake's player sets his damage at 4 and Sela's player sets her Damage at 1. The GU sets the Goblin Wizard's Damage at 5.

In the first round, Roland attacks the Wizard. He rolls Strong 4 + Sword-Fighting 1 (5 dice). The GU rolls the Wizard's Fast 4 + Distracting Magic 2 (6 dice). Roland's player rolls 3 Stars, the GU rolls 2. The Wizard takes a Star of Damage. If he takes 4 more, he's Out. Roland slices at the Wizard with his sword and the GU describes the tip of the blade cutting through the Wizard's robes. "Now, villain," says Roland, "where is the boy?"

The Wizard snarls "*chetz wubba!*" (none of the characters speak Goblin, but it sounds unpleasant) and tosses a ball of fire at the party. Because the Wizard is using a Special Thing (Goblin Magic), the GU tells the group that he can attack them all at once. The GU rolls the Wizard's Fast 4, and adds three Stars from his Goblin Magic.

The players defend. Roland decides to stand there and take it, hoping his armor will save him (his player rolls Strong 4). Blake, Sela and Ruby choose to jump out of the way, rolling Fast. Everyone rolls their dice, and

compares results. The GU rolls only once, by the way, and compares his result to the players'.

Sela takes one Star of Damage, and so she's Out, since that's all she can take. Her player decides her wings are singed and she falls to the ground, dazed.

Blake rolls well and takes no Stars. He dodges clear of the fireball and rolls to safety.

Ruby takes two Stars of Damage, but she can take one more before she's Out. The fire scorches her shirt a little, but she calls Blaze to her side and prepares to attack.

Poor Roland's player, though, rolled no Stars at all on his defense roll. The fireball catches Roland full force, knocking him down and burning off his armor! He takes four Stars of Damage. He's Out, and he's Hurt. He'll take a -1 to all Challenges until something can heal him, and he takes a new Weakness until the end of the Adventure. The GU decides that his Weakness is in Seeing; the fire scorched his face and his eyes aren't working well.

The Fight rages on, but now it's just Blake and Ruby against the Wizard. The Wizard only has two more Stars left in his Goblin Magic, though, and both Blake and Ruby are capable fighters.



# RUNNING THE GAME

Running **FirstFable** means taking on the role of the Grown-Up. The choice of title is deliberate, partially because we wanted to avoid the term “Game Master” (which sounds a little power-trippy) and partially because we wanted the reminder. If you’re running this game, you’re the Grown-Up. That means you need to make sure everyone’s having a good time, you need to make sure that conflicts between players don’t escalate to hurt feelings, and most importantly, you need to remember that it’s not about you. Fortunately, if you’re a parent, you’re probably well familiar with all of that.

Other roleplaying games and various online sources have a lot of good advice about running games, and if you’ve run games before (or even played a few), you probably know most of the basics. As such, we’re going to keep this section brief and to the point. Here are the **10 COMMANDMENTS OF BEING THE GROWN-UP...**

- **Keep it Moving.** Kids spend a lot of their time sitting at desks. Don’t remind them of school. Something should be *happening*. If something’s not happening, skip to the part where it does. “Walking through the woods” isn’t interesting unless the players are making it interesting (see next point). Feel free to say, “And so you all walk for a while, until you come to...” whatever the next interesting development in the Adventure is.
- **Let the Characters Talk.** If the players are talking in character, let them. Don’t bother them. Let it go on as long as it needs to. If the characters start to Fight, try and wrap it up without anything bad happening (no one should be Hurt in a fight between player-characters), but if they’re interacting and having fun, you don’t need to be involved unless you need play an Animal Companion or something. If the *players* are chatting out of character, though, steer things back on track. Don’t let one joke or funny story segue into another.

- **Learn to Cross-Cut.** The party always splits up. That’s not a bad thing — splitting up is away to cover more ground, to let different characters pursue methods that they’re better at, and to make the game more tense and fun. But you can’t ignore one group for an hour while you run the other group through Challenge after Challenge. Good rule of thumb: Finish

a Challenge with one group or character, then switch to another one. If you reach a point with one group or character that feels like it should a dramatic crash of music (DUN-DUN-DUNNNN) or a commercial break, that’s a good point to cut over to someone else. Also, if you see a player start to nod off or look bored or fidgety, switch to that player!

