

# Shark Nibbles #1

THE MONTHLY SAVAGE WORLDS NEWSLETTER



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

<b>The Monster Mash:</b> The death knight, ettercap, and banshee .....	2
<b>With the Roll of a Die:</b> House rules from the Savage Forums .....	4
<b>Savaged Shadowrun:</b> Just the basics...for now, that is! .....	6
<b>A Magickal Medley:</b> Designing your own magical swords .....	13
<b>Wizard's Pets:</b> Using familiars in <i>Savage Worlds</i> .....	14
<b>Double Down:</b> A <i>Necessary Evil</i> Recovery Mission .....	15

# THE MONSTER MASH

Welcome to the inaugural issue of **Shark Nibbles**, a monthly newsletter designed to keep you busy between issues of **Shark Bytes**! This initial installment of The Monster Mash, written by Mark Swafford (with input from Bill Littlefield and Clint Black), addresses the need for more monsters in the Savage Worlds system and presents a few creatures from the realms of Advanced Dungeons & Dragons (AD&D). Of course, they have been suitably Savaged so as to be as fast, furious, and fun as possible. The authors want you to know that any similarity between these Savage versions and their copyrighted counterparts is purely coincidental. Enjoy!

## THE DEATH KNIGHT



The death knight is a solitary creature that roams the earth wreaking havoc as it goes and leaving only destruction in its wake as it seeks to free its soul from eternal torment. Death knights are warriors who fell from grace through senseless destruction, broken vows, wanton acts of violence, and other such dishonorable actions and died before being able to make amends. As punishment for their wicked ways, a death knight is doomed to forever seek conflict and wreak destruction upon the living. If a death knight is ever able to atone for its acts it will be released from bondage and allowed to rest in peace. If such a goal is within reach, it will do whatever is necessary to attain it.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Notice d8, Riding d10, Stealth d8

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 10

**Edges:** Block, Combat Reflexes, First Strike, Improved Arcane Resistance (Magic)

**Hindrances:** Code of Honor, Death Wish

**Gear:** Mount (the choice of exactly what type of mount is left up to the GM), full plate armor (Armor +3), medium shield (Parry +1), longsword (Str +3).

**Special Abilities:**

**Fear -2**

**Fearless**

**Words of Power:** see below for details.

**Words of Power:** Death knights are cursed magical beings, not quite undead, yet not fully alive; therefore, they have the ability to use certain arcane powers without possessing or expending Power Points. These unique arcane effects are called "Words of Power". As a normal action, a death knight may invoke a single Word of Power. Each Word may only be activated once per encounter. All effects are centered on the death knight. Effects may not be maintained. If skill roll is required or an opposed roll is allowed, the death knight makes a Spirit roll in place of an arcane skill roll.

### Word of Power    Game Effect

Obscure	This Word surrounds the death knight (Large Burst Template) with an impenetrable darkness as if it had cast the <i>obscure</i> power. This darkness has no effect on the death knight.
Fear	This Word affects all creatures within a Large Burst Template as if the death knight had cast the <i>fear</i> power and achieved a raise.
Pain	This Word affects all creatures within a Large Burst Template. The targets must make immediate Spirit rolls. If they fail, they suffer a -2 penalty to all trait rolls for the next d6 rounds as their bodies are wracked by waves of intense pain. With a critical failure the penalty is doubled.
Paralyze	This Word affects all creatures within a Medium Burst Template as if the death knight had cast a the <i>entangle</i> power.
Stun	This Word affects all creatures within a Medium Burst Template as if the death knight had cast the <i>stun</i> power and achieved a raise.

# The Ettercap

Ettercaps are ugly bipedal creatures that get along very well with all types of giant spiders. These creatures of crude intelligence are exceedingly cruel, very cunning, and are skilled in setting traps—very deadly traps—much like the spiders that often live around them. They stand around six feet tall, even with their stooping gait and hunched shoulders. The creatures have short, spindly legs, long arms that reach nearly to their ankles, and large pot-bellies. The hands of an ettercap have an opposable thumb and three long fingers that end in razor sharp claws. Their bodies are covered by tufts of thick, wiry, black hair, and their skin is dark and thick. They have large reptilian eyes, usually blood-red in color, and large fangs, one protruding downward from each side of the mouth. The mouth itself is large and lined with very sharp teeth. Ettercaps prefer to dwell in the deepest part of a forest, near paths that are frequented by game or travelers. They prefer to capture their prey live, like a spider, but have no compunctions about eating dead meat. Ettercaps live in small groups, usually no larger than 3-4 individuals, and are pack hunters.



**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d8, Shooting d8 (web-slinging only)

**Pace:** 6 (on ground), 10 (in web); **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

**Edges:** Quick

**Hindrances:** All Thumbs

**Special Abilities:**

**Armor +2:** Tough hide

**Bite:** Str+1

**Claws x2:** Str+1

**Paralysis:** The ettercap uses this ability whenever it makes a successful bite attack; however, the venom is weak and lasts d4 rounds.

**Sneaky:** All Notice rolls made to avoid an ettercap ambush are made at -2.

**Web Slinger:** Once per round, in place of a normal claw or bite attack, the ettercap may make a normal ranged attack (5/10/20) with its web-slinging ability. The target gets an immediate Strength roll upon being hit and at the start of each subsequent action to try and escape. With a success, the target is free; however, the attempt consumes their entire action. With a raise, the target is free and may act normally. If unsuccessful, the target is immobilized and may perform no actions other than trying to break free.

# The Banshee

The banshee, or *bean-sidhe* (woman of the fairy), may be an ancestral spirit appointed to forewarn the members of certain ancient families of their impending death. Whatever her origin, a banshee appears in one of three guises: a young woman, a stately matron, or a raddled old hag. She usually wears a grey, hooded cloak or the grave robe of the unshriven dead. Though not always seen, her mourning call is heard... usually when someone is about to die.

**Attributes:** Agility d6; Smarts d6; Spirit d10; Strength d6; Vigor d6

**Pace:** 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Spellcasting d10

**Edges:** Improved Arcane Resistance (Magic), Improved Rapid Recharge

**Special Abilities:**

**Ethereal**

**Spells:** Banshees have 10 Power Points, and know *boost/lower trait*, *dispel*, and *telekinesis*.

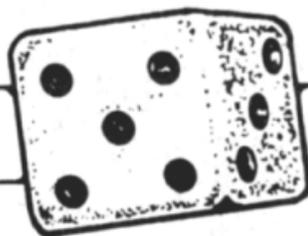
**Fear -2**

**Fearless**

**Keening Wail:** Once per night, a banshee may emit its keening wail. Any creatures within hearing distance must pass a Guts check at -2 or be Shaken for d4 rounds. With a critical failure, the victim must roll on the Fright Table at +2 instead!



## With the roll of a die...



This regular **Shark Nibbles** feature, *With the roll of a die...* seeks to collect the minor house rules that we Savages use to personalize our gaming experience. You won't find any proposals for sweeping change here—just juicy little tidbits that you can use or ignore without making any major modifications to the way that the *Savage Worlds* system works as a whole. So, with that said, take a look at what we've put together for you this month. Enjoy!

### ATTRIBUTES AND WILD DICE

Many Savages think that attributes should have a more tangible game effect on trait rolls. As it stands, attributes are used to determine the value of one derived statistic, to determine the cost of skills, to determine the base value of new game stats in supplemental products (e.g., Sanity in *Tour of Darkness*), and for defensive opposed rolls (e.g., tests of strength, resisting Taunt and Intimidation attempts, and avoiding the effects of certain arcane powers). Well, this little tidbit from the PEG forums adds a new dimension to attributes—serving as the Wild Die type for trait rolls.

Implementing this change is relatively easy: you simply replace the normal Wild Die (d6) with the die type of the linked attribute for the skill you are attempting to use. For example, a character with Strength d8 and Climbing d6 rolls a d8 as their Wild Die when making Climbing rolls. For raw attribute rolls, such as a test of strength, a character with Strength d8 would roll two d8s. That's it. Only one change and everything else (mostly) works as is. This will make Wild Cards more effective, but the increase in effectiveness will be flush across the board, so it's not as unbalancing as it may seem on first glance.

