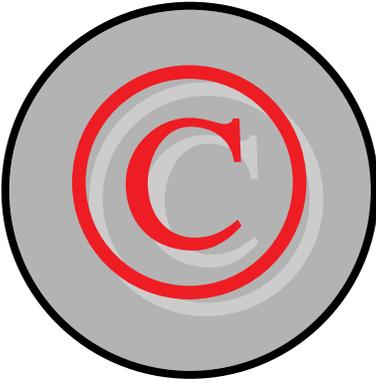


# DREAMTIME





## CREDITS

**Dreamtime™**

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**Intro**

This is the .pdf version of **Dreamtime**, identical in most respects to the printed version, with the exception of some color here and there. As always, body text in **red** is a hyperlink to elsewhere (**blue**), but there aren't that many in this document. If you are interested enough to have bought this, we'd like to point out a couple of links of note. Links were current at the time of printing.

**The Ancient World Web**

<http://atlantic.evsc.virginia.edu/julia/AW/meta.html>

An index to various ancient topics, from virtual tours to UFO's from Atlantis.

**Myths**

<http://pubpages.unh.edu/~cbsiren/myth.html>

Cultural myths and legends by geographical area.



Happy surfing!





## INTRO- DUCTION

### The Dream

No one knows what the Earth Mother dreamt before She made the People, only that She dreamt alone, for She told us so. Then, one Dream, She dreamt of us, and a great place filled with many things. Things both great and small, that walked, and flew and swam and crawled. There were wonders above and below, and everywhere She walked in Her Dream, She saw something new and fascinating. But as with all dreams, She eventually awoke from it. While the memory was fresh in Her mind, She made this Dream real, walking and creating and setting forth the wondrous things to multiply all the empty spaces of Her Dream. But, the Creation was a tiring thing, as all women will tell you, and She returned to Her rest before it was complete, and before all Her mistakes could be undone. But, She rested anyway, knowing that she would Dream of what went on in Creation, for She made it part of Herself. So, there are many things in the world that are not right, but all of Creation lets the Earth Mother sleep, for who knows what She might change if She awakens again?

We are the People, the last thing made by the Earth Mother. Formed from Her body at the end of Her work, we were small, and She had given her gifts to all the other shakt. "Give us fangs", we said, "that we might bite and tear", but She had given all the fangs to other shakt. "Give us claws then, that we can claw and climb", but those too were gifts already given. She had neither strength nor speed of limb to give us, nor wings or even fur to protect us from the cold winds. "Is there nothing you can give us, that we not be the least of the shakt?", we asked of Her. Earth Mother thought very long, and we worried that She might unmake us, for we were small and insignificant, and She was very tired and wanted to rest. But She looked upon us and smiled. "I have one gift left to give, and I give it to you. I give you Myself. You may take of Me what you need, so long as you show Me respect, and since all shakt are of Me, you make take of such of them as you have courage to challenge. Now go, lest I change My mind. You are special, and I will Dream much of you, last of My Children." And then she went to Her hidden place, and returned to Her sleep.

The People knew not what to do with this gift at first. The tree shakt left nuts upon the ground, but they hurt our teeth. Then one of the People took of the Earth Mother, and used a rock to smash the nut, and was no longer hungry. Then a Wintersleeper came for the nuts, and another of the People took a great stick and struck it dead, even though it had fangs and claws. A third took a pointed rock and cut off the skin, to keep from being cold, and the People saw the greatness of the Gift. In time we learned to use the Gift in many ways, and to speak to the invisible shakt, bound to our will by the Earth Mother.

We are the People, the last shakt of the Earth Mother. We use her Gift, and we use it wisely, for we live upon Her, and She is Dreaming of us.

### Designer's Notes

**Dreamtime** is a game where you should leave your preconceptions at the door. It might look a lot like a campaign set in a prehistoric human time, *but how do you know?* Your characters might not even be human, on a world that is not remotely like Earth. Your characters know that they are, that the world is, that it is a large and dangerous place filled with many things that defy comprehension and powers so great that their true nature is cloaked in symbolism, lest it take notice of you. At the same time, you are special, the favored children of the Earth Mother, to whom She has given gifts bestowed on none of Her other creations.

Maybe someday the elders of Atlantis and Mu will speak of you as legendary heroes, or maybe you are from a future so terrible that it completely wiped out humanity, and you are the next species to evolve, the advanced machines of an extinct humanity trying to understand and shape you while you struggle to understand and shape them. You don't know, and you never will. You just have to make the best of it, and try to understand what you can.

While there are some illustrations scattered throughout the rules, keep in mind that they only represent one possible interpretation of **Dreamtime**. We've made a deliberate effort to keep things vague in way that gives you a feel for the way your characters will think. They do not think in terms of exact numbers past 10 or so. They don't measure time in hours, leave written messages, or have vast wealth. Their worldview may have certain inconsistencies to our way of thinking, but which are perfectly reasonable to theirs.

Immerse yourself in the world of **Dreamtime**, and meet the challenges as they come. You may be surprised at how much you anticipate each new adventure in this strange new world.

*Greg Porter*

## Getting into character

Life in **Dreamtime** is both simple and complex at the same time, and there is a certain mental frame of reference you need for your characters. You have no writing, or even the concept of writing. You can't leave notes, write things down for later reference or make maps. The closest thing you have to abstract representation is the markings you make in caves for ceremonial purposes, and someday you might conceive of something like maps or hieroglyphs. You have a good memory, for all your traditions and formal teachings are oral in nature, and the legends of the past are your guide to daily existence. You have no clocks, and no way or need to accurately measure time. In the short term, there is the rising, setting and zenith of a number of the shakt, like the Sun and Moon. When you travel, the directions are counted as by the rising and setting of the Sun, the landmarks along the way, and how many days' walk it takes at that time of year. You note the phases of the Moon shakt as her moods change, and the passing of the seasons, but large amounts of time are measured not in decades, but in generations and their important events.

You are hunter-gatherers, living in small communities no greater than the Earth Mother will support, and packing up and moving on when times get bad. If it is not made of wood, leather, stone or bone, you don't have it. Your clothes are simple tanned hides, with or without fur as the season warrants. Your dwelling is a frame of wood with hides over it and a grass or hide sleeping mat. It can be broken down and lashed to the back of the small pack animals you own, the pohnee, if you need to move it. Your knife is chipped flint with leather wrappings, your bow simple hardwood.

One of the best ways to divorce yourself from modern-era thinking is to give the GM your character sheet. Once you have created a character, you need never see the numbers and stats on that piece of paper again. You can have a list of your possessions, and make written notes of your deeds, but your actual stats, levels of injury and the slow changes that experience brings will always be somewhat of a mystery. You can no longer think of your character as a rules mechanic, only as an abstract personality. Instead of having ASP, your character has the favor of the spirits, an intangible quantity that you can call on in time of need, but you never know exactly when your spiritual luck will run out.

This adds a bit of work for the GM, who must now handle all skill tests and attribute rolls for *all* the characters, but in the long run it is probably worth it.

## Character Generation

Before you get too far along with a character idea, remember that you are living in a world without a net. No hospitals to patch you up, no police, no hotels, no fast food, no nothing. You have you, any travelling companions, and to a lesser extent, your relatives, village and Clan. Almost everyone is expected to pull their own weight as soon as they are able. Your stats and skills should reflect this degree of self-sufficiency. Characters are supposed to be heroes in **Dreamtime**, and start off with 150AP and 150SP, plus or minus any amount from ads and disads. The average person has stats at the low end of the average range described below, around 100AP and 50SP before any ads or disads are taken into account.

Average male		Average female	
STR	5	STR	4
AGL	4	AGL	5
AWR	4	AWR	4
WIL	4	WIL	4
HLT	5	HLT	5
POW	3	POW	3
Total	107AP	Total	107AP

### STR

Everyone works for a living, and is used to carrying heavy loads at times. Only the elderly escape the full burden of the semi-nomadic life you lead. Males are tough and wiry, and have an average STR of around 5-6, and females have an average of 4-5. In the winter, this is still not enough to keep from being encumbered by the heavy skins you wear to keep out the winds that rush down across the plains. If you are travelling with any significant amount of goods, you will be encumbered somewhat, and you should get used to most physical tasks having +1 Difficulty as a result.

### AGL

This is an average of 4-6. Your lifestyle encourages hand-eye coordination for the hunters, but one can live by gathering and the use of snares in good times, and never have to lift a spear or bow. Cleverness in setting traps (AGL skills) can offset lack of coordination in other areas if you don't need or expect to use weapons that often.

### AWR

This is an average of 4-6. Just because you are primitive, does not mean you are not alert and aware. The world is full of subtle cues you must notice and interpret correctly in order to prosper. The more you use magic, the more likely you want a high AWR. Having one especially keen sense (as a Physical Ad) is not uncommon.

## WIL

This is an average of 4-6. The People have those who are strong and weak of will, those who lead, those who follow, those who persevere in the face of adversity, and those who seek the easy way out. There are certain standards of appearance, ways to dress and carry yourself to gain the attention of the opposite sex, or to inspire loyalty, fear or admiration, and high or low WIL or an appropriate Physical Ad will apply in this case as well.

## HLT

This is an average of 5. You are a hardy people, with little formal knowledge of medicine, relying on herbs and magic to cure your ills. Those who are not healthy often do not survive when the evil spirits pass over the village, especially in the winter. In addition, the long walks you do every day in search of food give you a natural stamina. Those with lower HLT are usually the elderly, or those whose other natural abilities mean their HLT is less important.

## POW

This is the spirit given to you by the Earth Mother. If you have a POW of 1, you are Afflicted, and should get a Natural Debility in POW as well. You may never, *ever* do magic of any kind, and no spirit will hear your voice, no matter how long or hard you call. The shamen wonder about the the Afflicted, trying to decide if they have so little magic that spirits cannot see them, or keep their spirit hidden from a secret fear. The Earth Mother often protects such of her children from harm. A character with a POW of 1 can buy the Block power as an inherent ability as the only exception to their Affliction. This costs 16SP, and subtracts 1 from the POW of any effect targeting the character. It is always on, and cannot be controlled, so it stops helpful as well as hurtful magics. A person who is Afflicted is thus immune to the spiritual effects of most **taboos**, but may still suffer social stigma from violating them.

One with a POW of 2 or more can work magic, and the higher the POW, the better. The average for the People is 3, and few shamen ever have a POW of more than 7.