- **Choose Your Words Carefully.** When you ask what a player wants his or her character to do, think about word choice and word order. If you say, “What do you want to do?” that puts a great deal of burden on the player. If you say, “Do you want your character to climb up the rope or yell for help?” that helps the player visualize what is happening and lets the player know some of his or her options. Also note that kids will often pick the last option presented, unless your tone of voice indicates the first one. This may seem manipulative, and it is, in a way, but it also helps you guide the story in a way that isn’t obvious and obtrusive.

- **Learn to Read Your Players.** Some children can sit at a table and play a roleplaying game hours. Some teenagers (and some adults, for that matter) get the fidgets after 20 minutes. Some folks need a book to read or something to color or draw while the game is going on, but can still pay attention (the Character Book are designed for doodling and writing during the game). Some can’t pay attention if there’s anything remotely distracting going on. You’ll need to learn how your players respond to the play space and how much attention you need to give an individual player to keep him or her in the game. One suggestion for a hard and fast rule: No gizmos at the table. No phones, tablets, computers or anything else with a screen. They suck attention like a sponge.

- **Help the Players Grow as Roleplayers.** One lesson that many players have trouble with is that players and characters don’t always know the same things. A Knight’s player might know that the Pirate stole his helmet, but the Knight doesn’t know that and shouldn’t act as though he does. Again, this can be a hard lesson to learn (especially for young kids), and as the GU, you should help the players learn it. “How does your character know that?” might get a response of “Well, he doesn’t” (in which case, lesson learned) or “Because I can hear it clanking in his backpack”

(in which case, maybe do a Challenge to see if that's the case — reward creativity!).

- **Avoid Violence.** Many roleplaying games are extremely violent. The most popular game of all time rewards characters for killing monsters and robbing them of their treasure, but few roleplaying games are completely devoid of violence. **FirstFable** doesn't need to be completely non-violent, but do have a look at how Fight rules work. Each player can decide whether to take a real risk in a Fight. Even if a character is Hurt, it's impossible for a character to die in a Fight. If you really want to include the possibility of violent death, our recommendation would be to say that only if a character puts all possible Stars into Damage and then loses them can the character die. But really, is that necessary? Or can the players be satisfied with driving off the bad guys, knocking them out, capturing them or otherwise incapacitating them, rather than slaughtering them? "Good guys don't kill" is a perfectly viable lesson to teach players of **FirstFable**.

- **Avoid Stereotypes.** Movies and TV frequently give us stock characters. It's very easy, unfortunately, to fall into some tropes and stereotypes that are downright offensive, and because many gamers are heterosexual, white, and male, it's easy for us to miss how offensive those stereotypes are. Kids, likewise, probably don't have the life experience to realize when the GU is playing a goblin thug with a "gangsta" dialect and break down what exactly that means in terms of real-world race, but they will certainly take that experience with them. Don't go for the easy laugh. Don't make jokes at the expense of other ethnicities, races, or orientations. Don't make the frail, girly damsel the one that characters have to save. Don't take the easy way out. Instead, think about your Adventures and how you can build them to challenge these kinds of stereotypes, to surprise the players when things don't turn out the way they might expect.

- **Just Say Yes.** The players will have great ideas for how things should go. Sometimes they'll have



interesting theories as to the bad guy's plans or the secret behind the mystery, and sometimes their theories will be more interesting than the Adventure you (or we) put together. Use the players' ideas. If a player has a suggestion for what should happen or what a failed roll means or who should be hiding behind a locked door, use that suggestion. If the other players at the table hear the idea and say, "Oh, yeah, that's awesome!" then take the suggestion. Roleplaying games are shared storytelling, and that means everyone should have a voice.

"Just Say Yes" comes from improv theatre where each actor agrees with what other actors say to keep a story flowing. Agreement rewards participation and creativity. Remember these are kids getting their first taste of roleplaying. You aren't out to challenge them with fiendish encounters and rack up a total party kill. You don't have to care if their characters get

overpowered when you say "yes" to their wonderful ideas for new Shines or Special Things. Just say yes and let everyone have a good time.