The only rules fallout from this change is the Master Edge, and you can drop that or modify it without much fuss.

Clint Black adds, "The only other thing you might consider is reducing the character's initial Bennies to 2 instead of 3 since this rule will give Wild Cards even more of an advantage over Extras. You can simply let them take another advantage in trade if taking something away without giving something in return seems a bit harsh. Besides, they can always earn more by roleplaying well and sucking up to the GM, right?"

### DRAMA POINTS

One idea that arose from a game a few months ago (with a bunch of avid *7th Sea* players who are now pretty interested in *Savage Worlds*) was the use of Drama Dice (or Drama Points). Personally, I don't like to mix mechanics, so rather than adapt Bennies for this purpose I simply told them you get one Drama Point per Spirit die type. These points are irreplaceable except by GM award (for outstanding roleplaying).

The GM shouldn't give out more than one or two Drama Points per session—if any at all. They should be reserved for only the most exceptional roleplaying exploits. Unlike Bennies, Drama Points may carry over from session to session. You may never have more Drama Points than your Spirit die type.

Basically, the mechanic allows you to achieve an automatic success at some action by spending the points—the number of points to be spent depends on how "dramatic" the effect is:

- Like that's anything special (1 point)
- Well, *that* was interesting (2 points)
- Never seen that one before! (3 points)
- Won't see that one again! (4 points)
- What just happened!!!! (5 points)

The key to using Drama Points in your *Savage Worlds* games is to force; yes I said *force*, your players into using them. Create wild and fantastic situations that just scream out for the use of a Drama Point or five. The more fantastic, adventurous, and pulpy the game, the more often you'll find your players willing to burn their precious Bennies and Drama Points.

### DAMAGE RATINGS

This idea was originally posted by Clint Black on the PEG Forums. I liked it so much, that I now use it as a quick guideline to determining whether or not the encounters I create will pose a challenge to my players.

Until you become familiar with the way in which *Savage Worlds* functions as a system, it may be difficult to create encounters appropriate to the experience and power levels of the characters. In order to help out the fledgling GM—or those experienced GMs who are new to the *Savage Worlds* system—you should try getting a Damage Rating (DR) for your characters. This rating is then compared to the encounter to give a rough idea of the challenge level of your encounter.

To figure the DR, take half the character's Strength plus the bonus from their "standard" weapon (i.e., the one they use the most). You can average individual DRs to figure out a DR for the group as a whole, then compare the overall DR to their intended opponent's Toughness:

- If it's equal, then the characters have an edge over an equal number of opponents (Two Extras equal one Wild Card).
- If the Toughness is a point higher, then the fight should be about "even."
- If the Toughness is two points higher, then it will be a tough fight (One opponent for every two characters).
- If it's three points higher, the characters are in trouble (One Opponent for every four characters).

Of course, there are other factors to consider, such as arcane powers, Edges, and Hindrances, but the above method should give you a rough idea of how your players will fare against the things you decide to throw them up against.

## THE MAIN GAUCHE

Marc Hameleers uses the following rules to simulate the thrust, parry, and riposte of swordplay in his *Savage Worlds* games.

The *main gauche* is a heavy dagger that is designed to be used in one's off hand as a parrying device. Although its main purpose is to aid in defense, one trained in its use can also use it offensively, as a dagger. The main gauche game stats are the same as those of a dagger, with the following addition: a main gauche can be used in a round either to defend (+1 Parry) or to attack (as a dagger). It weighs 2 pounds.

When using these rules, a rapier can still be used in the off hand, but does not grant the normal +1 Parry bonus unless the character also has the Florentine Edge.

## A VARIANT HINDRANCE: YOUNG

Matthew Mather, the guru of the *Savage Worlds* Yahoo Group and Maintainer of the *Savage Worlds* FAQ, proposes this variant form of the Young Hindrance:

### Young (Major)

Your hero is younger than a teenager (or the non-human equivalent of a teenager). You may not increase Strength or Vigor above d6, and your small build results in a -1 penalty to Toughness. If your hero's race grants a d8 or higher Strength or Vigor to begin with, you get the bonus; however, the affected attribute(s) may not be increased further until this Hindrance is "bought off" (see below). The Toughness penalty stacks with the Small Hindrance and any other racial modifiers that may be present. Your hero starts with only 10 Skill Points and you may not use bonus points earned by taking Hindrances to increase your hero's Attributes during character generation. You draw one additional Benny at the start of each session to represent the carefree nature of youth. At Seasoned rank or higher, with GM approval, you may declare that your hero has "grown up". "Growing up" does not cost an advance and removes the penalty to Toughness and the restrictions on Strength and Vigor, but the benefit of the extra Benny is lost.

## GARROTING—COMMANDO STYLE

This one popped up on the forums a few months ago. I went back to try and locate the author, but was unable to do so. Suffice it to say, I didn't write it! This alternative system works quite well for modern action type campaigns.

Garroting a target is not the same as strangling him. First the assailant must sneak up on the intended target from behind. Then, he must loop the wire around the victim's throat. After that—here's where the difference is—while firmly grasping either end of the garrote wire, the assailant quickly turns his body under the wire so he is back-to-back with the victim, thus crossing the ends of the wire. The assailant's hands will be holding the wire over one shoulder. Finally, he pulls forward and down with all his might, jerking the victim over his shoulder, and snapping the victim's neck while at the same time collapsing the trachea. This is all performed in one fluid motion. If, and that's a big "if", you can manage to get the wire over his neck without him reacting fast enough to put something under it, instant death is guaranteed so long as the maneuver is performed properly.

So, how does this translate into game terms? First, make a Stealth roll. If you achieve a raise you get The Drop on your target. Next, make a Called Shot (-4) Fighting roll against the target's neck. If successful, Wild Cards will take Strength+5 points of damage (+1 for the wire and +4 for the called shot). If you also got The Drop, don't forget to add the +4 damage bonus for that as well! A raise on the Fighting roll will add another +d6 points of damage as normal. Extras are killed automatically.

If the Stealth roll fails, assume the victim got his hand under the wire in time and the encounter is handled as a normal grappling contest.

## A NEW EDGE: POWER LINK

Here's one I found some time back on the PEG Forums—it may have originally sprung from the fevered mind of the prolific Clint Black, but I can't truly be sure of that (by the way, neither can he!)

### Power Link

Requirements: Seasoned, either AB (Magic) or AB (Miracles) Edge

A hero with the Power Link Edge may share the burden of using a power with other heroes, and increase her likelihood of success.

This Edge requires all the heroes involved in a Power Link to have the Power Link Edge, the same Arcane Background Edge, and knowledge of the same power. In addition, all characters wishing to make use of this Edge must be within 1" of each other at the time of activation.

To perform a Power Link when using an arcane power, one of the eligible

arcane characters is chosen as "primary caster." The primary caster uses his or her traits for all rolls required to activate, implement, and maintain the power. This Edge allows the other supporting casters to each make an arcane skill roll (as a normal action) in support of the primary caster. Every success and raise adds +1 to the primary caster's arcane skill roll. All casters who succeeded on their arcane skill roll may divide up the Power Point cost with the primary caster however they wish.

Any supporting casters who have not been disrupted (Shaken, wounded, etc.) may share in the maintenance cost of the power as well.

If the primary caster is disrupted, the other casters may immediately make an arcane roll to bolster the primary caster's ability to focus his concentration. Every raise adds +1 to the primary caster's concentration roll. If the primary caster loses control, the power ceases to function.

## A NEW RACE: THE GNOME

According to Dave Blewer, all of the D&D races, except gnomes, are more than adequately covered by the *Savage Worlds* rules. Gnomes are in very many ways similar to dwarves (which is why I think they were left out of the rulebook); however, if we exaggerate the common "tinker gnome" stereotype we can create a viable racial type that can stand on its own.