## Ads & Disads

Certain character advantages and drawbacks are possible for **Dreamtime** characters, while others are not, or are strongly curtailed.

### Age

Characters may start at any age, with appropriate aging rolls. Non-player characters suffer double aging effects. Life isn't easy, and health problems tend to cascade and feed upon each other until the body is no longer a suitable home for the shakt it holds.

### Authority

There are only three real Authorities a character can have, Clan Elder, Clan Champion, and Village Shaman. The latter is the only one they could possibly start a game with. The others must be earned.

### Shaman

Authority to decide village spiritual matters	1SP
Authority to perform rituals on/for the dead	1SP
Authority to arrest within jurisdiction	1SP
Minimum Spirit Knowledge skill of 4	-2SP
Minimum POW of 4	-1SP

In addition, the shaman must have some sort of shamanic ritual spell to hold office, although it is conceivable that one could be a charlatan with no magic talents whatsoever. Naturally, the more skilled the shaman, the more prestige they will have in the village. Any given village will seldom have more than one shaman and one shaman-in-training. Some villages have no shaman whatsoever, and if there is only one shaman to serve several villages, this individual will seldom need worry about food and shelter (and might be protective of their "territory").

### Background

Background is *mandatory*. All characters must have at least 2AP or SP worth of background (200 words), to give the GM and player a feel for the character. In addition, background is required or strongly recommended as part of other ads or disads.

### Contacts

Contacts can be either temporal or spiritual. Just about anyone can be a Contact. This can represent NPC friends, people who owe you favors, or a fairly solid but informal business relationship with someone who has a skill or talent you need. A spiritual contact is a very **lesser shakt**, a spirit guide that can provide intangible aid when performing certain magics. The amount is seldom more than a slightly decreased Difficulty or slightly increased effect. The GM may also use such a spirit guide to do foreshadowing, or send cryptic messages or warnings in dreams. Such a Contact might also be a watchful ancestor who has not yet rejoined the Earth Mother.

**Dependence**

This disad is not allowed unless the player can come up with an exceptional background to justify it. There are **mood-altering herbs** that the People know of, and which may be used to see visions of dubious usefulness, and it is possible to have a psychological addiction to them. Since most of them are seasonal, this means the character will have a yearly withdrawal session when they have to go without.

**Destiny**

Characters may have a Destiny if desired. If the GM thinks the group will hold together for some great and shared Destiny, all characters may have the same Destiny if they want it .

**Enemies**

Characters are unlikely to start the game with any spiritual foes, but they might have mundane ones. A Level 1 or 2 Enemy is possible within your own Clan, and can represent past misdeeds, suspicions or professional rivalries. You will be unpopular and unwanted anywhere within your own Clan where you have Enemies, and this will translate into increased Difficulty on all interpersonal tasks. A low level Enemy can also represent obnoxious relatives that wear upon your time, resources and patience.

You may have a Level 3 or higher Enemy with **other Clans**. You will not be welcome on Clan lands, and you will either be run off, captured or killed, depending on the level of Enemies and the nature of your offense.

All Enemies must be described as part of your character background, and approved by the GM.

**Extra limb**

This is not allowed as a character trait. A character may have a power that grants them an extra limb, or they may be missing a limb to gain points, however.

**Fame**

Characters may have 1 or 2 levels of Fame to represent past heroic deeds, like being a former Clan champion, slaying a monster, having spoken to a great or greater shakt (and lived), and so on. People with positive levels of Fame will do better in negotiations, be more welcome in strange villages where their deeds are known, and are seen as good people to have around.

Negative fame is the opposite, and has much the same social effect as Enemies. You are known for having brought a curse upon a village, being leader of a disastrous hunt, having repeatedly violated taboo, or other bad things. People will want to distance themselves from you, lest your bad karma transfer to them.

**Frailness**

Frailness is allowed for skinny or elderly characters, but is not recommended.

**Habitual Behavior**

This is not normally allowed, since the level of population is low enough that strangers automatically stand out, and habitual behaviors are just a small part of this.

**Height/Weight**

Characters can have the normal variation in height and weight. Most characters will about 10cm shorter than modern characters, but since this is uniform across all the Clans, you get no points for it.

**Immortality**

Characters may not have this advantage. Certain powerful NPC's may have it, and it is an advantage that can be acquired through *very* long term roleplaying. ASP in excess of the maximum allowed may be put towards it, and any adventure in which the character successfully finds some information or makes a character decision that moves them tangibly towards this goal will qualify as 1 or possibly 2AP towards it. Any age-related AP gains during play may also be devoted to this goal. Acquiring it would be the culminating event of *many* long adventures.

**Note** - The limited form of Immortality could be an excellent adventure hook. Three generations ago (about 50 years), there was a *very* bad year. The omens and shamans said an malign force walked the land, stealing the shakt from the People. The people of entire villages disappeared, their huts left empty with possessions inside. Some said it was a shaman who had made a pact with unwholesome things from Elsewhere. Great heroes went in search of this shaman. Some found nothing. Some did not return. The disappearances stopped, and great thanks were given to the shakt of the departed ones. But now, a traveller and trader of things and tales has said that he passed a village with no one there...

**Inheritance**

Life is uncertain and full of risk. Characters replacing those who have passed on to the next world may have an Inheritance from the previous character.

**Luck**

The world is full of magical energy, and Luck is certainly possible for any character who wants it.

**Natural Aptitude**

Characters may have Natural Aptitude on *one* attribute or skill. Many legendary figures from your Clan's past probably had this advantage.

**Natural Debility**

This disad is allowed but not generally recommended. Characters who are Afflicted can never consciously practice magic, and may normally never increase their POW, so having a Natural Debility in POW will not make them significantly worse off than they normally are.

**Non-combatant**

This is possible, but very difficult to play. You are not a hunter or fighter of any kind. You eat food that you trap or find growing in the wild, or you have skills of such usefulness that you need not hunt, since others pay you food and goods to ply your trade.

**Pain tolerance**

Very useful, and probably recommended for any character. Life can be hard, and you have to learn to ignore the minor pains in order to get things done.

**Papers**

The concept does not exist in **Dreamtime**. Even the ceremonial objects used by **shamans** have no intrinsic authority they bestow upon the owner.

**Physical Ad**

These are relatively common, and characters may avail themselves of this advantage within the limits of the rules. Characters may have *one* of the following ads on POW: +2 to resist spells, or +2 to effective POW when casting spells. The former makes you harder to be targeted by certain spells, while the latter gives you a higher effect when casting spells. Those who are Afflicted *can* have the increased POW for resisting spells if so desired.

**Physical Lim**

While the magic of the shakt can restore most physical maladies, the potential cost is sometimes too high to risk. Physical Lims could represent problems you have had from birth, or past injuries you have sustained.

**Psych Lim**

The world is a strange place, full of mystery. Your character's personality may be shaped by the unknown or past experiences, and a handful of minor Psych Lims or a few major ones are not unlikely, so long as they are appropriate for **Dreamtime** and you have background notes for any major ones. Suggestions include personal **taboos**, which act like any other if you violate them, codes of honor, attitudes towards members of other Clans, or fears or phobias relating to events in your past.

Think of your character as a legendary hero in the making. Such larger than life figures often have larger than life flaws that are part of their legend. A hero with great mood swings, going from rage to depression, an outcast, whose tale is one of redemption, or a seeker of knowledge who paid too high a price for wisdom, all these are heroic faults.

**Cultural Psych Lims**

While each Clan has its own codes of behavior, certain things are common to all Clans, and all characters are expected to conform to the following:

---

Respect for the elderly

Respect for shamans

Respect for Clan elders

Respect for taboos

Respect for any shakt you take a gift from (like the Deer shakt after you make a kill)

---

*Not* having one of these is worth 4AP or SP for each one, since they are Level 2 Psych Lims, and you will take +2 Difficulty in any task that involves dealing with other people and that Psych Lim. For instance, if you don't have respect for the shakt, the chance of you being chosen hunt leader is at +2 Difficulty. If you have no respect for Clan elders, you are +2 Difficulty in getting to speak or gain a favor from them, and so on.

**Size**

Giantism and dwarfism is not unknown among the People. One level of either is permitted, and the character should have some Fame or other notoriety that affects the way people react to the character. If you are of the Clan, your Size will be accepted, but people may still be wary of you. Giants tend to be warriors, and dwarfs tend to gain respect through shamanic endeavors.

**Toughness**

Characters may have as many levels of Toughness as they care to buy. This is the Dreamtime, and the blood of the shakt can run strong through your veins. As specified, you pay double for each level past the first unless you have some trait that explains the Toughness. A STR of  $\geq 7$  is sufficient in **Dreamtime** to qualify as such a trait.

**Tricks**

A character may have a trick, if they can think of one appropriate to this culture. This could be a knack for lighting fires with primitive tools, scooping fish from the water with your bare hands, or sleeping in a tree without falling out. Clever players can no doubt think of others.

### Vulnerability

Characters may have this, but it is not recommended. One example of a **Dreamtime** Vulnerability would be an allergy to environmental factors like pollen. A Level 1 or 2 allergy would be a serious if not crippling impairment during the spring, when the plants are beginning to bloom, since they would take a +1 or +2 impairment each hour until incapacitated. Such a character would have to spend the spring in high, clear places away from all plants in order to function at all. A character with an allergy to bee stings would take a +1 or +2 non-lethal impairment from each bee sting, and would probably have some strong Psych Lims about bees and stinging insects in general.

### Wealth

There is no currency in **Dreamtime**, only barter. A person's wealth is measured in their material goods, and their ability to keep them. Characters have no "savings" or "income" in the traditional sense. They can start off with 8 items from the equipment list, and a one-person hut or 4 additional items. If they have a hut, then they are a member of a particular village, with the associated privileges and responsibilities. Anything after that is acquired solely through character action or interaction. The personal interrelations needed in a barter economy insure that people who need things stay on good terms with those who can provide them.

Managing to acquire goods and services is a part of day to day life that players will need to learn, and also to learn the way the People would think and negotiate.

---

Firehair "Brond, it is said that you make fine arrows. The deer shakt is unhappy with me, for I lost arrows these past days, and had others break upon the rock. Can you make some fine arrows for my bow?"

Brond "But I also must eat, and if I am making your arrows, I cannot hunt. What will you offer me to calm the growling of my belly?"

Firehair "I will bring to you the flesh of yesterday's hunt which I was going to have tonight. Will that be enough?"