- **Teach.** Create Adventures about things you know. Use interesting historical facts. Introduce species of animals that are interesting to learn about. Include puzzles that are within the players' ability to solve. Mix up 1 part water to 2 parts cornstarch, put the mixture in a bowl, and tell the characters that they've come to a pit (too big to jump across) filled with this stuff. It's harmless to touch, but if they stand still on it, they'll sink (which the players can mimic by pushing on the stuff slowly). If they run across it (which the players can discover by tapping the surface of the stuff), it holds their weight. A few minutes searching online will uncover all sorts of similar tricks that you can put in a fantasy context and use in your **FirstFable** games. Never pass up the chance to teach the players something interesting.



# ADVENTURE: THE HUNT FOR THE WILD GUFFIN

In this Adventure, the players are hunting down a fantastical beast, one that they've never seen, but have heard stories about all their lives. Along the way, they can discover Special Things, undertake Challenges and generally be brave, heroic, and clever.

The mythical beast is called the Guffin. The Royal Zoologist, Edwina Darton, wants nothing more than to prove its existence and present a picture (or even a living specimen!) to the King at the opening of the Royal Zoological Gardens next month. But since no one has ever actually seen the Guffin, no one is sure how to catch one. That's where the characters come in.

## BEGINNING

The characters are together near the woods. It's late in the afternoon, and they're sitting in a meadow, near a stream, resting while their animals (if any) drink. As the characters chat, a man on a donkey rides by. He's

carrying news that the Royal Zoological Gardens will open next month as a birthday gift to the King, and that the Royal Zoologist, Edwina Darton, would love to have a Guffin for the exhibit. The conversation turns to the Guffin, and one of the characters (ask for a volunteer) says, "I heard that the Guffin..."

At this point, go around the table and have each player supply one thing that their character has heard about the Guffin. The only rules are that it can't contradict something that another character says (so if one character says "I heard the Guffin eats only flowers," the next character can't say "I heard the Guffin eats people!").

The players don't know it (though they might suspect), but they are creating the Guffin for you! Write down what they say about the Guffin, and maybe have everyone contribute to a quick sketch of the beast. When everyone has contributed, you've created the Guffin, the beast that the characters will find on this Adventure.





## THE QUEST BEGINS

The characters can stay here by the stream as long as they want, but when someone starts to wander off, he or she sees tracks that could only have been made by the Guffin! (Look at the sketch and figure out what the tracks would look like.) Identifying and finding these tracks is not a Challenge, but following them is (Smart). The tracks lead off into the nearby woods. The old man on the donkey is afraid of the woods, so he won't be going, but he encourages the characters to go. "I'm sure that Dr. Darton would give you a reward, even for a picture of the Guffin!" he says.

## CHALLENGES IN THE WOODS

The following four events can happen in any order as the characters search for the Guffin. After each one,

one of the characters gets a Handout for a Special Thing. That means you need to make sure that the same character isn't hogging the spotlight, so make sure that you're giving everyone a chance to take actions and solve problems. You can put in other Challenges, too, depending on what the characters do and how long you want the Adventure to go on.

### BEWARE THE WOLF

The characters are in the woods, following the tracks and looking for the Guffin, when they hear a howl. Is it the beast? The Guffin they've searched for? No! It's a very angry wolf!

**Wolf:** Strong 4 Fast 3 Smart 1

**Shines:** Knocking People Down 1 Mighty Snarl 1 Chasing Things 1

This isn't a Fight scene, though. If the characters try to make it one, set the wolf's Damage at 2. The wolf has a toothache, and it's just angry and cranky. The true Challenge here is to realize that the wolf is hurting (Smart), and then to pull its tooth without harming it (Strong).

If the characters manage this, the wolf becomes friendly to the character that pulled the tooth or show it the most compassion. It acts as a five-Star Special Thing, and will do things like knock down enemies, chase things for the characters, and even allow a lightweight character (probably a Faerie Prince or Princess) to ride on it. It will stay with the character when its Stars run out, but it won't leave the woods (so it doesn't stay with the character past this Adventure, though it might rejoin the character on future Adventures in this forest). If the characters lead the wolf to the Guffin's tracks, it can help them track the beast.

### SNEAKY THIEF

As the characters are searching for the Guffin, they might hear someone creeping up on them (Smart Contest versus the Thief's Fast). If the characters win, they hear Renyard, the Thief and can ready themselves. If they lose, the Renyard surprises them and gets to attack first.