### Gnomes

- **Attentive:** Gnomes have an eye for detail and so start the game with Notice d6 for free.
- **Clever:** Gnomes start the game with Smarts d6.
- **Low Light Vision**
- **Slow** (Pace 5)
- **Small Hindrance**
- **Studious:** Gnomes love learning new things. They start the game with a d6 in any one Knowledge skill.





## **A Down and Dirty Savaging, by Bill Littlefield, Clint Black, and Peter Leitch**

*OK, so I'm not a Shadowrun fan...or at least I wasn't before picking up a copy of the Shadowrun Quick Start Rules at the local used bookstore. Heck, I'd always been intrigued by the setting, and for only \$2, what did I have to lose? Well, I got home, read the book from cover to cover and was hooked! What follows is simply my attempt to port some of the basic Shadowrun "shticks" to Savage Worlds. My only goal was to do enough conversion to allow my group to get through the sample adventure included in the Quick Start Rules using their own characters. You can be sure that more extensive "conversions" will grace the pages of both this newsletter and its counterpart **Shark Bytes!** Please note that nearly all of the flavor text in this article is excerpted directly from the Shadowrun Quick Start Rules and the Shadowrun Third Edition Rulebook, both © The FASA Corporation.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The year is 2060. The world is changed, some say Awakened.

A lull in the flow of mystical energies has subsided, and magic has returned to the world. Elves, dwarfs, orks and trolls have assumed their true forms, throwing off their human guise. Creatures of the wild have changed as well, transforming into beasts of myth and legend. The traditions and paths of magic have returned, and shamans and mages have developed their powers and found a place in the new world. Many aspects of the Awakening's touch remain mysterious and unexplained. Modern society struggles on, despite the odds, in an effort to assimilate the ways of magic into a technological world.

The decades that followed the Awakening were years of turmoil, panic and confusion. Cultures that had never lost touch with their mystical past began to use magic against the great nations that had suppressed them for so long. The vast, global telecommunications network collapsed under an assault by a mysterious computer virus. Nuclear missiles were launched, but failed to detonate. Dragons soared into the skies. Epidemics and famine ravaged the world's populations. Clashes between the newly Awakened races and the rest of humanity became common. All central authority crumbled, and the world began to spiral down into a chaotic abyss.

But man and his kin are hearty animals. Out of the devastation and chaos, an unstable new social order has slowly emerged. Advanced *simulated sensorium* (simsense) technology has aided in replacing the old telecommunications network with the new virtual reality world of the Matrix. New nation-states of Amerindians, elves, orks and dwarfs have formed. Environmental degradation and toxic pollution have made many areas uninhabitable, inspiring eco groups to wage war on polluters while at the same time allowing Awakened powers to use incredible magics in an attempt to heal the earth. Central governments have Balkanized into smaller nations and city-states as fear of the world's changes drives wedges between peoples of different backgrounds. Metroplexes, vast metropolitan areas known as "sprawls", cover the landscape, turning large regions of the countryside into dense urban jungles. Unable to contain civil unrest and massive crime waves, police services have been privatized or contracted out to corporations.

Megacorporations have achieved extraterritoriality and become the new world superpowers, a law unto themselves. An entire world speaks their language, as the *nuyen* has become the global monetary standard. They play a deadly game, venturing into the shadows to get an edge on the competition. Meanwhile, they house their corporate families in secure enclaves and compounds, safe behind layers of security and corporate indoctrination. Outside these arcologies and gated communities, whole stretches of sprawl have become ungovernable. Gangs rule the streets, and the forgotten masses grow. Lacking even a System Identification Number (SIN) to grant them any rights, these outcasts, dissidents and rebels live as the dregs of society, squatting in long-abandoned buildings, surviving by crime and predatory instinct. Many of them attempt to escape their miserable existence by slotting addictive BTL (Better-Than-Life) chips and living vicariously through someone else's senses. Some of them band together, and some just seek to gain their own twisted forms of power.

Technology, too, has changed people. No longer just flesh, many have turned to the artificial enhancements provided by *cyberware* to somehow become more than human. Some acquire implants that allow them to directly interface with machines, either as "deckers" who run the Matrix with their cyberdecks and programs, or as "riggers" who jack into vehicles and remote drones,

becoming one with the machine. Others seek to push the envelope of physical capabilities, testing themselves on the street against other "street samurai". Stronger, smarter, faster is the human of today.

In the world of 2060, the metroplexes are monsters casting long shadows. And it's in the cracks between the giant corporate structures that shadowrunners find their home. Entire societies live and die in a black-market underworld, exploited and abused yet powerful in their own way. Crime syndicates such as the Mafia and Yakuza have grown explosively as their networks provide anything that people will buy. "Shadowrunners" are the professionals of this culture, where self-sufficiency is vital. When the megacorps want a job done but don't want to dirty their hands, it's a shadowrun they need, and they turn to the runners, the only ones who can do it. Though a shadowrunner's existence is not listed in any but the most classified of governmental or corporate databases, the demand for his or her services is high. Deckers are employed to slide like a whisper through the visualized databases of giant corporations, spiriting away the only thing of real value—information. Street samurai are enforcers-for-hire whose combat skills and reflexes make them the ultimate urban predator. And magicians, who possess an ancient gift to wield and shape the magical energies that now surround the Earth, are much sought-after, for obvious reasons. Shadowrunners sell their skills to survive, taking on the illegal and dangerous tasks that the megacorps are incapable of performing for themselves. So strap on your gun, prepare your spells and grab your cyberdeck, chummer...it's time to Shadowrun!

## SHADOWRUNNING

In *Savage Shadowrun*, players take on the roles of shadowrunners (usually referred to simply as 'runners'). Shadowrunners commit crimes, usually for money. When a corporation or other sponsor needs someone to do their dirty work, they look to the shadows. As "deniable assets", runners make advantageous—and expendable—tools.

Runners usually operate in teams. A team can be any combination of character types, depending on what the players want to do. The team should have a plausible reason for working together, such as being old friends or past cellmates, having the same interests, or even being forced together by circumstance. Different teams will have different capabilities.

Runners have *contacts*, which represent other potentially useful people they might know. Some of these contacts will be underworld types, like a ganger or a hit man. Others will be ordinary people, useful for information or for "special arrangements"—for example, the corporate secretary who let's you know when the scientist you've been hired to kidnap will be leaving the research facility.

The most important contact for the runners is the *fixer*. A fixer acts as a "middleman" who can usually help the runners find gear, other contacts, or work—all for a fee, of course. A corporation or other organization that needs runners sends an agent to a fixer to ask for recommendations. If a team of runners has a good reputation and meets the specified requirements, a meeting is arranged to discuss the details and haggle over payment. Because such matters are highly sensitive, total anonymity is par for the course. Employers of this type are always known only as "Mr. Johnson".

Mr. Johnson may not always be a corporate representative. "He" may not even be a mister. The world of *Savage Shadowrun* is rich and complex, with many people and groups who may need to hire runners to accomplish certain goals. A criminal syndicate may hire runners to strike at rivals, a mage may hire them to acquire certain rare materials for magic use, or Mr. Joe Normal may need to find the terrorists who kidnapped his wife. Regardless of the sponsor, if a job involves doing something dangerous and potentially illegal, it's a Shadowrun! A few of the more common types of shadowruns are described below:

- **Datasteals** are jobs where a decker hacks into a computer or host system and steals information.
- **Extractions** are frequently arranged by corporations who wish to "recruit" (kidnap) valuable personnel rather than data.
- **Courier Runs** are glorified delivery jobs, although the item being transferred is often of strategic or monetary importance.
- **Smuggling** involves the transport and delivery of illicit goods.
- **Wetwork** is assassination, pure and simple.
- **Hooding** is robbing from the rich to give to the poor. Runners who engage in this activity are known as "hooders".
- **Structure Hits** are sabotage missions designed to damage or destroy large, and usually expensive, targets.