Brond "But you want several arrows, and fine ones. Not only shall I miss hunting, I must also get new flints to make the heads, feathers of the groundbird so it flies true, and strips of sinew with which to bind them. Winter comes sooner that you suppose. Bring for me the flesh you spoke of, and I will start work on your arrows, and give you enough for your hunt tomorrow. But, I shall also require the hide of a deer, and the antlers and sinew. These you must give to me before the moon becomes full again."

Firehair "You ask much of me."

Brond (shrug) "You lost a lot of arrows."

Firehair (grumble) "I will do as you wish."

---

The deal is concluded. Brond is charging a steep price, but he is also giving Firehair some of his arrows on credit. If Firehair dies, Brond is out of luck. Brond's mate makes jewelry and other useful items from the antlers, so he is helping her with the part about the antlers, thus allowing her to forage for food instead of bartering for antlers. Her likely fruits and vegetables will go well with the meat Firehair will provide, and keep both of them fed for a few days. Firehair gets some arrows immediately, thus increasing his chances of maintaining his status as hunt leader, and thus getting a better share of any major kills. Everyone gets what they want, and both sides have an approximate idea of what the other wants and needs. If Firehair is known to be wasteful of arrows, Brond may keep more than the normal surplus on hand. If Brond's wife is known to use antlers a lot, Firehair may have a few stashed away, even though he doesn't use them himself.

Even with the limited commodities available, there is some organized long-distance trade. For instance, salt moves inland and becomes more valuable on the way. Flints of high quality travel to places that have none. Exotic hides and stones may be traded as a measure of status, and the fruits of a particular magical gift may travel great distances as trade goods (like fine weapons or tools like needles and fishing hooks).

## Skills

The following skill tree is used for **Dreamtime** characters. Explanations of special skills follow.

### Combat skills (AGL)

#### Projectile weapons

- Bows
- Spears
- Rocks

#### Melee weapons

- Knife
- Spear
- Club

#### Unarmed combat

- Punch
- Kick
- Hold
- Block

### Medical (AWR)

#### First aid

### Trades (AWR)

#### Armorer

- Knives
- Bows
- Spears

#### Cooking

#### Leatherworking

#### Animal handling

#### Basketweaving

#### Pottery

### Academics (AGL)

#### Dance

#### Ceremony

### Academics (AWR)

#### Art

#### Biology

(Herbalism)

#### Astronomy

(Omens)

#### Meteorology

#### Native language (free)

#### Other Clan languages (-2)

#### Legends (-1)

- Own Clan
- Other Clan

#### Singing

#### Poetry

#### Spirit knowledge

#### Theater

- (Disguise)
- (Sleight of hand)

### Area knowledge (AWR)

#### Clan lands (-1)

#### Shakt (-1)

### Environment (AWR)

#### Survival

- Warm climate
- Cold climate
- Dry climate

#### Hunting

- (Stealth)
- (Tracking)

### Environment (HLT)

#### Running

#### Swimming

#### Climbing

## First aid

This works as described in the basic rules. There is no advanced medical knowledge to provide a basis for surgical skills. You heal naturally, with magic, or not at all. Certain shamanic rituals may involve serious injury to the patient, such as to let out spirits of disease, but this is not usually a valid therapeutic technique.

## Armorer

An armorer knows how to make weapons, and the preparation of any intermediate items needed for those weapons, like a shaft sander for arrows, sinew preparation, etc. The usual elements for any **Dreamtime** weapon come from the following list: Stone, wood, sinew, bone, feathers.

## Cooking

Not usually a prime economic skill, it may gain favor in the winter months when preparing dried foods into tasty dishes, or making the best use of partially spoiled meat, or knowing how best to keep decay spirits from infesting unattended foods.

## Leatherworking

This is the skill you use if you want to cure or work any raw hides you procure. If you cannot make things for yourself, you will have to barter to have someone else make them for you.

## Animal handling

This is skill in dealing with Pohnee and Dog, how to treat them and feed them and tend to any wounds they get.

## Basketweaving

Wicker and grass can be used to make lightweight containers, useful to those who forage for plants, and to hang from the inside of your hut to keep things off the damp ground. Good baskets last a long time, therefore the skill is not widely needed, and their cost fairly high.

## Pottery

The People have learned to make stone grain grinders and stone pots, good enough for cooking purposes. They can also make clay urns, useful to store foodstuffs in dry places, away from the ever-hungry mouse shakt. Pottery skill is also used to make fired beads, and the skillful potter knows the secrets of colored glazes. The leap to making fired pottery has not been made yet.

## Dance

The art of body motion is useful in some magics, and also for attracting and seducing potential mates of either sex. It can provide a complementary skill bonus for other skills if used correctly.

## Ceremony

In addition to knowing the magic rituals to appease the spirits, the respected shaman also knows the proper ceremonies of a non-magical sort. These are gestures of respect, the proper hides to wear, foods to eat and gifts to offer. More importantly it provides the physical skills needed for rituals involving symbolic letting of blood, walking on coals and other dangerous physical feats.

## Art

The making of a representation of a thing that is not the thing itself is a concept that has not yet been born, but to make a thing that is pleasing to the eye requires this skill as well as the skill needed to craft the item.

## Biology

This is a general purpose naturalist skill. The character knows something of the comings and goings of seasonal animals, the places to aim for best effect on natural creatures, what plants grow in what season, where they can be found, and what they do. The Herbalism skill applies solely to the properties and knowledge of plants.

## Astronomy

You know the comings and goings of the Sun shakt, the Moon shakt and the lesser shakt of the skies. You may be able to tell the moods of the Moon shakt, and when she is likely to challenge the Sun shakt, or become very angry and when the People should avert their eyes from her gaze. If you know of omens, you know less about when the shakt come and go, but you do know what their comings and goings mean, and hints of the future brought by the Bright Spears and the White Maiden.

*“And the People of all the Clans lived in fear that winter, for the shamen had spoken of the coming of the White Maiden, and she had not appeared. Instead, many Bright Spears fell. The shamen said this meant the White Maiden had been slain in battle, and there was strife among the shakt. Indeed, Sun shakt seemed not to look upon the People, and Storm shakt strode across the land with terrible fury...”*

## Meteorology

Interpreting the whims of the Storm shakt and the lesser wind shakt can be useful on occasion.

## Legends

This is the oral history of your Clan, tales of great heroes (and fools), and how they did their great deeds. In desperate times, people turn to the legends for guidance, and in normal times they are a common-sense primer on how to do things, and how *not* to do things.

## Singing

While formal voice training is in the far distant future, a melodious voice and sense of rhythm can be useful in certain magic rituals, and in charming lesser shakt to your will.

## Poetry

This skill is required to perform magic using only the shakt, rather than shamanic rituals or inborn gifts of the Earth Mother. Even shamanic magic can be assisted by this skill. Anyone with a high enough POW can use poetry to generate a magic effect, but it is always risky, and may have a high price.

## Spirit knowledge

This is the knowing of the names of the shakt, where they live, how to get their attention, and convince them to do your bidding. All shamanic magic is based on the knowledge of spirits. Since people are but spirits in tangible form, this skill also helps one to see the heart of a person, sometimes concealed beneath an outward guise, and it may also help you convince that person to do certain things by speaking to their inner spirit.

## Theater

This skill provides the shaman with impressive outward trappings for ceremony and some magics. Also, many shakt are not that bright, and can be fooled by a shaman who has the outward symbols of a shakt that the other shakt would be favorably inclined towards. For instance, a shaman might disguise themselves as a deer when going to the sacred place of the deer shakt, so as to avoid the protections against intruders. It may also fool an angry shakt who is looking for the disguise, and not the shaman underneath. Using theater skills effectively can decrease the Difficulty of some tasks that require Spirit Knowledge skill.



## Sample Difficulties

Below are some sample Difficulties and times for various tasks, along with some description of special tasks.

First aid	Difficulty
Stop bleeding injury (1 min)	Amount eventually fatal roll made by

Armory	Difficulty
Make arrow (1 day)	2
Make knife (10 hours)	1
Make large knife (1 day)	2
Make spear (2 days)	3
Make small ax (1 day)	2
Make large ax (2 days)	3
Make club (2 days)	3
Make bow (1 day)	2

Almost anyone can make these weapons, given time. A high skill lets you make them much faster. For instance, a person with Armory skill of 4 could make a knife in little more than an hour. All Armory skills assume the character has all raw materials needed and the tools required for use of the skill. This means if you are on the open plains, finding spear shafts could be hard. The time also includes any waiting time needed to have hide glues cure, etc. All Difficulties for making items assume you only have average tools for time purposes and are using an "out of combat" bonus on the base Difficulty. Exceptional tools for these or other tasks of making would only come as gifts from the shakt, either as items or a gift of wisdom on how to make them.

Leatherworking	Difficulty
Prepare 1 hit location of hide (5 hours)	2

This time and Difficulty represents the labor needed to make the hide usable. The actual tanning or curing process may take weeks, but the leatherworker can engage in other work while this is going on. This time also takes into account any of the very simple preparation needed to make the leather suitable for leggings or other worn items.

Animal handling	Difficulty
Train Dog to attack with you	3
Care for Pohnee	3

Basketweaving	Difficulty
Make small basket (1 day)	2
Make large basket (2 days)	3
Make Pohnee baskets (10 days)	5

Pottery	Difficulty
Make stone pot (5 days)	2
Make clay urn (2 days)	3
Make beads (5 days)	2

To make beads is relatively simple, but since they are jewelry, the creation of attractive ones is a function of the artistic skill of the maker. The worth of beads fluctuates with quantity, but if scarcity is maintained, the base quantity is worth about as much as a bow, quiver and two dozen arrows.

Art	Difficulty
To make a thing pleasing to the eye	+4 to normal

Biology	Difficulty
To glean information about an unknown thing	5
To find stip grass (1 hour)	4
To find bac grass (1 hour)	5
To find marion berries (4 hours)	7
To find shaktbane (4 hours)	9
To find fireeyes (4 hours)	9
To find gonzoroot (4 hours)	8
To find visionroot (4 hours)	8
Preserve fresh herbs for several days	6

To glean information from an unknown creature is to figure out where it might be vulnerable, what parts are good to eat, what are its habits, etc. The various aspects of this require different techniques. To find if it is good to eat, you have to kill one. To know its habits, you must follow it. These tasks take varying amounts of time.