**Renyard:** Strong 3 Fast 5 Smart 3

**Shines:** Picking Pockets 1 Riddles 1  
Using Rope 1

**Weakness:** Math 1

**Special Thing:** Magic Boots (see below)



Renyard is slim, with red hair and a devious smile. He plans to rob the characters and then use his boots to escape. His boots allow him to jump incredibly high and run like the wind, and so he will jump into treetops to get away. He doesn't want to Fight (if the characters attack, set his Damage at 1), so the real Challenge here is catching up to him.

The secret, here, is that Renyard is actually a fox. He was changed into a person for violating the Law of Foxes (if the characters ask, Renyard tells them he has to keep these laws secret — he's learned his lesson!). If the characters catch him and remove the boots, the spell is broken, and Renyard turns into a fox again. He tells the characters they can keep the boots. He doesn't need them anymore, and the curse on them (that prevented him from taking them off) was broken with the spell. If the characters ask, Renyard tells them which way the Guffin is.

The Jumping Boots are a Special Thing. They only have three Stars to devote to running fast or jumping high, but the character that caught Renyard can keep them, even past this Adventure.

### TRICKY FAERIES

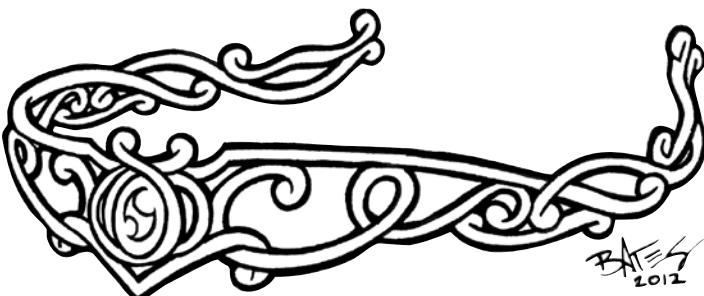
The characters take a wrong turn and wander into a faerie circle. Tiny pixies surround them, dancing and glowing, and tell them that they won't let them go until they solve a riddle. If the characters try to take a step out of the ring, it looks like the edge of the ring is miles away! (If one of the characters is a Faerie Prince or Princess, then that character can confirm that this kind of illusion is typical of pixies, and it's better just to play along.)

The riddle is this: *Summertime, Wintertime, Springtime, Autumn. What was at the top is now at the bottom. Oak tree, maple tree, grass and clover. What do they do when summer is over?*

The answer is: "Leave" or "leaves." You can let the players talk it out. They can guess as many times as they want. The pixies just giggle when they guess wrong. If they'd rather have hints, have the players roll Smart. For every Star, let them ask a yes-or-no question.

When the characters guess the right answer, the pixies twirl about in delight and give the character that guessed the riddle the Circlet of Sight. This circlet is a Special Thing that allows a character to see through solid objects. The circlet stays with the character that pulls it out, even after this Adventure ends.

## FINDING THE GUFFIN



The pixies tell the character that this magic item will let him or her see clearly and without obstruction, and then they vanish in a puff of glittery smoke. If the characters ask, they point the way toward the Guffin.

### SWORD IN THE STUMP

As the characters wander in the woods, they come across a sword jammed into a tree stump. The sword is shiny and new, not rusted at all, but it is wedged tightly into the stump. Pulling it out is a Strong Challenge. The character must gain five Stars to do it, but they don't all have to be on the same roll. The real Challenge is not giving up.

If the characters free the sword from the stump, it glows with a magical light, and points the way toward the Guffin. The sword is a three-Star Special Thing. In addition to be sharp enough to cut through almost anything, it can produce light for a few seconds. The sword stays with the character that pulls it out, even after this Adventure ends.



When the characters have completed the Challenges in the woods, they find the Guffin. The poor thing is trapped under a fallen tree, and it can't move. How it behaves depends largely on what the characters decided about it, but it is probably afraid. The Guffin might be able to talk, and if it can, the characters can reason with it and offer to help. Play this part out as a conversation, and hopefully the characters will offer to free the Guffin even if they aren't sure that it will come with them. If they ask nicely, though, the Guffin will agree to visit the Royal Zoo and meet the King.