Runners accomplish their tasks by working the streets for information, calling in markers and favors from friends, and exploiting contacts in the shadows. They take whatever action their job requires: surveillance, theft, breaking and entering, kidnapping, and even murder. Runners do these things because they are survivors. Many of them grew up committing crimes to get by, or perhaps they obtained special training somewhere and want to put it to use. Some may have extended families to feed and no other source of income. Many of them simply prefer the freedom of the shadowlife... controlling their own destinies as opposed to being a wage slave in some drab corporate business park and spending the entire day kissing corporate hoop. Others just enjoy the thrill of running, thriving on its risks. Finally, some runners, like the hooders, are inspired to run by a sense of social justice; they want to damage the powers-that-be however they can while providing relief for the underclass.

## CREATING A RUNNER

Creating a runner in *Savage Shadowrun* is pretty much the same as creating a character for any other setting that uses the *Savage Worlds* rules. Any exceptions, additions, or modifications to those rules are noted in the following sections.

### RACES

The following racial descriptions should not be considered all-inclusive by the GM. There may be additional racial types... after all; the world is a big place. However, such possibilities are not considered here. The possibility of additional racial types will be addressed in a future article.

- **Humans:** Humans were the only race existent in the world until 2011, and there are still more of them than any other race. The average human is 1.7 meters tall and weighs about 70kg. Their average lifespan is around 55-70 years. They start the game with any one attribute at d6 and a free Edge of the player's choice.
- **Dwarves:** Dwarves average about 1.2m in height and weigh around 55kg. They are thought to have an average lifespan of 100 or so years. Consider them to have the following racial attributes—Thermal Vision (Infravision), Slow (Pace 5" and a running die of d4), and Resistant (+2 to all rolls to resist poisons and toxins). In addition, they start the game with Vigor and Spirit d6.
- **Elves:** Elves are slightly taller than humans on average (1.9m) although they are generally slimmer (72kg). Elves are thought to have a lifespan measured in centuries rather than decades. Consider them to have the following racial attributes—Exotic Beauty (Charisma +2) and Low Light Vision. In addition, they start the game with Agility d6.
- **Orks:** Big and brutish; orks are the most numerous, and least respected of the non-human races. They are as tall as elves, but much more muscular (95kg). No one knows how long they live. Most die of "unnatural causes" long before they reach their prime. Consider them to have the following racial attributes—Thermal Vision (Infravision) and the Outsider Hindrance. In addition, they start the game with Strength and Vigor d6.
- **Trolls:** The biggest and the baddest. The average troll weighs in at 225kg and stands over 2m tall. They are thought to have an average lifespan of 50 or so years. Consider them to have the following racial attributes—Thermal Vision (Infravision), the Outsider Hindrance, Inconvenient Size (all items must be custom made and both cost and weigh 50% more than normal), Size +1 (grants Toughness +1 and doubles their normal Load Limit), Thick-headed (raising Smarts during character generation costs 2 points per die type; thereafter, it requires two level ups), and Thick Skinned (Armor+1). In addition, trolls start the game with Strength d8 and Vigor d6.

### PROFESSIONAL ARCHETYPES

Some example professional archetypes are presented below. All you need to do to start playing is to create a character that meets the listed requirements. Players are both free and encouraged to create their own unique character concepts. These archetypes are provided to give players a sense of some of the most common types of shadowrunners they'll encounter in the Sprawl. Several new professional archetypes—Adepts, Combat Deckers, Drone Riggers, Street Mages, Tribal Shamans, and Vehicle Riggers—will appear in future issues of **Shark Bytes** and **Shark Nibbles**.

#### Combat Mage

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d6, Agility d6, Arcane Background: Magic, Fighting d6, Shooting d6, and Spellcasting d6  
The combat mage exists to deal out death and destruction, whether physically or magically. He craves the excitement of combat, whether it's using his gun, sword, or spells makes no difference! When choosing the combat mage's three initial powers, two of them must have damage-dealing effects (e.g., *blast*, *bolt*, *burst*, or *stun*). A combat mage gains +1 Parry and casts all damage-causing spells as though they were one Power Level less than their actual PL (see *Magic in Savage Shadowrun*, below).

#### Covert Ops Specialist

Requirements: Novice, Agility d8, Climb d6, Lockpicking d6, Stealth d8, and any Combat Edge  
The covert ops specialist is a master of infiltration and stealth. His skills and gear allow him to surreptitiously survey targets and gather intelligence. Masters of close physical combat, the covert ops specialist is trained to bypass security measures and, if need be, to eliminate hostile targets. Covert ops specialists gain a +2 bonus on all Climb, Lockpicking, and Stealth rolls.

#### Investigator

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d8, Investigation d8, and Streetwise d8  
The Investigator is a throwback to the days before the Awakening. His skills—digging up dirt and chasing down leads—as well as his street credibility (known as "street cred" in the sprawl) are valued by everyone in the shadows. The investigator, although no slouch with his fists, would rather use his smarts to stay out of trouble. His weapons of choice are state-of-the-art electronics and surveillance gear. Investigators get a +2 bonus on all Investigation, Streetwise and Notice rolls to search through evidence or find clues.

### **Mercenary**

Requirements: Novice, Strength d6, Agility d6, Vigor d6, Fighting d8, Shooting d8, Throwing d6, and any Combat Edge

Not much to say here. Mercs are as prevalent in 2060 as they were in 1980—a skilled soldier is always in demand. Mercs have the training and skills to take on any job at any time—if the price is right, that is. Mercenaries get +1 Parry and a +2 to resist Tricks in combat. They may also take Combat Edges as though they were one Rank higher than their actual Rank, so long as they otherwise meet the Edge's prerequisites.

### **Sprawl Ganger**

Requirements: Novice, Agility d6, Strength d6, Fighting d6, Intimidate d6, Streetwise d6, Enemy (Rival Gangs), and Loyal (Gang)

The urban sprawl is the ganger's home. This hombre is pure street muscle and he's got the chummers, the rap sheet, and the bruises to prove it. He rarely uses firearms—which are a good back-up, don't get him wrong—but if you can't crack someone's skull with your bare hands, then you don't belong in the sprawl. His real strength is in his colors and the others who wear them. With an hour, and a successful Streetwise roll, a ganger can call up 1d6 gang members to help him out. These gang members will be Extras armed with melee weapons. With a raise, he calls up a total of 2d6 gang members. In addition, gangers receive a +2 bonus to Streetwise and Intimidate rolls on their home turf.

### **Street Samurai**

Requirements: Novice, Fighting d8, Shooting d8, Streetwise d6, and Code of Honor

The street samurai is more than an urban predator and partial Cyborg; he is a freelance operative who follows a strict code of "street honor". He is as learned in the ways of the traditional samurai as he is in the practice of security procedures. Although he sells his skills to the highest bidder, he is not just another amoral killer, and will refuse jobs which he deems dishonorable. The street samurai is always trying to stay one step ahead of the scum in the sprawl by upgrading his body with cyberware—the best that he can afford. Due to his reputation and skill, the street samurai has access to advanced cyberware, and due to his rigid honor and will, he is better able to live with it. A street samurai gains two pieces of cyberware each time he takes the Cyberware Edge. In addition, they gain a +2 bonus to Streetwise rolls when attempting to locate a Street Doc.

### **Street Shaman**

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d8, Arcane Background (Magic), and Spellcasting d6

A shaman's magic comes from the power of nature and the spirit world. To the shaman, the world is filled with living spirits—powers he calls on for magical aid. Shamans are in tune with the natural flow of the energies of life and magic. Street shamans are held in high regard (if not fear and awe) by the average chummer. They gain a +2 Charisma bonus when dealing with any city dweller who isn't a mid-level or higher member of a corporation or organized crime gang. Street shamans live in a tough world where one's skill equates with one's chances of survival—they gain one additional power related to their Totem for free.

### **Tech-Wiz**

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d6, Repair d6, Knowledge (The Matrix) d6, and Notice d6

The tech-wiz is a new breed of decker, one that can not only enter the Matrix (see below), but is also a master of all things electronic. The tech-wiz probably understands machines better than the people he's surrounded by. This character can improvise something when the need for a tool or device arises. He suffers no negative penalties on Trait rolls for lack of equipment in most reasonable situations. In addition, given a few simple tools, props, or devices, he can generally rig devices to help escape from deathtraps, weapons to match some bizarre need, or otherwise create something that's needed when such a thing isn't actually present. The extent of this is completely up to the GM. This Edge also gives the character a baseline cyberdeck with which to access the Matrix.