The [herbs](#) are plants which the People have knowledge of. Each of the plant shakt can give a gift to the People. The plant shakt only grow where they will, and will not respond to the wit or magics of the People, having lost their power if their shakt are not pure. If a character finds a special herb, they will find no other of that herb within the space of half a day's walk, for they have searched that area already. Each automatic success gives you an extra dose of the herbs, or secret knowledge of where a plant is for later use (provided no one else finds it first). A truly lucky shaman will know a place where a plant grows that is also positively aspected. Then the shaman can work a poem to hide the plants and the area from being found by others, renewing the enchantment as necessary. The exception to this depletion of resources is bac grass and stip grass, which are common in most areas. Most special herbs lose their shakt within a day of being plucked, but the skilled herbalist can keep them potent for several days.

**Stip grass** - The juice from the crushed stems slows the flow of blood from a cut, and provides a -1 Difficulty to First Aid tasks. Stip grass is found spring through fall near streams and rivers.

**Bac grass** - When bound on a wound, broken stems of bac grass adds 1 to the HLT of the injured person. This must be repeated each day for long term effect. Bac grass is found on sunlit plains, in small patches where the ground is drier in the summer and fall.

**Marion berries** - Marion berries grace one with the blessing of the winds, and for a short space they give the person who chews them an addition of 1 to their AGL. The berries can be dried and saved. Most of their shakt leaves them, but these dried berries can be prepared with hot water, and the drink will keep one awake through the longest night. When the wind shakt leaves you in either case, you lose 1 from your AWR until the next rising or setting of the sun. Marion berries grow on small bushes on windswept hills, and are found only in the spring, or summer on the highest hills.

**Shaktbane** - The fronds of this fern are unsightly to all shakt, and they will not go near to places where it grows. All magic by or against a person carrying fresh shaktbane is at +2 Difficulty, and it gives -2 to the Difficulty of coercing unwholesome shakt. Some say the carrying of shaktsbane protects one from taboo as well. Shaktsbane can be found spring through fall near the center of marshes and bogs, growing on isolated pockets of land where no creature dwells.

**Fire eyes** - The red flowers of this plant are especially loved of all fire shakt, and to toss them into a fire is to invite the shakt of that fire to come forth and grant you a small boon. It can tell or show you all that transpires within sight of any fire that is less than a day's walk away, so long as some ashes of the fire eyes remain, perhaps for a handful of breaths. Or, the shakt can be made to come forth at any time before the next sunset, to set fire to any single item you touch and which will burn. Fire eyes only bloom in the fall, and grow in rocky areas far from grass and trees. The fire shakt cannot go there, so they are very happy when people bring them.

**Gonzoroot** - The madness of many shakt comes upon one who chews this root. Their body is opened to all shakt who would want to reside there, but banishes them again later. While under the influence of these shakt, the person has Pain Tolerance, and if they already had Pain Tolerance, it counts vs. lethal injuries. They will see visions of the living and dead, and will not know the difference. While possessed, they will fight with all skills at +2 Difficulty, but also with an Initiative 2 points higher, giving them an extra action each turn. To use gonzoroot too much is to invite despair and permanent possession by unwholesome shakt. Gonzoroot is found near the roots of ancient trees, and can be found year-round unless the winter is especially harsh.

**Visionroot** - Fresh or dried, one who partakes of these will sever the ties of shakt and body, and they may walk among the shakt until the visions leave them. This is disorienting and dangerous, for the People have only wit and guile in the shakt world, and can be led astray or hurt, never to find their bodies again. The user must decide what they want to do in their vision, make a GM-set AWR task to glean useful information (at least Difficulty 10), and then make a Difficulty 8 HLT task to avoid the toxic side effects of the fungus (+1 *lethal* impairment per point the roll is failed by). Visionroot is found in mid-summer, on old rotted logs in great forests.

Astronomy	Difficulty
Predict the Moon shakt's moods	6
Vaguely predict the future based on sky omens	6

To successfully use this skill in either way gives you vague foreshadowing information of the GM's choice. Another possibility is to use unusual phenomenon as a signal for widely separated groups to act at the same time.

Meteorology	Difficulty
Predict <i>natural</i> weather a day in advance	5
Each day after that	+1

The normal comings and goings of Storm shakt are somewhat predictable, though less so than Sun shakt. To be aware of his rolling across the hills and plains before he arrives allows the People to plan when to hunt and gather, and when to seek shelter in their huts.

Poetry	Difficulty
Compose a poem of 1 second (10 seconds)	1
Compose a poem of 2-4 seconds (20 seconds)	2
Compose a poem of 5-9 seconds (1 minute)	3
Compose a poem of 10-16 seconds (2 minutes)	4
Compose a poem of up to a minute (1 hour)	7
Compose a poem of up to 10 minutes (1 day )	11
Compose a poem of up to an hour (1 week)	14

To use poetry to manipulate the shakt is usually done with preparation. The length of the poem must match the casting time of the spell desired, and to attempt a long casting without a prepared poem is great folly. This is a task of making, and one uses poetry to shape the words, just as one would use a knife to shape wood. However, poems are very small, and do not take as long as might be expected. Short poems can be made up on the spur of the moment, if needed, but the Difficulty above reflects an "out of combat" bonus (+2 to this Difficulty to compose a poem while fighting). Whenever a character has to make a poetry task, they must first compose the poem, and *then* use their poetry skill to recite it. Characters may use spare time to compose poems for a specific task, and keep records of their nature and length. If the GM is keeping track of skills, then the GM should make these skill checks and give the player an indication of how successful the character *thinks* they were.

Survival	Difficulty
Find enough food for one day (4 hours)	
Spring (warm climate)	5
Summer (warm or dry climate*)	4
Autumn (cold or dry climate*)	5
Winter (cold climate)	7

\*depending on campaign area

**Note** - Simple math will tell you that in order to survive year round, a character will need a Survival skill of at least 4, and even this means they will have to spend extra time in the summer to get the surplus needed for the winter. In bad years, people with a skill of only 4 often do not survive without support of relatives.

Characters in **Dreamtime** are hunters and gatherers. Unless you are injured, ill or elderly (and have people who care enough to feed you), each character is responsible for putting food on their own table. In average times, you would use the skill Survival, with any secondary skills for other climates, or Tertiary skills for the area in which you live.

If you have an automatic success, you get an *extra* day of food for each point in excess of the Difficulty. If you have multiple people going on a hunt, the Difficulty is the same, but you have a much better chance of being able to bag larger game. The hunting parties should check for success based on the skill of their leader. Success by the leader means that *everyone* gets food based on the leader's success, although the level of any *automatic* success is increased by 1 for the leader, and decreased by one for everyone else. Failure by the leader means that *no one* gets food. Hunt leaders are most popular in areas and times where the average skill and Difficulty of a successful hunt means occasional failures for the average hunter.

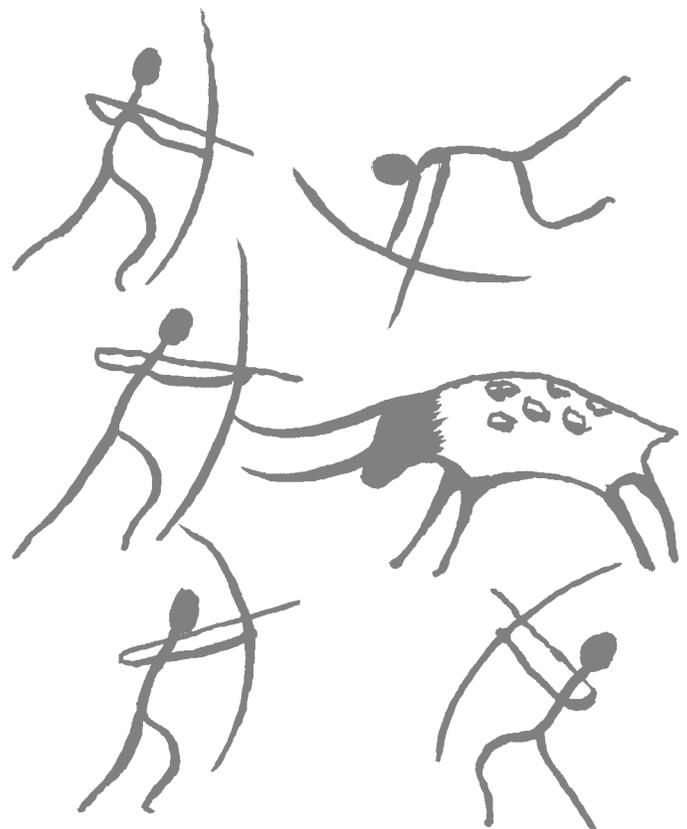
**Example** - Firehair is leader of a summer hunting party, and has a survival skill of 6. He is automatically successful, and is counted as having a skill of 7 for success purposes, gaining today's food and 3 extra day's worth. Everyone else in the party is counted as having a skill of 5, and only gets today's food and 1 extra day's worth.

**Note** - Overly successful hunting for a long period can anger the mother shakt of the beasts you hunt.

Food is a combination of animal and vegetable matter, whatever is handy in the season in question. This could be tubers, berries, fruit, grains, small or large animals, fish, honey or whatever can be made into bite sized pieces, chewed up and swallowed. To represent the random chance of getting an animal as part of the foraging, characters can roll dice for their skill instead of getting an automatic success. This means they can only get food for one day in most cases, but if they roll a "1", assume they have bagged game with a useful hide. Roll 1d10 and add any automatic successes the character *could* have gotten. The result is the number of points of "hit locations" of uncured hide gained.

**Example** - Firehair goes hunting alone later that summer, and rolls a 1. He would normally get 2 automatic successes, so he rolls 1d10 and adds 2, getting a total of 5. He has an animal or animals with 5 points of hit locations to make into clothing, sleeping mats, etc. Note that this is not 5 hit locations, but 5 points worth of hit locations. The chest is a roll of 3-4, so this is 2 points worth of hit locations, for instance.

If this rule is used for a group of hunters, it is almost certain that *someone* got an animal if the hunt is successful. Determine the amount of hide normally. The leader has first chance at any hide, trading each location on a 1-for-1 basis with food, and the rest distributed equally among the hunters (including the leader).



## Natural powers

Characters can have certain powers imbued into their being by birthright from the Dreamtime. A character may have up to 30SP in paranormal powers in addition to any shamanic rituals they may know.

If a character starts the game with a paranormal power, it is assumed to be a blessing of some type, either directly from a shakt, or because that somewhere in the character's family is the blood of one or more shakt. Each power must be fully described as to how the character acquired it, how it affected their upbringing, childhood and social status, and the way it manifests in play. If the *player* can't do this, then the *character* can't have the power.