Getting the tree off of the Guffin should involve all of the characters. It could also involve the Special Things they've gained over the Adventure. The boots allow a character to leap up to the top of the trees and see how best to move the tree. The sword could cut away the branches. The wolf can help lift the trunk or dig a trench to free the Guffin. A character can use the circlet to see through the trunk and figure out where to cut it or lift it.

In any case, when the Guffin is free, it behaves as appropriate based on what the characters do. They might try to capture it by force, in which case it doesn't Fight (it's too weak), but it cries sadly as they tie it up. They might try to lure it back to the zoo with its favorite food, in which case it happily goes with them. An Animal Keeper might try to talk to it, and again, it goes with the characters if they're polite.

### THE ZOO

The characters are present at the opening of the Royal Zoological Gardens. They get to meet Dr. Edwina Darton, who thanks them over and over again for bringing a Guffin. If the Guffin is sad to be there, the King hangs his head, not wanting to imprison the magnificent beast, and orders it released into the woods. The characters are given money as a reward, but that doesn't become a Special Thing. The message here is that they did well, but it would have been better if they can worked harder to make the Guffin come with them willingly.

If the Guffin agreed to be here or is otherwise pleased, the King is delighted with the Guffin, and thanks the characters. He tells the characters that they are welcome in his Gardens whenever they want to visit. Each character gains a one-Star Special Thing: Friend of the King. Hopefully this is the start of many exciting Adventures for the characters!

## WHAT NEXT?

You may have noticed by now that **FirstFable** is designed to be super simple. With only three core stats and purposefully ambiguous rules about what can be a Shine or how many Stars a Special Thing should have, **FirstFable** is meant to be easy to learn for the GU and the kids.

That simplicity may mean that after your kids enjoy playing several adventures in **FirstFable**, they will be ready to move on to a larger roleplaying game system. You'll know best when they are ready to move on and what introductory game to graduate them up to next. We made **FirstFable** because we felt the roleplaying hobby was missing something for a starter experience for younger kids.

## GIVE BACK

**FirstFable** is meant to be owned by the roleplaying game community. We're releasing it for free under Creative Commons. Our hope is that you might also take a little time to give back to the game however much or little you and your kids feel inspired to help. There's more information at [www.firstfable.com](http://www.firstfable.com), and here's a few suggestions:

1. Spread the word. Use your social media to let others know about **FirstFable**.
2. Help us improve the Guide Book and Character Books. Did we have a typo? Was something unclear? Were there words in the Character Books your kids didn't understand? What do your kids want to see in the Character Books that is missing?
3. Create a new Character Book. Did your daughter want to play a vampire? Did your son want to play a wizard? All of the templates are downloadable at [www.DriveThruRPG.com](http://www.DriveThruRPG.com) and/or [www.firstfable.com](http://www.firstfable.com). Create a new Character Book with your kids and then publish it on DriveThruRPG. Talk about a confidence booster to have your first roleplaying book published at a young age! More Character Books give new **FirstFable** players more options to choose so you're giving back to the community while teaching kids about creating and publishing.
4. Create a new adventure. What comes after the hunt for the Guffin? What other stories did you tell with your kids? Write one up, publish it for free on DriveThruRPG and share it with the **FirstFable** community.

# HANDOUT

## WOLF

Stars: ★★★★★

The Wolf can:

- Knock down enemies
- Dig
- Chase things
- Track by scent

Once its Stars run out, it will stay with the character, but it won't leave the woods. If your character goes on another Adventure in these woods, though, the Grown-Up might have the Wolf show up to help out!



## JUMPING BOOTS

Stars: ★★★

Use the Jumping Boots to:

- Jump high up into treetops
- Run fast

You can add the Jumping Boots to your character sheet — they stay with your character, even after you've used their Stars in this Adventure!