### **The Face**

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Intimidate or Persuasion d6, Streetwise d6

The Face is the gilded-tongued warrior of the shadows. In his mind, it's not about guns, magic, or even cyberware. It's all about style and charisma! Whether it's negotiating a contract, interrogating a prisoner, or talking his way past a security checkpoint, he's the social chameleon. This cool chummer is able to hang with tough gangers and mingle with high society figures with equal ease. The Face is also able to blend in with a crowd as well as impersonate others. His endless list of contacts and safehouses means he can disappear without a trace when things go bad. The Face gets a +2 bonus to Charisma. He also gets the Connections Edge for free.

### **Weapons Specialist**

Requirements: Agility d8, Fighting d8, Shooting d8, Throwing d8, Repair d6

The weapons specialist is proficient at using and repairing just about any weapon you've ever seen and probably a few that you've never even heard of! They may ignore up to two points of penalties to their armed attack rolls, no matter what the source. In addition, when attempting to repair or jury-rig weapons they make their Repair rolls at +2.

## EDGES, HINDRANCES, AND SKILLS

Since the initial purpose of this article was to simply provide enough information to run characters through the *Prototype Envy* scenario, we felt that the existing Edges, Hindrances, and skills were sufficient. The only additions that we deemed essential to the *Savage Shadowrun* setting were the Cyber Edges detailed below.

### CYBERWARE

The various technological implants, organ modifications and structural enhancements that can be applied to the body in order to improve one's natural attributes and abilities are collectively referred to as "cyberware". Each piece of cyberware is treated as an individual Edge (Weird Edge/Novice). A character can have as many "Cyber Edges" as his Spirit die type divided by 2; otherwise, Cyber Edges are treated just like any other Edge.

#### ⇒ Headware

- **Datajack:** A hardwired connection that allows both input and output to certain pieces of cyberware and gear. Anyone wishing to access the Matrix must have at least one datajack. This Edge may be taken multiple times.
- **Cybears:** All Notice rolls based on hearing are at +2. You can record anything that you can hear and download it later (if you have a datajack). Cybears triple the range at which an unmodified individual can hear sounds.
- **Cybeyes:** All Notice rolls based on vision are at +2. You can record anything that you can see and download it later (if you have a datajack). Cybeyes triple the range at which an unmodified individual can hear sounds.

#### ⇒ Bodywear

- **Boosted Attributes:** This modification can include any of the following—muscle enhancements (Strength), electrochemical stimulation (Agility), neural boosting (Smarts), or organ enhancement (Vigor). The overall effect is to allow a +2 bonus on rolls based on the affected attribute. This Edge may only be taken once per attribute.
- **Dermal Plating:** The character's skin is augmented with dense plastic and metal fiber plates, thus granting them the full-body equivalent of Armor +2 (this can stack with natural armor, such as that possessed by trolls).
- **Smartlink:** This is a sub-dermal pad that acts as a modified datajack allowing a character to utilize "smart gun" technology (see below). This Edge may be taken once for each hand.
- **Spur:** This modification equips the character with a retractable blade on each hand (or foot). Unarmed damage is increased by +2. Extending or retracting the blades counts as a free action. This Edge may be taken twice (once reach for hands and feet).

#### ⇒ Cyberlimbs

- **Cyberarms:** These devices grant a +2 bonus on all Strength rolls (including melee damage rolls). Each arm has Armor+2. This Edge may be taken twice (once for each arm).
- **Cyberlegs:** These increase the character's Pace by +2" as well as increasing his running die type to a d10. When making an unarmed attack (i.e., a kick), a bonus of +2 is added to the character's damage total. Each leg has Armor+2. This Edge may only be taken once (both legs must be replaced at the same time).

## GEAR AND EQUIPMENT

Not much need be said on this subject. All characters start the game with 1000 nuyen (the form of currency used in the *Shadowrun* setting; one nuyen is worth \$1 as listed in the *Savage Worlds* rules). I just used the existing (mostly) equipment lists from the *Savage Worlds* rulebook and added a choice piece of equipment here or there. In the world of *Shadowrun*, pistols, rifles, swords, knives, tasers, spears, Kevlar armor, and smart weapon technology exist side-by-side. The main technological advancements are seen in the lowered weights, decreased size, and increased ammo capacity of the weaponry. The few additions I felt necessary are detailed hereafter. Look for a more comprehensive list in a future issue of **Shark Bytes**.

- ⇒ **Credstick** (\$50): A Credstick is a combination passport, key ring, credit card, checkbook, and business card. The chip in the Credstick contains the owner's System Identification Number (SIN), credit balance, financial records, and resumé, as well as passcodes and other personal information.
- ⇒ **Cyberdeck** (\$5000+): Cyberdecks are the tools that deckers, including the techwiz, use to interface with the Matrix. In a nutshell, a cyberdeck is an extremely powerful microcomputer capable of converting a decker's neural impulses into holographic command instructions (and vice versa). Only one decker may use a cyberdeck at any one time. The decker connects to his cyberdeck by means of a fiber optic cable plugged into his datajack.
- ⇒ **Maglok Passkey:** Cost varies, but is never less than \$1000. This sophisticated Lockpicking device grants anyone possessing it the ability to open electronic locks as if they had Lockpicking d10. Keep in mind that Wild Cards using a passkey do not roll a Wild Die with the Lockpicking roll when using this device's skill rating.
- ⇒ **NavDat GPS** (\$1200): This high-tech Global Positioning System (GPS) system capable of giving an exact location accurate to 3m. You can import maps into this device as well.
- ⇒ **SmartWeapon:** Double the cost of a normal ranged projectile weapon and you can outfit it with "smart weapon technology". The user must have a Smartlink (see *Cyberware* above) in order to benefit from it, though. Smart weapons grant a +1 bonus on all Shooting rolls using the augmented weapon.

## THE MATRIX

The Matrix is an interlocking system of computers, called hosts, linked together by grids—the world telecommunications network. Most computer systems throughout the world are accessible via the Matrix, assuming you either have authorized pass codes or are capable of hacking your way in! The human mind cannot directly comprehend the flow of data in the Matrix.

Users no longer need to remember codes, command sets, or filenames. If they want something they go get it. If they want to program something, they mentally perform the motions using virtual components and the computer learns from them. If users were restricted to the old-tech tools—command lines, file names, programs in procedural languages, etc.—the system would be unmanageable. The Matrix is constantly alive with the hum of data traffic—faxes, phone calls, e-mail, tridlinks, program frames, exploring and working personas, and more.

Within the Matrix, everything operates in terms of nanoseconds, and so time goes by much more swiftly than in the real world. A decker can traverse the globe in seconds, hopping from local to regional grids, or even through satellite uplinks and back down again. Huge constructs that represent a myriad of hosts dominate the datasphere. Many of these are public and accessible, serving as databases, social clubs, game rooms, or PR offices. Others are private, layered with Intrusion Countermeasures (IC) and other security measures and patrolled by security deckers (corporate-employed deckers). These hosts contain the deepest, darkest secrets of corporations and other entities.

To connect to the Matrix, people use cybernetic devices known as cyberdecks and cyberterminals. All such devices have a fiber-optic cable with a standard data plug. This cable is connected to a jackpoint. With the right tools, a decker can jury-rig a jackpoint. The deck or terminal connects its user either via an electrode net that slips over the head (the way of the corporate wage slave), or with a direct cybernetic interface through a datajack (the way REAL deckers operate).

Once activated, the deck or terminal overrides most of the user's own sensory information and replaces it with an electronic simulation of the Matrix. This is accomplished through Artificial Sensory Induction System Technology (ASIST). The simsense signal translates the complex codes structures of the actual Matrix into graphical icons. It's through these icons that the character is able to interact with objects within the Matrix.

Legitimate users have registered cyberterminals that identify themselves to the Matrix at every step, but deckers run special software that conceals or forges the signature of their cyberdeck. When everything goes right they can dance through the secrets of the Matrix, laughing at security measures. Of course, when things go wrong...well, they can die. Black IC is a real killer!