The only mandatory requirements on such a natural power are that they be approved by the GM, and that the power has the limitation: Immutable. Things to watch for are powers that make the character completely immune to any weapons or damage normally encountered, automatically disables most foes, or which bypasses many of the features that make the Dreamtime challenging. *The GM has the right to retroactively limit gifts that prove too unbalancing, and should let players know this beforehand.* For instance, being able to fly at a constant high rate of speed bypasses lots of wonderful terrain features the GM can use, and makes the character able to perform feats of transport, communication and reconnaissance that would be otherwise impossible. There is no problem with trying such things with verse and dance, since there is always risk, and the more you do it, the riskier it gets. Being able to reliably perform game unbalancing miracles is what you have to watch out for. To keep a group diverse, it is recommended that any group of characters have no more than 2 people with the same power. Having a group of characters all with Wind Bows, Stoneskin and Windgift would be a bit contrived, and any plot complication that might hinder one would hinder all. A suggestion is to make a list of all the gifts available, and write them on small slips of paper, each gift written the number of times you will let a character have it. Then pass out the slips of paper equally to the players, avoiding one person getting the same gift more than once. Then the players can trade the slips among themselves, and *may* purchase the gifts they end up with their SP if they so desire.

## Known or legendary gifts

The following are sample paranormal powers that are probably known to most people through legends and tales. These inborn gifts hinder the development of tools, since if one person is around who can do things much faster and easier with a gift, there is great disincentive to develop a way to do it that is slower and more cumbersome. Since many villages have someone with at least a small gift, the cumulative disincentive is quite high. There are countless gifts in addition to the ones below, but these provide a sample to spark your imagination.

### Wind bow

This is an intangible bow that the wielder calls forth with their own shakt. A normal arrow can be fired from it with great skill, and no loss of normal or magical strength.

#### Blast

Ranged	5SP (arrows have range)
Self only	2SP (power only works for owner)
Visible effects	2SP (the bow can be seen, and the arrows tracked)
Drain	2SP (POW Aptitude vs. Difficulty of POW used to avoid HLT loss)
Conscious	5SP (firing decision is conscious)
Requires focus	2SP (power can't be used without arrows)

Requires a second to use	-1SP (plus time to draw a new arrow)
Requires conc. each use	-2SP
Requires gestures	-1SP (you look like you're using a bow)
Requires a combat skill roll	-3SP (use bow skill)
Range mod of 4	+4SP (it is a very accurate bow)
Only used at Aptitude	-3SP (max. damage from arrow is POW Aptitude)
Immutable power	-5SP (may not be altered)
<b>Total</b>	<b>8SP</b>

*"And Ijon carried arrows, but little else, for he had the bow of the wind. Although he was strong, the bow was not, and the arrows were less than what a stronger person might use. It mattered not to Ijon, for he was clever with the wind bow, and placed the arrows with great skill..."*



The '!' sound is a glottal stop, done by pressing the tongue to the roof of the mouth and rapidly pulling it down to the bottom of the mouth.

## Firemaker

One of the lesser fire shakt has taken a liking to you, and will manifest upon your call. More friendly or larger fire shakt have allowed themselves to be wielded as fearsome clubs or knives, but this is rare. In a world where there are no easy normal ways to make fire, this is a fairly common gift, and it would be rare for any village to be without one such person (who is usually welcome on long winter journeys).

### Blast

No range	2SP (you must touch what you want to set alight)
Self only	2SP (power only works for owner)
Visible effects	2SP (the fire is easily visible)
Drain	2SP (POW Aptitude vs. Difficulty of POW used to avoid HLT loss)
Conscious	5SP (using the power is deliberate)
Requires focus	2SP (power must be applied to something burnable)
Requires 10 seconds	-4SP (the fire shakt must be called from its wanderings)
Requires conc. each use	-2SP (the fire shakt comes, burns something, then leaves)
Requires vocalization	-1SP (you must call the shakt to come)
Causes special effect	+5SP (the shakt may be very selective in how and what burns)
Only used at Aptitude	-3SP (which is quite enough to ignite damp tinder)
Immutable power	-5SP (may not be altered)
<b>Total</b>	5SP

## Stoneskin

The Earth Mother watches you in her Dream, and protects you with Her strength. Your skin is supple as the finest hide, but becomes hard as stone when you would suffer harm.

### Armor

No range	2SP (the power cannot be extended past you)
Self only	2SP (power only works for owner)
Visible effects	2SP (your skin changes visibly when struck)
Constant	5SP (the power is always with you)
Independent	2SP (the power works whether you desire it or not)
Inherent	5SP (power requires no outside talismans)
Only used at Aptitude	-3SP (probably an AV of 1/0 or 2/0)
Immutable power	-5SP (may not be altered)
<b>Total</b>	10SP

*"And Stoneface was a great champion, and used his gift not to defend, but to attack. He would grab his foe by the shoulders, and then strike his face into theirs, his nose becoming a fearsome beak that none could withstand..."*

## Seagift

The Sea shakt knows you, and keeps you safe from its watery embrace. If you are in the sea or the rivers that run to the sea, you can breathe the water like the swimmers do. Your shakt must be strong, or the sea shakt cannot find you to help you (POW of  $\geq 3$  for automatic protection).

### Protect

No range	2SP (you may not extend the power)
Self only	2SP (power only works for owner)
Invisible effects	5SP (aside from not drowning, there is no visible sign)
Constant	2SP (does not drain the character)
Conscious	5SP (using the power is deliberate, so you can't sleep)
Inherent	5SP (power is inherent to you)
Requires a Psych Lim	-3SP (you must show respect to all shakt of the water)
Only works in rivers, seas	-1SP (the water must be touching the sea shakt)
Immutable power	-5SP (may not be altered)
<b>Total</b>	12SP

*"Waterfriend was beloved of her village, for in the year of ice in summer, she brought back many fish from the sea that all in the village might eat. All gave thanks and respect to Sea shakt, even to this day. For her are named the beads of the sea, Waterfriend's Tears..."*

## Telekinesis

A lesser shakt of the winds is your ally, and relieves you of your burdens. It is mischievous and flighty though, and will not follow you into your hut or any small places.

### Telekinesis

No range	2SP (power may not be extended)
Self only	2SP (power only works for owner)
Invisible effects	5SP (the winds are subtle and unseen)
No drain	2SP (the wind helps you without price)
Automatic	5SP (the shakt does what it wills)
Inherent	2SP (you need no thing to gain the aid)
Only where winds blow	-1SP (for the People, this is almost everywhere)
Only used at Aptitude	-3SP (the amount lifted by this STR doesn't encumber you)
Immutable power	-5SP (may not be altered)
<b>Total</b>	9SP

*"Manyfingers, of the village near the smoking hills, was born upon the peak, and the shakt of the West Wind blessed her. She walked lightly upon the ground, and did dance such as to amaze and delight the lesser shakt. She became a great shaman, and many elders asked that she be the one to do the rituals of departing when their shakt departed to the underworld..."*

## Rockshaper ◆

The character can feel the hidden powers of the Earth Mother's Creation, and can touch and reshape Her body. This is permitted, because She gave the People the Gift of taking from Her what they need to survive. You can make stone of earth, and earth of stone, so long as the part you shape is a whole thing, separated from others of its kind. Once you know the secret of a stone or earth, you may hold that name in your heart and change it at a later time. Rockshapers are rare, but they can make very fine knives and spear points by shaping the flint with their bare hands.

### Create

No range	2SP	(you must touch what you want to shape)
Self only	2SP	(power only works for owner)
Visible effects	2SP	(the earth or stone glows when shaped)
Drain	2SP	(POW Aptitude vs. Difficulty of POW used to avoid HLT loss)
Conscious	5SP	(using the power is deliberate)
Requires focus	2SP	(must have material to shape)
Must have a POW of $\geq 6$	-1SP	(you must have a powerful shakt to feel the hidden earth)
Requires 10 seconds to use	-4SP	(the hidden form of stone or earth must be called)
Requires conc. each use	-2SP	(each shaping is a separate magic)
Requires vocalization	-1SP	(you must call the hidden name of the rock or earth)
Power may be "prepared"	+5SP	(you may trigger a specific effect in no time once it is prepared)
Causes a special effect	+5SP	(you may alter the moisture of the earth or stone)
May only be used at Aptitude-3SP	(which still shapes at least 5kg of earth or stone)	
Must alter a whole thing	-3SP	(you may only change an object your POW can lift)
May only create stone/earth	-4SP	(all Creates are limited)
Immutable power	-5SP	(may not be altered)
<b>Total</b>	<b>5SP</b>	

*"Endar the Unloved was a rockshaper, but cared not for his Clan or People. He feared the Sun and Storm, and made his hut the body of the Earth Mother, where the People first lived. Its mouth was made of many stones made one by his gift, and he would work terrible magics on all who approached. His disrespect angered the Earth Mother, and one day She rolled in Her sleep, and the next one to travel near his cave saw that it was no more. And we knew that this was proper, that those who live in the Earth Mother are too weak to walk beneath Storm and Sun, and She takes them back unto Herself in time..."*

## Beastgift ◆

You have been blessed by a particular beast shakt. You may look through the eyes and hear through the ears of any of that kind of beast if you can overcome its shakt in spirit combat. If you lose, the shakt of that beast will claw at your shakt, and you will feel the pain in your body. In addition, you may never harm, partake of or use the body of that type of beast, or use your gift to allow these things to happen. This is the price that the mother shakt of that beast imposes for allowing you to see through her children.