# HANDOUT

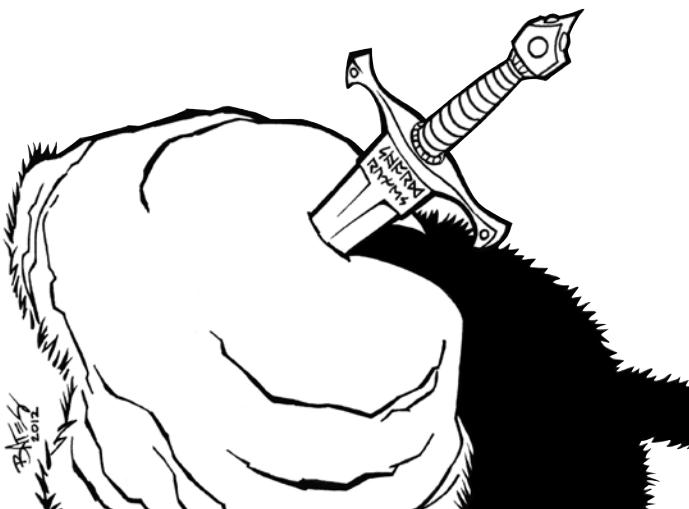
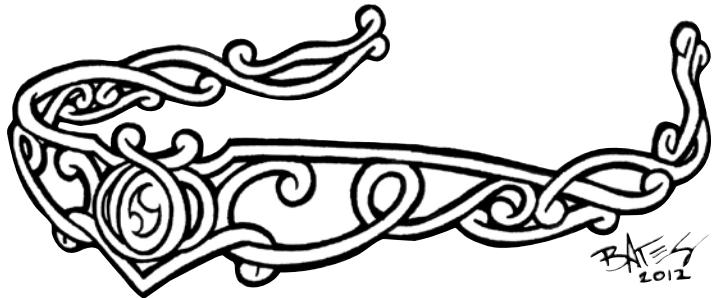
## CIRCLET OF SIGHT

Stars: ★★★

Use the Circlet of Sight to:

- See in the dark
- See through solid objects

You can add the Circlet of Sight to your character sheet — they stay with your character, even after you've used their Stars in this Adventure!



## SWORD IN THE STUMP

Stars: ★★★

Use the Sword to:

- Cut through anything
- Produce a magical light

You can add the Sword to your character sheet — they stay with your character, even after you've used their Stars in this Adventure!

# CHARACTER SHEET

CHARACTER'S NAME: Ruby

PLAYER'S NAME:

CHARACTER TYPE: Animal Keeper

## STATS:

STRONG: 3

FAST: 2

SMART: 4

## SHINES:

Scampering 1

Taking Care of Hurt Animals 1

Throw Things 1

## WEAKNESSES:

Camping

## SPECIAL THINGS:

Animal Companion-Blaze

EFFECT: Scary Roar

STARS: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

EFFECT:

STARS: ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

## DAMAGE:

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆



# CHARACTER SHEET

CHARACTER'S NAME: Blake

PLAYER'S NAME:

CHARACTER TYPE: Pirate

## STATS:

STRONG: 3

FAST: 3

SMART: 3

## SHINES:

Sneaky 1

Fighting With a Dagger 1

Acrobat 1

## WEAKNESSES:

Cooking

## SPECIAL THINGS:

Magical Treasure-Eye of the Sea

EFFECT: Can see long distance or future

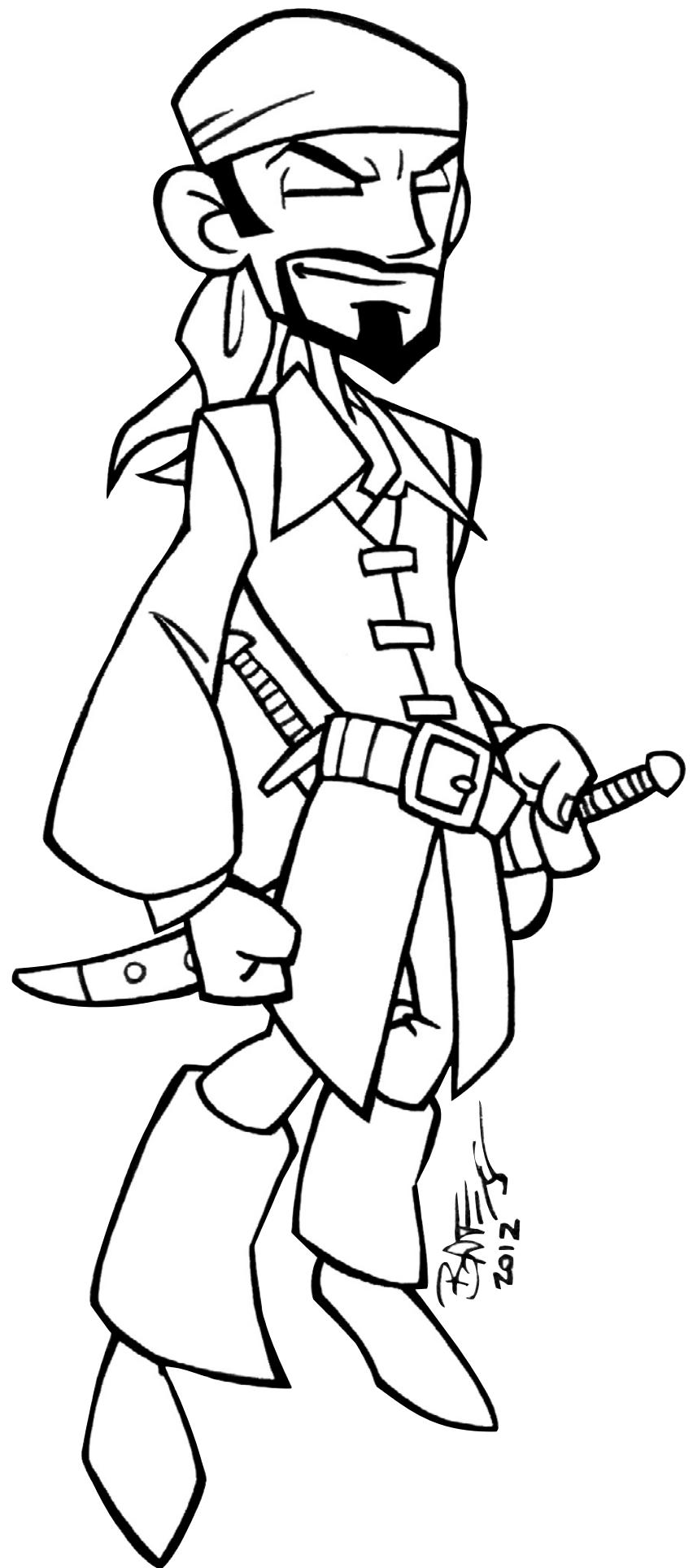
STARS: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

EFFECT:

STARS: ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

## DAMAGE:





# CHARACTER SHEET

CHARACTER'S NAME: Sela

PLAYER'S NAME:

CHARACTER TYPE: Faerie Princess

## STATS:

STRONG: 2

FAST: 4

SMART: 3

## SHINES:

Singing 1

Squeezing Through Small Openings 1

Knows Everyone in the Faerie Courts 1

## WEAKNESSES:

Talking with Birds

## SPECIAL THINGS:

Special Weapon-Faerie Magic **EFFECT:** Moving things without touching **STARS:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**EFFECT:** \_\_\_\_\_ **STARS:** ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

## DAMAGE:





# CHARACTER SHEET

CHARACTER'S NAME: Roland

PLAYER'S NAME:

CHARACTER TYPE: Knight

## STATS:

STRONG: 4

FAST: 3

SMART: 2

## SHINES:

Mighty Arms 1

Sword-Fighting 1

Painting 1

## WEAKNESSES:

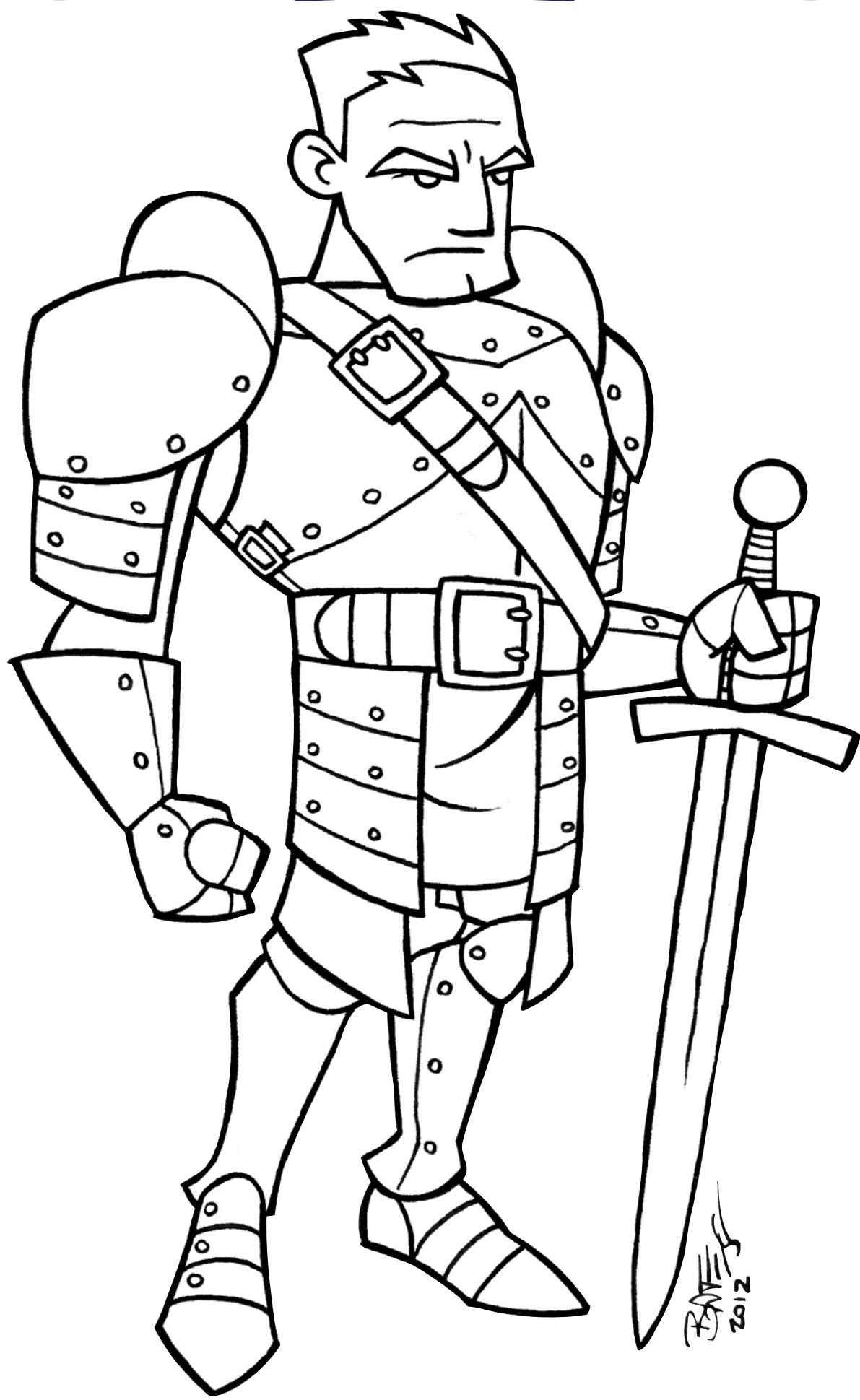
Riding a Horse

## SPECIAL THINGS:

Special Weapon-Magic Sword	EFFECT: Points toward what you want	STARS: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
	EFFECT:	STARS: ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆
	EFFECT:	STARS: ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆
	EFFECT:	STARS: ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆
	EFFECT:	STARS: ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

## DAMAGE:





# CHARACTER SHEET

CHARACTER'S NAME:

PLAYER'S NAME:

CHARACTER TYPE:

## STATS:

STRONG:

FAST:

SMART:

## SHINES:

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## WEAKNESSES:

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## SPECIAL THINGS:

EFFECT: \_\_\_\_\_ STARS: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## DAMAGE:

\_\_\_\_\_ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

# NOTES

# FIRSTFABLE

When did you realize that roleplaying games were an amazing, magical pastime? Who was your first character - a fireball slinging wizard, a brave knight, a superhero, or an Old West gunslinger? However you found yourself in the hobby, one thing is true: It's fun, it's unforgettable, and it's best when shared.

FirstFable is a simple, elegant game designed to help adult gamers introduce young players to the joys of roleplaying. Appropriate for players as young as 6 years old, FirstFable was designed by professionals in both game design and education, and is available, free of charge, to anyone who wishes to use it.

Grab some dice and some pencils, and start crafting your own FirstFable!