The Matrix is a large and complex "organism". Describing it in detail is beyond the scope of this article. Look for more information about operating in the Matrix in an upcoming *Savaged Shadowrun* installment.

## MAGIC IN SAVAGED SHADOWRUN

### OVERVIEW

The Awakened world is permeated by *mana*, the energy of magic. Mana is invisible and intangible. It cannot be detected measured, or influenced by machines, only living beings. Mana is sensitive to emotion and responds to the will of those capable of harnessing its energy. Mana fuels sorcery and conjuring, allowing magicians to cast spells and summon spirits.

In *Shadowrun*, anyone with a Magic Attribute of 1 or more is referred to as one of the Awakened. Those with a Magic Attribute of 0 are collectively referred to as Mundanes. In *Savaged Shadowrun*, this equates with those characters that possess the Arcane Background: Magic Edge and those that do not. Simple, isn't it? Well, not quite.

In *Savaged Shadowrun* you don't use Power Points—taking the Arcane Background (Magic) simply gives you the ability to cast spells (i.e., the Spellcasting skill). You still start out knowing three powers; however, you may ignore any listed Rank restrictions (i.e., you can choose from any of the listed powers). Wait a minute! Before you start jumping up and down with excitement, read the next paragraph...

In converting *Shadowrun* magic into *Savage Worlds* terms there are three things to consider: Force, Resistance, and Drain. The former two don't translate well into *Savage Worlds* terms, so we can ignore them. The latter; however, is a key feature of *Shadowrun* magic and so must be accounted for.

Drain is a measure of difficulty in casting a given spell. Ignore the normal Backlash rules associated with the AB: Magic Edge and instead replace them with the following:

- Each spell has a Power Level (PL) equal to the number of Power Points that would normally be expended (i.e., those listed in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook) during its casting (e.g., *bolt* has a PL of 1 when cast normally; casting three *bolts*, each at 2d6, raises the PL to 3; casting three 3d6 *bolts* raises the PL to 6).
- Every magician has a Magic Level (ML) equal to one point per Rank (thus a Novice has a ML of 1 and a Veteran, a ML of 3). The Wizard Professional Edge, rather than allowing a reduction in Power Point cost, raises the magician's ML by +1.
- Spells are cast in the normal fashion (i.e., a Spellcasting roll); however, whenever a spell is cast, whether successful or not, the magician makes a drain test (a normal Spirit roll); the following modifiers are applied to this test: +2 (If PL < ML); +0 (If PL = ML); -2 (If PL > ML); -4 (If PL is more than double ML).
- Cyberware has an effect on magic. All spells suffer +1 PL for each Cyber Edge possessed by the caster and any non-damaging power suffers +1 PL for each Cyber Edge possessed by the target. The modifiers are cumulative

If the drain test succeeds the character is Shaken. With a raise, the magician suffers no ill effects. If the test is failed, the character gains one level of Fatigue. Recovery requires 10 minutes of uninterrupted and complete rest. With a critical failure (i.e., snake eyes) result the character suffers a wound.

## MAGICAL TRADITIONS

For purposes of these introductory rules, we will only discuss "full" magicians. "Aspected" magicians will be detailed in a future article. Full magicians follow one of two traditions—shamanic or hermetic. A tradition is a set of beliefs and techniques for using magic. It colors the magician's outlook and affects how the magician learns and uses magic. The choice of a magical tradition is permanent—once you have chosen your path there is no turning back.

A follower of the shamanic tradition (AB (Magic: Shamanic)) is known as a *shaman*. Shamans focus their magic through their relationship with the world of nature, the power of emotion, and personal inspiration. Magical knowledge comes to them from a spirit-patron known as a totem. Shamans have what is called the "totemic mask". When casting spells, they take on the visual aspects of their chosen totem—the more powerful the spell, the more noticeable the effects.

A follower of the hermetic tradition (AB (Magic: Hermetic)) is known as a *mage*. Mages see the universe as a complex pattern of forces that can be controlled with the proper formulae and rituals. Magical knowledge comes from study and research.

Regardless of their tradition, all full magicians are capable of casting spells (sorcery) and summoning spirits or elementals (conjuring). Conjuring is handled by adding an additional power, *conjure spirit or elemental*, to those already included in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook (see below). In addition to these abilities, all magicians have a psychic sixth sense known as "astral sensing" (called "The Sight" by the Awakened). The act of using this sense is referred to as "assensing". As an action, a spellcaster can assense a single living target; the following information about the target is revealed: general state of health, general emotional state, and whether the target is a mundane or an Awakened. Once you have read a target's aura you will always recognize it—regardless of physical alterations or disguises.

### CONJURE SPIRIT OR ELEMENTAL

**Rank:** Novice

**Power Points:** Special

**Range:** N/A

**Duration:** Special

**Trappings:** The magician creates a magical circle, enters a trance, or provides an appropriate sacrifice.

Conjuring a spirit (shaman) or elemental (mage) requires a full minute to accomplish. During the attempt, any disturbance of the magician (who may make a Spirit roll to maintain his focus) results automatic failure and the magician becoming Shaken.

If successful, the magician summons an appropriate spirit to aid in his cause. The spirit will remain within sight of the magician until sunrise or sunset (whichever comes first) after which time it will depart, regardless of whether or not it has performed its required services. The magician may automatically banish a spirit he has conjured at any time as a normal action. If a spirit is ever "killed" it automatically departs. While present, the spirit may be called upon to perform up to three services. These services may include using its innate powers or engaging one or more of the magician's enemies in combat. A magician may never have more active spirits/elementals than Spirit/2). The PL of the spell equals the spirit's Force/2. A spirit's Force is expressed as a die type (d4 – d12). A spirit's traits, innate abilities, and Pace are equal to its Force. A sample spirit (Force d8) is detailed below. Feel free to create more!

#### Hearth Spirit [Wild Card, Force d8]

Hearth spirits exist as protectors and defenders within buildings and other dwellings. Hearth spirits appear as something that would normally be present within the building or dwelling they inhabit.

**Attributes:** All d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d8

**Pace:** 8"; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

**Special Abilities:** Ethereal (however, if they attack they become vulnerable to all attacks during the round in which they make their attack roll) and Fearless

**Innate Powers:**

**Accident:** The target of this power must make an Agility roll at -2 or lose their action for the turn as they trip, fall down, bite their tongue, etc. A "target" consists of any and all individuals within a medium burst template and within line of sight of the spirit.

**Concealment:** The spirit can hide people within its environment so long as they do not move. The maximum number of people that can be concealed in this manner is equal to the spirit's Force/2. To detect concealed individuals one must make an opposed Notice roll against the spirit's Force.

**Confusion (d8):** This power mimics the *stun* power except that range is doubled.

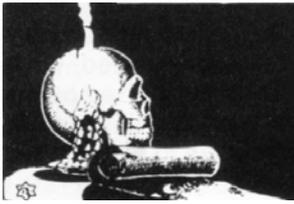
**Guard (d8):** This power mimics the *dispel* power.

**Search:** If the spirit passes a Smarts test it will locate any desired object within 100m (if such an object exists).

## PARTING SHOTS

Well there you have it. *Savaged Shadowrun*, at least enough to get you thinking, in only seven pages! If you want to try this "conversion" (and I use the term in its loosest sense) out, then hop on over to the **Shark Bytes** website ([www.sharkbytes.info](http://www.sharkbytes.info)) on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January and download *Prototype Envy*, the *Savaged* version of the adventure included in the *Shadowrun Quick Start Rulebook*. You can find it in the Nibbles section. Keep an eye for lots of *Savaged Shadowrun* articles to appear in the pages of **Shark Bytes** and **Shark Nibbles!**

Well, chummer, until next time: Stick to the shadows and Stay Savage!