### Clairsentience

Range	5SP	(you must be able to see the beast when concentrating)
Self only	2SP	(power only works for owner)
Invisible effects	5SP	(the beast acts normally while you are watching)
Drain	2SP	(POW Aptitude vs. Difficulty of POW used to avoid POW loss)
Conscious	5SP	(using the power is deliberate)
Inherent	5SP	(You need no talisman or charm to work the power)
10 seconds to use	-4SP	(you must engage the shakt in spirit combat)
Requires gestures	-1SP	(you must mimic the conflict with the beast shakt)
Requires POW vs. POW+4	-3SP	(you must overcome the beast shakt)
Causes a special effect	+5SP	(the beast will not harm you while you use the power)
Backfires	-3SP	(you take non-lethal injury of POW used if you fail)
Requires a Psych Lim	-3SP	(you must abide by mother shakt's conditions)
Only w/a single beast type	-3SP	(you must choose a type of beast to see through)
Immutable power	-5SP	(may not be altered)
<b>Total</b>	<b>7SP</b>	

*"Longstrider travelled much, and learned the wisdom of many things. One day he spied a young talen, far from its high nest, and too small to fly. This he placed in his pouch, and climbed to its rocky perch. There, though buffeted by wind shakt, and attached by the mother talen, he placed it back in its nest, taking nothing. That night he dreamt of the talen shakt, for it was her place that he had climbed. She spoke 'Since you have challenged mine to do me a kindness, I give the same to you. The child of your next mate shall challenge the shakt of my children, as you did with your body. If they succeed, they shall see through my children as though they were there, but if they fail, they shall bear the scars on their heart as you do on your arms'. And it was so. The child of Longstrider's mate was See-far, who was a great hunter and learned other wisdom from the ways of the talen..."*

## Shamanic magic

Aside from gifts of the Earth Mother to individuals, there is a limited and relatively fixed number of magic rituals which the People have acquired over time from the Earth Mother or other shakt. A person who knows some of these rituals is often a shaman, or a shaman-in-training, a process that takes many years to complete, and which is full of mystery and secretly held knowledge.

Shamans do not go through all their pomp and ceremony for no reason. All magic involves the spirits, and one must get their attention to make a spell work. They can be cajoled, humored, tricked, convinced, saddened or enraged by the skilled shaman, and that is what Spirit Knowledge skill represents. The shaman knows the true heart of a thing, and uses their words and gestures and anything else available to get the shakt to do what is desired. Since people have shakt, it can be used on them to modify their behavior. Someday this might be called body language or psychology, but for now it is knowing how to speak to the spirit of a thing. When a skill roll is required, the skills of singing, ceremony, dance and theater may be able provide complementary skill bonuses, or offset some special side effect of the ritual. Aside from these few rituals, the only magic is gifts and poetry.

## Banishing the unwholesome

This ritual removes unnatural taints from someone who has committed **taboo**. It does not restore any injuries or other permanent effects of the taboo, but prevents them from continuing to occur. Any healing or recovery needed is at the natural rate. If the ritual is performed on one who has not atoned for the taboo, the taboo is still lifted from them, but is transferred to the shaman instead, who may not lift it from themselves until they atone for the taboo in the way the original victim would have had to.

### Block

No range	2SP (you must touch the person to be relieved of the taboo)
Others	5SP (may remove taboo from anyone)
Visible effects	2SP (the hands of the shaman glow and the taboo is seen)
Drain	2SP (POW Aptitude vs. Difficulty of POW used to avoid HLT loss)
Conscious	5SP (using the power is deliberate)
Focus	2SP (shaman must have a spirit rattle, whose noise helps weaken any taboo forces)
Must have a POW of ≥3	-1SP (you must have moderate power of personal shakt)
Requires an hour to use	-7SP (shamanic rituals are time-consuming)
Requires conc. each use	-2SP (each attempt must be separate)
Vocalization, gestures	-2SP (you must speak and gesture of the taboo and atonement)
Requires Difficulty 6 skill roll	-1SP (uses Spirit Knowledge skill)
Special effect	+5SP (causes annihilation rather than negation or opposing power)
Backfires	-3SP (shaman gets taboo if recipient has not atoned)
Only used at Aptitude	-3SP (enough to counter a taboo)
Only counters taboo/curse	-3SP (it will not Block other beneficial or harmful magics)
Time Multiple, same limits	+5SP (this lets the Block be as permanent as the taboo)
<b>Total</b>	<b>10SP</b> (the Time Multiple has a minimum cost of 5SP as well)

*"And the warriors came back from the taboo swamps bearing the shaktsbane the shaman had asked for, that he might make talismans of protection for their quest. Though they had the shaktsbane, they were yet afflicted with curses of weakness and trembling, for they had gone in without its protection. The shaman called forth the taboo, who were many and small, and they were pulled from the arms and legs of the warriors. They bore small swellings where each one had entered, and which lingered for a day after the taboo was gone..."*

## Speak with Ancestors

This ritual calls the shakt of a dead person to answer the questions of the living. If the ritual is successful, the spirit of the deceased comes forth from the Underworld, and the Guardian of the Dead is compelled to let them pass. However, the Guardian is not disturbed lightly, and exacts a price for each spirit that passes. If the Guardian is treated with disrespect, or the rituals are not followed, the Guardian will bind the spirit of the shaman and then take the shaman's body and do it grievous harm. This ritual can also be used to speak with spirits displaced from their bodies, or to shakt, but one must be in the presence of the spirit or shakt, and the spell puts no compulsion upon them.

The spirits of the dead are beyond cares of life, and will answer truthfully to any questions the shaman asks, but will not volunteer information unless they are very recently dead, and would be inclined to help the shaman who asks. The dead dream endlessly until they become one with the Earth Mother again. So long as a part of their body remains whole, their shakt can be called, and the amount of memory they have is based on the amount of their body that is left. It is said that some shamans keep the skulls of the shamans before them, to ask wisdom in times of need. It is also said that some keep the skulls of their foes, and guard them well, so that their spirits will never truly find rest.

### Detect

No range	2SP (you must be with the remains)
Others	5SP (anyone the shaman is touching may speak with the dead)
Visible effects	2SP (the body of the shaman glows and the shakt is seen)
Drain	2SP (POW Aptitude vs. Difficulty of POW used to avoid HLT loss)
Conscious	5SP (using the power is deliberate)
Focus	2SP (shaman must have part of the body whose spirit is to be called)
Must have a POW of $\geq 3$	-1SP (you must have moderate power of personal shakt)
Requires an hour to use	-7SP (all shamanic rituals are time-consuming)
Vocalization, gestures	-2SP (you must speak and gesture of the things you are doing, like tricking or fighting the Guardian)
Difficulty 6 skill roll	-1SP (uses Spirit Knowledge skill to bypass Guardian of Dead)
Requires POW vs. POW+2	-2SP (shaman must draw back shakt of dead person)
Special effect	+5SP (allows two-way communication)
Special effect	+5SP (dead are compelled to tell truth)
Side effect	-1SP (you get +1 non-lethal headache)
Backfires	-3SP (Guardian possesses shaman)
Only speak with spirits	-1SP (this is not much of a limit, since shakt are everywhere)
<b>Total</b>	<b>10SP</b>

## Blessing of the Earth Mother

This ritual is cast upon those who are called upon to do heroic deeds for the Clan. The shaman calls upon the spirits needed for the blessing, and binds them with their will to the person to be blessed. The name and history of the person to be blessed are spoken, along with the great deeds to be done, to impress upon the spirits the importance of protecting their charge from all harm. The spirit of the shaman is weakened by this ritual, and so the blessing only lasts until the quest is completed, or the hero or the shaman dies. Each part of a person's shakt can be so blessed, so that they are stronger, faster, keener of vision, or sturdier of heart or limb, and each blessing is a separate ritual.

**Note** - Like poetry, the maximum duration this power can be made to last is approximately one week. Some shaman can prepare the spell, so that it lasts a week from when it is activated, allowing a character to travel far and then call upon the blessing when needed.

### Add

No range	2SP (you must touch recipient)
Others	5SP (power may bless anyone)
Invisible effects	2SP (while the casting has effects, the power is not seen)
Drain	2SP (POW Aptitude vs. Difficulty of POW used to avoid POW loss)
Conscious	5SP (using the power is deliberate)
Inherent	5SP (shaman needs no talismans to work the magic)
Must have a POW of $\geq 3$	-1SP (you must have moderate power of personal shakt)
Requires an hour to use	-7SP (all shamanic rituals are time-consuming)
Requires conc. each use	-2SP (each attempt must be separate)
Vocalization, gestures	-2SP (you must speak and gesture of the worthiness of recipient)
Difficulty 6 skill roll	-1SP (uses Spirit Knowledge skill)
Requires POW vs. POW+4	-3SP (must bind shakt to target)
Backfires	-3SP (shaman or recipient takes opposite effect if failed)
Power can be prepared	+5SP (shaman may let target call upon power when needed)
Time Multiple, same limits	+8SP (the shaman can make the duration as long as a week)
<b>Total</b>	<b>16SP</b>

## Journey to the Endless Dream

This ritual is cast upon the remains of the dead (or the largest remaining piece), to sever the ties the spirit has to its former home, that the spirit of the dead one may go and rejoin the Earth Mother in Her endless Dreaming. The body is then just bone and flesh, and the spirit of that person may *never again* be called forth. The shaman laments in the place of all those who held that person dear, speaks of their deeds so that all may hear and remember them, and tells the spirit that they need not watch over their mates, children and Clan, but may rest in peace, knowing that the living shall be safe and that the dead shall not be forgotten. This is a simple ritual, but if it is done wrong, the watching spirit of the dead one can become angry, and haunt the place, or possess the shaman performing the ritual.

### Block

No range	2SP (you must touch the remains)
Others	5SP (power may send anyone to rest)
Visible effects	2SP (the shakt of the deceased becomes visible)
Drain	2SP (POW Aptitude vs. Difficulty of POW used to avoid POW loss)
Conscious	5SP (using the power is deliberate)
Focus	2SP (shaman must have largest remaining piece of deceased)
Must have a POW of $\geq 3$	-1SP (you must have moderate power of personal shakt)
Requires an hour to use	-7SP (all shamanic rituals are time-consuming)
Requires conc. each use	-2SP (each attempt must be separate)
Vocalization, gestures	-2SP (you must speak and gesture of the life of the deceased)
Difficulty 6 skill roll	-1SP (uses Spirit Knowledge skill)
Requires POW vs. POW+0	-1SP (must impress shakt of the dead)
Special effect	+5SP (the permanence of the Block is total banishment of the shakt and cannot be undone)
Backfires	-3SP (spirit of the dead is made angry and tries to harm shaman by possessing an animal to attack him)
Only sends the dead to rest	-4SP (it will not Block any other type of magic)
Time Multiple, same limits	+5SP (this lets the Block be as permanent as the shakt)
<b>Total</b>	<b>10SP</b>

