1. Threat Levels: Handling Issues of Scale

By default, combat assumes that characters are facing opponents of roughly similar size. This is a fair assumption within a certain range - slightly larger opponents can just be considered stronger and more dangerous, but that only scales up so far. However, it breaks down when trying to model significantly larger opposition, like giants, dragons or killer robots. To represent this difference, assign certain opponents assign an aspect called "Threat", which could range anywhere from a single box for an ogre to a few dozen for Smaug. This threat rating provides no skills, but instead allows some specific uses by checking off a box. The default uses are:

1. Can be used as any other aspect in combat, for rerolls, etc.
2. Can be used to increase the MoS in an attack roll by 1 (requires at least a scratch outcome). This expenditure can be countered by the expenditure of a fudge point by the target.
3. May decrease the severity of a wound taken by one step (hurt to clipped, clipped to scratched, etc. Checking off 3 boxes can reduce a taken out result to a scratch)

These rules can also be used for opponents who are tougher than the norm but are not actually large, such as ringwraiths or androids.

Example of a Threat

Aaron (Ranger: great) has angered Groth the Pretty, an ogre bandit (Ogre: Good, Threat ❑❑). In the first Exchange, Aaron gets off a superb bowshot, against Groth's fair charge. That's a MoS of 3, which would normally be a hurt result. Groth checks off a threat box and reduces that to a clipped result. In the second exchange, Aaron has to drop his bow and pull his sword, so he's at -1 this round, and Groth is at -1 for the clipped result. Groth's mighty club swings and beats Aaron by 2. He checks off another threat box and bumps that MoS up to 3, a hurt result against Aaron. If Aaron had a fudge point to spend he could spend it to cancel that and drop it back down to a clipped, but he's all out. When the next round begins, Groth has checked off all his threat boxes, and Aaron is hurt.

Threat boxes generally refresh between scenes unless there is some reason why the threat would not have an opportunity to gather itself, such as continuing pursuit or a dangerous environment.

Threat levels are also a great way to handle certain weaknesses. A dragon may, for example, not be able to use any of its threat effects against an attack from a dragon-slaying arrow. Alternately, a protective ward against spirits might strip a wraith of some or all of its threat levels.

Threats as Special Abilities

Threat level can also be used as a shorthand for other abilities that an opponent may have. A Dragon might need to check off a box of threat to breathe fire, or a wraith may need to check off a box to fade (or perhaps to materialize). While not every threat may need this level of detail, it can prove a handy shorthand. Some possibilities might include:

Deceptive: Creature is hidden or hard to hit in some way, such as with a projected image or rapid teleportation. Check a box to force an opponent to reroll an attack and take the new outcome

Fiery Breath: Check off a box to breathe fire. This can be used for all manner of other special abilities that should not be used every round (if only because they would be boring that way).

Lightning Fast: If an initiative system is being used, check off a box to go first.

Lycanthrope: Check off a box to reduce all damage from non-silver sources by 2 steps for the duration of the scene.

Oversized/Multiattack: This opponent is much harder to gang up on. Each box checked off decreases the number of opponents by one, for purposes of determining superior numbers, for the duration of the scene.