# A Magickal Medley

*This initial installment of A Magickal Medley picks up where The Magic Fish leaves off! This month, Bill Littlefield looks at magical swords—more specifically, some ideas for creating your own magic swords. He’s also provided some “sage advice” for those of you who are new to the Savage Worlds system and wants you to know that throwing a +5 Holy Avenger from the AD&D game into your Savage Worlds game is not, I repeat, not recommended! Enjoy!*

OK, I think we can all agree that whenever playability and rules collide, playability (i.e., Fast! Furious! Fun!) should come out on top. Assuming that we can concede that point, let’s move on and explore some basic assumptions made within this article:

- All magical swords weigh ½ of what their mundane counterparts weigh.
- If you can’t use the mundane version, for whatever reason, you can’t use the magical version. ‘Nuff said!
- Magic swords may not be destroyed by any mundane means. Destroying even a +1 sword should require monumental effort.
- Magic swords are rare—if you manage to get your hands on one, consider yourself lucky indeed!

**Sword, +X:** These weapons are the most “common” of magical swords. They simply grant a bonus of +X to the character’s Fighting and damage rolls made while employing the weapon. Now if this seems too powerful to you, consider allowing the bonus to apply to *either* the Fighting roll or the damage roll... and no one’s saying that ‘X’ has to be the same for both. There’s nothing wrong with a sword that provides a +1 bonus to all Fighting rolls, yet grants a +4 bonus to damage rolls against ogres.

As far as determining the value of ‘X’ is concerned, I wouldn’t go above +1 unless the bonus is restricted in some way. This restriction can come in the form of a preferred target of the weapon (e.g., +2 versus hill giants, or +1 versus orcs), its use could be restricted to a specific type of user (e.g., only elves gain its magical benefits—in the hands of non-elves it is treated as a normal sword), or perhaps it has even more stringent restrictions (e.g., +1 in the hands of a human, but +4 when wielded by the true king of the Ice Kingdoms). The possibilities are limitless!

Also, such swords need not always be magical in nature—they could be the result of exceptional materials or quality craftsmanship as well. Experiment with these kinds of things until you find a level of power that meshes best with your campaign style. Now let’s move along!

**Sword, Special Ability:** Some swords, rather than granting simple bonuses to attack and damage rolls, grant the wielder access to powers that would normally be beyond their capabilities. This includes such things as a sword that grants the character the benefits of the Arcane Resistance Edge whenever it is drawn, a sword that causes all Allies to act as if their leader had the Command Edge, or perhaps the sword mimics the Danger Sense Edge and emits a low whine whenever danger is near.

Now don’t feel as if you need to stick with Edges. Perhaps a sword increases the user’s Fighting skill by one die type, or maybe it increases their Parry instead. Some swords might even grant an increase to a specific attribute (or maybe it simply provides a bonus to rolls made using that attribute, or any of its linked skills). Some could allow the user to access an effect that mimics an arcane power. In this last case, you have a choice to make: either give the sword an inherent number of Power Points with which to activate its powers, or give it concrete abilities that do not require Power Point expenditures. In the latter case, things like range, area of effect, and arcane skill die type will be fixed and immutable.

The thing to remember is: the more powerful the weapon, the rarer it should be. *Savage Worlds* is well-suited to the high fantasy genre in which magic weapons are rare and powerful—remember, every Edge, +2 bonus, or die type increase you give a weapon is like giving the character using it a free level-up (albeit a level-up balanced by the fact that such bonuses are tied to an item which may at some point leave the owner’s possession). Don’t go overboard. Trust me, it’s quite easy to do so, and if you do, you’ll quickly throw the balance of your game off—way off! K.I.S.S., and you’ll be OK.

**Sword, Cursed:** So far so good...literally. I mean really, who wouldn’t love to get their hands on any one of the swords described above? Well, sometimes you can get too much of a good thing. In such cases, it’s up to the GM to shake matters up a bit. So with that in mind, let’s talk about magic swords that *aren’t* all that desirable—at least if you’re lucky enough to know what they are *before* you lay down your hard-earned gold...

“Cursed” weapons are great fun, at least for the GM! Not only do they give you a chance to screw around with your players, but the look on their face when they pick up something they think to be Glamdring that turns out to be more like Mournblade is, well...priceless!

These swords will appear to all intents and purposes as “normal” magic swords. Their cursed nature is only revealed at some point in the future—usually when it’s most inconvenient for the character wielding it! A typical scenario would end with a character trying to hide from a ravaging horde of orcs only to discover that his blade, Orcsinger, squeals loudly whenever an orc is within 100 yards of it! The key to cursed swords is to make the curse have an effect that, while annoying and perhaps even dangerous, is not totally debilitating. That, and provide a means of egress—whether a sacrifice, a quest, or a cleansing ceremony—always provide a player with the means to rid himself of a cursed item... though no one says it has to be easy!



# The Wizard's Pet: Familiars in Savage Worlds



*This article, written by Bill Littlefield, is based on an original idea by Tom Yates, and benefited from **lots** of input from Clint Black. It provides some simple rules for including that staple of classic fantasy—he wizard's familiar—in your Savage Worlds games. Now, all those characters with the Arcane Background (Magic or Miracles) Edge can get a pet! But remind them that along with a pet comes responsibility and if they shirk that responsibility they may find themselves sans familiar! Until next month...Stay Savage!*



## WHAT CONSTITUTES A FAMILIAR?

Well, that depends on the game world. For example, in a fantasy world it could be a standard black cat, raven, or dog. In a game set in the far future, perhaps a cybernetic imp or a virtual AI would be more appropriate. In a roaring pulp adventure, robotic familiars or perhaps the ubiquitous “brain in a jar” would better fit the bill.

Theoretically, any arcane character can have a familiar—if the GM allows it, that is. They are traditionally most common amongst wizards (those characters possessing the Arcane Background (Magic) Edge), although they can be appropriate for a character that possesses more shamanistic/totemic inclinations (i.e., the Arcane Background (Miracles) Edge), as well. However, most organized religious institutions—especially monotheistic ones—would frown upon their members possessing supernatural familiars and so, if they do happen to have one, such characters try to keep it a secret.

Arcane characters may only have one active familiar. The familiar is loyal to the character, but it isn't blindly loyal—if it's abused it will leave and seek out a more congenial companion. In such cases, the offending character must perform an act of contrition—the permanent sacrifice of a Benny! When the new familiar arrives, it will have one more Benny than normal and the character will have one less. This act affects the character beyond any permanent bond with the character, so if the familiar dies or is driven off at a later date the character does not get his Benny back—through the act of contrition it is irrevocably lost. If a familiar is destroyed, through no fault of the character, a new one of the same type will arrive in 2d6 days.

## SO HOW DOES ONE OBTAIN A FAMILIAR?

In order to obtain a familiar, the arcane character must take the Summon Familiar Edge (see below) at any normal leveling opportunity at which he meets the listed requirements. Additional Edges, which grant benefits to both the character and the familiar, are included as well.

**Summon Familiar** (Seasoned, Arcane Background, Spellcasting/Faith d8 and Smarts/Spirit d8 depending on Arcane Background): By taking this Edge the arcane character gains a familiar. This Edge may be taken only once. The exact type of creature that appears is up to the player (subject to GM approval, of course). All such creatures are assumed to be of Small size; however, a character (with GM approval) may choose a Tiny familiar or a Large one. In the former case, the familiar gets an extra Benny. In the latter, the character does not get the benefits of the Power Points Edge (see below).

The character and the creature communicate via a unique telepathic link and are able to understand (but not speak) each other's thoughts and language. As a normal action, the character is able to see and hear whatever the familiar can to a range of 50 miles. By concentrating (in combat, taking a full round action with no movement) the range is doubled.

The familiar possesses one Benny and is treated as having the Common Bond Edge with regards to the character that summoned it so long as the two are able to communicate telepathically.

Finally, when the familiar arrives it grants its companion the benefits of the Power Points Edge. These Power Points are accessible to the character whenever the familiar is in contact (at or within 1" [6 feet] for purposes of the game) with the character. A character in contact with his familiar could access the familiar's Power Points and then send the familiar off, but the two must actually be in contact when the Power Points are expended. A familiar's Power Points recharge as normal and do not require the familiar to be in contact with the character.