## Bind the Angry Spirit

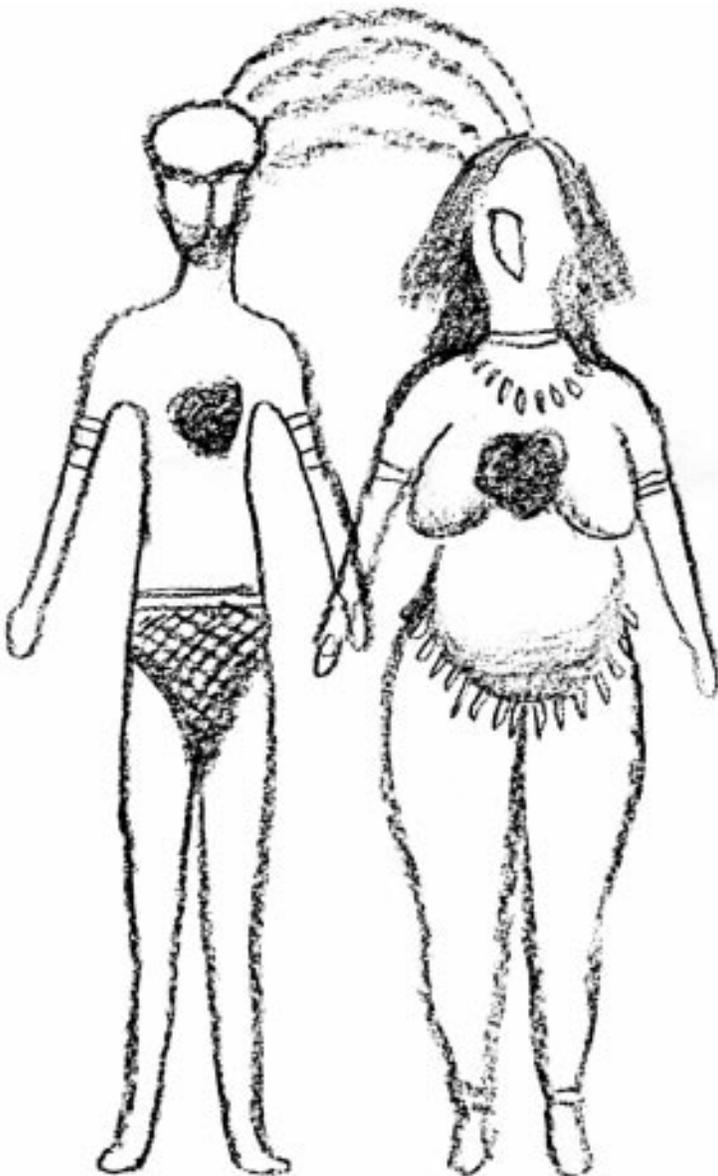
This ritual is used to remove angry or unclean spirits from one who has been possessed. The shaman must be more clever than the possessing spirit in order for the spell to work. The shaman forces the spirit from the body of the victim, and holds it while the person regains possession of the body. Once this is done, if the victim is free of taint, the angry spirit is denied entrance, and must depart to whence it came. If the shaman is not as powerful as the spirit, the spirit may choose to possess the shaman instead. If the spirit is clever, it can often escape this way, for the former victim may be bound to prevent them from doing harm, and the spirit bound in the body, but a possessed shaman could walk free. If a shaman cannot be found to bind the angry spirit, then the victim must often be killed. This banishes the angry spirit. While the body dies, the true spirit of the person can eventually find rest with the Earth Mother, rather than going through the pain of seeing its body perform unwholesome acts to taint the memory of family and friends.

### Block

No range	2SP (you must touch the person who is afflicted)
Others	5SP (power may work on anyone)
Visible effects	2SP (the nature of the shakt is seen)
Drain	2SP (POW Aptitude vs. Difficulty of POW used to avoid POW loss)
Conscious	5SP (using the power is deliberate)
Inherent	5SP (shaman needs no talismans)
Must have a POW of $\geq 3$	-1SP (you must have moderate power of personal shakt)
Requires an hour to use	-7SP (all shamanic rituals are time-consuming)
Requires conc. each use	-2SP (each attempt must be separate)
Vocalization, gestures	-2SP (you must speak and gesture to draw out angry spirit)
Difficulty 6 skill roll	-1SP (uses Spirit Knowledge skill)
Requires POW vs. POW+0	-1SP (must challenge the power of angry shakt)
Backfires	-3SP (the shaman can be possessed if they fail)
Special effect	+5SP (success means the opposing magic is broken, not just nullified for the duration of spell. This is slightly different than countering a taboo, since a possession implies constant control, rather than passive pain)
Only dislodge angry spirits	-4SP (the power cannot be used for other attack or defense)
<b>Total</b>	<b>10SP</b>

**Earth Mother's Touch**

This ritual is important, but it is not quite a spell, just a culturally important use of poetry that some are known to do. If two people are mates, and feel that this bond is permanent, they may weave a poem of binding and blessing upon each other. If successful, they each increase their POW by one so long as the other lives. If their mate dies, they lose this blessing, and permanently lose an additional point of POW. In addition, each one feels some of the pain of the other, and some of the joy, over any distance. If characters wish to do this, it should be taken very seriously. If the character is not actually in love with the mate, or it seems that one or the other is intent on using the extra POW for personal gain, then the ritual will automatically fail. Whichever of the two has ulterior motives will have all their past misdeeds and future intentions made known to all who witness the ritual by all the shakt in the area, and the conniving one will be under a taboo violation that only the Clan's mother shakt can lift.



**Poetic magic**

In addition to gifts and shamanic rituals, the world still seethes with the leftover forces of Creation and countless shakt of all kinds. By speaking loudly to the invisible world of the shakt, you can convince, cajole or fool them into doing your bidding, since this is part of the Earth Mother's Gift.

In game terms, all characters who are not Afflicted are assumed to have 10SP towards the use of *any* paranormal power they want to try. All magic of this type has the following mandatory conditions:

Non-ranged	2SP (magic can be used on self or at range of touch only)
Usable on self only	2SP (magic can be used by you only)
Visible effects	2SP (magic is <i>highly</i> visible)
Drains POW	2SP (user must use POW Aptitude vs. POW used to avoid drain)
Requires conscious control	5SP (magic must be deliberately chosen to work)
Inherent	5SP (magic requires no focus)
Vocalization required	-1SP (user must speak)
Minimum POW of $\geq 2$	-1SP (Afflicted cannot do this magic)
POW vs. POW+0 test	-1SP (if magic affects a target with POW)
Poetry skill roll	-1SP (requires use of Poetry skill at Difficulty of POW used)
Backfires	-3SP (appropriate to spell)
Uncommon weakness	-1SP (there is <i>always</i> a hidden vulnerability)
<b>Total</b>	<b>10SP</b>

This allows the character to use their Poetry skill to attempt magic of any kind with the limitations and advantages listed. The limitations listed are the minimum levels required, and if necessary they can be made more restrictive, but never less.

**Example** - Frehd the Fearless thinks a magical trap is in the empty hut he is investigating, so he murmurs a quick poem to the shakt to let him find lurking shakt (Detect power). He decides to only use his POW Aptitude of 1 to avoid drain, which gives him an effective AWR of 1, and a Difficulty of 1 on his Poetry skill, which is no problem. He can now hear magical energies with his ears, and might sense the thrumming of a lurking shakt waiting to wrap the hut around him and smother him.

Now, to work magics with other special effects or greater potential, the character needs to find power limitations to match the cost of any advantages they want. For instance, if Frehd wanted to use his Detect power for combat targeting, for instance to be able to strike the shakt with a magical weapon, then his Detect power would need "causes a special effect", i.e. allows combat targeting. This costs +5SP on a power, so Frehd must find -5SP in limitations. He chooses to have the Detect only work at POW Aptitude (-3SP), since that is where he is using it anyway, and to take 2 seconds to use the poem (-2SP), which balances things out. He really ought to add range to the power as well (+3SP) or he will only be able to hear the shakt while it is within touching distance. If all he wants to do is strike it with a weapon, this short range will suffice.

To get mighty magic requires great limitations. For instance, to get any type of Multiple, you would have to find the entire cost of the Multiple somehow. So, one might increase the casting time to an hour (-7SP), require a POW vs. POW+4 task to be successful (-2SP more than normal), require a Difficulty 10 skill roll (-2SP more than normal), have a side effect (-1SP), give it a common weakness (-2SP more than normal), and limit the power to a specific purpose (probably about -3SP more), for a total of 17SP more than the base amount, enough to put up some whopping big magic, especially if several people cast a power with the special effect "Multiple only applies to someone else's casting". This lets each participant cast a Multiple on the casting of the central person. Of course, failing any skill rolls can be catastrophic at high levels of power. If multiple people attempt to combine poems to get a greater or common effect, the Difficulty of any poetic task is increased by 1 for each person over the first.

One problem with using poetry is that the shakt are easily bored and annoyed. Each time you use a poem to cast a power, you take a *permanent* -1SP to the use of that power, forever. So, if Frehd tried to use poetry to do another Detect, he would have to find another 1SP of limitations to make it work. Perhaps he would use a longer poem, or one more pleasing to the shakt (higher Difficulty). But, each time it gets harder and harder, until the shakt will not respond anymore to you, no matter how hard you try. And remember that if you attempt a spell and fail for any reason (including not having enough limitations), it backfires, as the shakt will punish you for wasting their time.

## Backfires

Whenever a poem or any other spell backfires, the backfires are appropriate to the power used. Some ideas are below.

Power	Backfire
Absorb	Target absorbs from caster
Add	Subtract
Armor	Adds to damage done
Blast	Caster takes blast
Block	Adds to effect
Clairement	Target knows of attempt and learns info
Create	Dangerous creation
Detect	Temporary deafness, blindness
Dominate	Caster becomes weak-willed
Precognition	Dangerously bad prediction
Protect	Illusion of protection only
Shapeshift	Malformed shift, caster shifts badly
Subtract	Add
Telekinesis	Angry uncontrolled shakt
Telepathy	Possession, target knows of attempt
Teleport	Random movement

**Last note** - The shakt will do you favors, but the only permanent favors are gifts bestowed at birth or by powerful shakt. To use poetry to gain a permanent blessing upon oneself *always* backfires. If not immediately, at some later date when the shakt realizes that the person is asking far too great a service. The greatest service any shakt will willingly bear is no more than a quarter of a moon (i.e. a week).

## Aspecting

Certain inherently powerful areas provide +1 to +5 SP towards use of a power appropriate to the aspecting, and subtract -1 to -5 SP from use of a power inappropriate to the aspecting. These can be temporary aspects, like a campfire being used for a bonus to a fire-related spell. Another benefit of aspected areas in your favor is that the quantity and proximity of spirits means you don't take permanent penalties for using a poetry repeatedly in such an area. Any penalties you have already accrued still apply, but you do not take additional ones after you leave the area.