**Bond Familiar** (Seasoned, Summon Familiar): This Edge may be taken multiple times, but only once per Rank. By taking this Edge the character gains a special ability related to the natural and innate abilities of his familiar (e.g., a character with a black cat familiar might gain Low Light Vision, or a +2 bonus on all Stealth rolls, or maybe even Danger Sense). The key is to keep the ability's power equivalent to that of a single Edge—beyond that, the only thing limiting you is your imagination!

**Enhance Familiar** (Veteran, Summon Familiar, Bond Familiar, Spellcasting/Faith d10 depending on Arcane Background): This Edge may be taken only once. The character's familiar is now treated as a Wild Card and gains all the attendant benefits (i.e., may use a Wild Die, gets three Bennies at the start of every session, and gains the ability to soak damage). In addition, the familiar grants the character an additional five Power Points (subject to the same conditions as the Summon Familiar Edge). However, anytime the familiar suffers a wound the character must make a successful Spirit roll or gain a level of Fatigue. Recovering this Fatigue level requires 10 minutes of absolute rest (i.e., no actions possible). With a critical failure, or if the familiar is actually destroyed, the character suffers a wound instead.

# DOUBLE DOWN

## *A Recovery Mission for Necessary Evil, by Mark Aylor*

### INTRODUCTION

Milton Forrester is a petty criminal and a gambling addict. He became a criminal to pay off his gambling debts and hasn't looked back since. He recently lost a large sum of money to someone with major league V'sori connections. Unfortunately, he was also doing some work for Omega at the time and offered to repay the debt with "...everything I know about Omega". What he knows isn't much, but any little piece of information is enough to hurt Omega!

### THE MESSAGE

Dr. Destruction's recorded message for this mission:

"Milton Forrester has betrayed us. He has arranged a meeting with a V'sori Battle-Master named K'mang. This meeting will occur, only not as planned."

"You are to intercept Forrester and keep him under wraps. I have arranged for you to link up with Guy 'Mimic' Marquess, who will take his place for the meeting with K'mang. You must protect Mimic while he meets with the V'sori Battle-Master. Our intention is to have Mimic pass along disinformation about our efforts to the V'sori. If there is trouble, ensure that he is extracted safely. Mimic is Omega's best infiltrator, a talent we can not afford to lose. Forrester, on the other hand, is expendable. Learn everything he knows about Omega before dropping him from a very high place."

### FINDING FORRESTER

The players have little time to find Milton. He is in hiding waiting for the meeting. He knows he is a dead man if he is found by Omega before this. A Streetwise roll at -2 leads the villains to Arlene Tolman, Milton's sometimes girlfriend. If the Streetwise rolls fail, the players can talk to Willy the Fish, Valerie Ramirez, or some other contact they may have to get a lead on her.

Arlene lives in a tenement in Southpoint. The players arrive just as four Quisling Gang Heavies and a Quisling Gang Leader (NE p.140) show up to put an end to Arlene. The fight takes place in the building, just outside Arlene's apartment. The Quislings are also looking for Milton due to his past associations with Omega. They intend to "send him a message" by murdering Arlene.

Once the gangers are defeated, Arlene still needs to be threatened or intimidated to reveal Milton's location. The villains can easily bully her using the threat of the Gangers who just tried to kill her.

### THE CATCH

Milton is hiding out in the upscale Northpoint apartment of Simon Stevenson, to whom he owes the money that got him into this mess. Simon is a City Councilman and owns a casino in Star City where Milton incurred the debt. Simon is out when the players show up, but he could be useful to Omega in the future.

The security on the apartment requires a Lockpicking roll at -4 to bypass. If the break-in attempt fails, a SOCorp unit (1d4+4, NE p.140) will arrive in 5-10 minutes. If they successfully break in, Milton does or says anything to convince the villains to spare his life. He even tells them the truth! This is a good thing because Mimic needs the time with Milton so he can better imitate him and get the meeting particulars and anything else important from him. Milton, on the other hand, is buying time so he can trigger the silent alarm. If he succeeds, the SOCorp unit shows up in less than five minutes.

### THE DILEMMA

Milton is needed alive until after the meeting just in case there is a follow-up meeting or something else comes up. The question is how to keep Milton under wraps until after the meeting. Do they take him along or split the team? If they bring Milton along, THE MEETING plays out as is. If they split up, divide the forces appropriately between the two groups—K'mang pried the information telepathically from Mimic and sent half his strength to recapture Milton.

### THE MEETING

The meeting is scheduled immediately after the villains get what they need from Milton and decide whether to split up or take him along. It takes place at a sunken open air restaurant with lots of good vantage points to watch from. It starts off without a hitch, then suddenly K'mang pulls his blaster and shoots Mimic (Guy fails his acting roll, K'mang's telepathy succeeds, some detail Milton forgot to mention, etc.). It is a serious enough wound to incapacitate him but not kill him outright.

When the villains try to rescue Guy, a Fin force descends on them from their hiding place (a K'tharen Commander and 6-10 individuals, depending on group strength). K'mang also participates in the fight. The villains are forced to rescue Mimic and get out. If more Fins are needed, have them arrive in groups of five (plus another Commander if necessary).

If the group split up in THE DILEMMA, the second squad of Fins is also enough to force the villains to grab Milton and flee or kill him outright (add another K'tharen Commander in this case). He must not be captured by the V'sori or the information he was going to give K'mang will be pried from him.

## THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

The majority of characters involved in this scenario are described in the *Necessary Evil* sourcebook as noted in the text above. The main characters are detailed hereafter.

### Milton Forrester

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d4, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d4, Gambling d6, Guts d4, Investigation d4, Notice d6, Shooting d4, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Greedy, Habit (Gambling), Quirk (Doesn't look people in the eye)

**Gear:** Z-belt (Armor+1), vibro-knife (Str+2; HW; AP8)

### Guy "Mimic" Marquess [Wild Card]

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d4, Investigation d8 Knowledge (Acting) d8, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d8

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

**Edges:** Alertness, Ambidextrous, Investigator

**Hindrances:** Dependant (handicapped sister), Loyal (Dr. Destruction), Overconfident, Pacifist (Minor)

#### Super Powers:

- Chameleon: Voice (5)
- Copy-Cat: 5 levels, Versatility (13)
- Fearless: (2)

**Gear:** Z-belt (Armor+1), vibro-knife (Str+2; Heavy Weapon; AP8)

### BattleMaster K'mang [Wild Card]

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (V'sori Politics) d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d10, Swimming d10, Taunt d8

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes, Command, Inspire, Natural Leader

**Hindrances:** Mean and Murderous (Minor)

#### Special Abilities:

- Aquatic (Pace 10")
- Low-Light Vision
- Psi-Projection
- Telepathy.

#### Super Powers:

- Attack, Ranged: 12/24/48; 2d6; AP 8; Cone Template. (Mind Blast)
- Stun: Large Burst Template; Smarts roll or be Shaken. (Synapse Shock)

**Gear:** Personal combat armor (+4, Heavy Armor), blaster pistol (15/30/60; 3d6; Shots 20; Double Tap; Heavy Weapon; AP 4), vibro-sword (Str+4; AP 8; Heavy Weapon)

## AFTERMATH

Guy is hurt badly enough to require medical attention immediately. This is a perfect lead in for THE RED CROSS (NE p.133) or talking to The Hippocratic Oath if they have already finished this Savage Tale. Mimic will recover.

They also have moral dilemma in deciding what to do about Milton (and possibly Arlene). He has information about Simon Stevenson who is a V'sori sympathizer they should try to get if they remember, and they still have Dr. Destruction's message of "...dropping him from a very high place".

After the mission, Dr. Destruction contacts them:

"Well done. It is unfortunate that Guy was hurt and the disinformation he tried to pass will be discarded, but it will put the V'sori on their toes. From now on they will have to take extra care with the information they receive. Next time, it could very well lead to a trap. I hear Guy will recover thanks to your quick response. Excellent work. He is an asset we can not afford to lose."

## UNTIL NEXT MONTH...STAY SAVAGE!

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