Places where the Earth Mother has suffered wounds are negatively aspected towards creation and healing, and positively aspected towards destruction and decay. The closer to the injury, the more pronounced the aspecting. Areas known to be a specific part of the Earth Mother, or where a great aspect of Creation took place are aspected towards healing and creation, and against destruction. A Clan shrine is an example of a place that is positively aspected (+3), for it is where the Earth Mother put the first People of that Clan. Other minor areas (+1) can be very small, and *general* knowledge of them is a separate Area Knowledge skill. Remember that this skill will give you *automatic* knowledge of a certain number of these areas, but only general ideas of others (two days walk west of the Finger Rocks, where a great tree straddles a small stream...).

## Magical talismans

Legends of the People speak of different kinds of magical talismans, most of which are leftover parts of Creation that still possess some facet of the Earth Mother's power. Those that fall from the sky are highly prized, and shamans often find these first, since they weave poems of finding to know when new ones have fallen, and if they have knowledge of Astronomy they may know the ways of the shakt and when they are most likely to fall.

**Sunstones** - During the days of Sunwolf, the sun shakt gave him the gift of making these. They are rocks taken from the highest peaks, which he laid hands upon for many hours, after which they glowed with an eternal light of their own. These were prized by villages and travellers, and once there were many of these, but over the generations many have been lost or broken. None have been given that gift since, so the Sunstones that remain are highly prized.

*"And there was a friend of Sunwolf named Algar, who had a Sunstone as a gift from Sunwolf. In the year of ill omens and the red sun, he and his companions were set upon by laughing wolves that live in the lands of Clan Sem. Sorely were they pressed, and many had fallen. Algar took his Sunstone, and spoke words of power. The Sun shakt came forth from Algar's hand, and blinded the wolves, and they burned and smoked from the Sun shakt's fury. And then the Sun departed, leaving only darkness, for all who had seen that light were blinded for a time. Algar was blinded for a space of days, and his hand remained scarred for the rest of his years, for the Sunstone had burned it like fire, and itself had cracked and broken from the heat."*

**Black tears** - These are oblong lumps of a black, glassy material that sometimes fall from the sky. It is known that they are powerful talismans for scrying. Each one contains 10SP worth of magical energy, which can only be used towards a spell that gains visual information of some type, gained by looking into the glass while casting the spell. Each use subtracts 1SP from the tear, but not the user's ability to cast that spell, until its power is lost and it crumbles to dust. What is not known, is that these black tears are the tears of the Moon shakt, which she sheds that she may gain knowledge of the world. All that is seen through a black tear is also seen by the Moon shakt.

*"There was a shaman of Clan Ugrik, near the river that flows from the great hills to the east, who had by great fortune several of the black tears that fall from the sky. He asked many questions, and saw many answers, and was counted wise among his people. One day, he asked to see the shakt from which these gifts came. No one knows what his vision was, save that it was terrible, for his eyes were blinded by it, and his voice was taken from him. He lived for the space of a season, and was no more a shaman, for his voice was silenced, and when he wept, his tears were always black..."*

**Pointed rocks** - These are bluntly conical rocks, about the size of a fist. They are known also to fall from the sky, and are believed to be leftover stuff from the Earth Mother's creation, returning to her. If broken when a spell is cast, they can provide a single Multiple of any type, for as long as that spell is maintained. These rocks are very rare, and any shaman would count themselves lucky to have one, for it is a status symbol showing they can, at need, cast mightier magics than anyone else.

*"In the year of Terror, when madness fell upon the People, and Clan fought Clan, for which the Elders made the Moot, that it not happen again, in that year Clan Ugrik fought a great battle against Clan Far Traveller. Many did not return, for there was great magic worked upon that field. Many of the pointed stones of power were broken. There was fire and water and Things that none know of today, for those that survived would never speak of what they saw, save to make that place taboo to all the People, lest they wake things best left sleeping."*

**Motherstones** - These are rippled ovoids of a strange black rock, very rare. Few know their true purpose, but all who encounter one cannot help but notice their weight and feel. They are the flakes scratched from the Earth Mother when the Moon shakt fought against her exile at the end of the Dreamtime. With skill and much time, a motherstone can be hammered into a fearsome knife or spearhead which shatters stone, and which goes through hide better than any stone point. There are perhaps two of these weapons among all the Clans, and the tales say that they have been with those Clans for generations.

*"Clan Far Traveller had a spear made from the Motherstone many years ago, and the Clan champion kept it in his village with the other things his valor had gained him. An evil sending flew into his village one day, sent from one who remains unknown to this day. Its hide was as rock, and the arrows and spears of the village were as puffs of air to it. Zsar the champion was able to wound it with his magic spear, but the thing wrested the spear from him with its beak, and flew away, but its wounds had weakened it, and it and the spear fell into the swamps to the south, in the direction of Clan Sem. No magics ever found the beast or the spear, and though Zsar was greatly saddened by its loss, he remained Clan champion for many years, and was the teacher of champions for many years after that."*



## DAILY LIFE

### The Life of the People

The People are a Tribe, which is split into three Clans, each of which borders the others. As far as they know, they are the chosen children of the Earth Mother, and if there are other Clans or Tribes, they are unknown. Each Clan has many villages, each one a loosely knit community that is somewhere below the loading capacity of the surrounding terrain, usually at least two day's walk from the nearest other village. The territory of each Clan is several week's walk across, and villages on one side barely speak the same language as those on the other, grading gradually into the language of the neighboring Clan. Within a village, there are village elders and possibly a shaman, but most individual actions are their own responsibility. Informal hunting parties are often arranged, usually on a seasonal basis to catch migrating game animals. It is taboo to have a mate from the same village, so bloodlines are kept mixed, although the People do not see it that way. It is just a taboo, so that is the way things are done.

### Birth

A birth is a joyful event in good times, and a sad event in bad times. In good times, a birth brings new life to the village, and the promise the Clan and the People will live on. In bad times, the promise is not there, for too often the newborn must be abandoned because of a lack of food. The Earth Mother looks after all mothers, and birth, while painful, rarely has complications unless the shakt of the mother or child is tainted somehow.

The shakt of a newborn is fragile and easily shaped, and many parents compose poems of blessing and destiny for their child, and bind the magic to its tiny shakt before it is fully formed. This is where many of a character's gifts may come from. This is a risky business, and failure can curse both the parents and the child. While the shaman may remove the taint from the parents, the child will be tainted for life. In exceptionally bad cases, the ill will of a shakt will be visited upon an entire village. Most who compose poems for this purpose take exceptional care, and only ask moderate blessings of the shakt.

### Daily life

For the average person, a day consists of foraging, returning home, working on chores, trades or discussion, going to sleep, rising and doing it again. In average years, half a day's work is sufficient to acquire food, and slowly acquire enough surplus to get you through bad times, and the rest of the day can be spent on other activities as desired. This can include child rearing, crafts, practicing skills or engaging in discussions around the central village campfire. Imagine walking down to the river to find good reeds for a basket, using rocks to pound out the stiffness of a rough-tanned hide while talking with a friend who is flint-knapping to make a spear point, or making a small bow to give to your mate's child to teach him how to be a hunter, while the littlest children chase and play with Dog, who puts up with it because they are the young of his pack.

As long as the hunting is good, the furs are warm and the shakt are happy, life goes on in this way without much thought. If game or food becomes too scarce, the village packs their belongings on the Pohnee and travel packs, walks a few days to a week to where the hunting or foraging is better, and settles down again. Since the average village only stays in place for a few years before moving on, no one can never know where *everything* is, and you must usually ask directions when leaving the area of the villages you know.

### Family

Most adult characters will have relatives within the village or other nearby villages. One benefit of relatives elsewhere is that if you identify yourself as such and your relatives accept you, you can avoid the formality of challenges. Characters are expected to help out parents, or brothers or sisters and their children to some extent. It is a cruel child that denies shelter and food to their own kin, but it is irresponsible of kin to ask for things that they should be able to provide themselves. The awkwardness of unwanted relatives living with you does happen in **Dreamtime**, and there are various subtle and not-so-subtle means of dealing with it. Characters are left to figure these out on their own while trying to avoid social stigma. The GM should not burden characters this way unless there is a good reason for it. A Level 1 Enemy could easily be obnoxious relations who sponge off the character's livelihood, or a Contact as a relative could ask for favors on occasion ("Stoneheart and his mate lost their hut when the wind shakt tore it apart, and they need a place to stay. Brother, can you shelter them until I return from a hunt with enough hide to let them rebuild, which I hope shall be very soon, and you know this is truth...")

## Death

Death is a part of life, and comes in many ways. The body is seen as a home for the person's shakt, and like a knife or basket, eventually it wears out, and the shakt must return to the Earth Mother. This is perhaps seen as the best death, to have lived a full life, gained wisdom and respect, and to return that fullness of life to She who gave it to you.

The different Clans honor their dead in different ways. Clan Far Traveller returns the body to the Earth Mother, and the dead one is often arrayed with the tools and possessions they held dear. The place in which this is done is one where it is felt the shakt was most at home. A hunter might be near a good hunting ground. A shaman might be near a well-aspected place, if one is known. Anyone might express a desire to be close to their mate, even if the body no longer holds the shakt of a person. The ritual of separating the shakt from the ties to the body is sometimes performed, but this is usually a decision of any mate, and based on the availability of a shaman.

Clan Ugrik respects their dead by returning the body to the other shakt of the world. It is left in a place the beasts know of, and returned to the Earth Mother through her other children. The ritual of separating the shakt from the body is always performed, if at all possible. If not, the skull is preserved so that the ritual may be performed upon it at a later time.

Clan Sem respects their dead by insuring they return to the Earth Mother as soon as possible. A great fire is made upon which the body is burned. The greater the person, the greater the fire that is built, and truly great Clan members are consumed upon the dry rocks by fire shakt called for the occasion. When the ashes have cooled, they are cast into the air, cast upon the earth, and cast upon the water, that the spirit be rejoined with the Earth Mother, where it properly belongs. For this reason, they do not need the ritual of separating the shakt from the body, and few Clan Sem shamans know this ritual.

In all the Clans, to dishonor the Clan is to invite the pain of not being properly respected upon your death, and having measures taken to insure your shakt does not see its final rest for as long as possible. Those who have secretly done terrible things may also try to arrange things so that they can postpone their final reckoning with the Earth Mother as long as possible.

## Other

For a simple people in a primitive world, life can still have an amazing wealth of detail and mystery. Basic things can have a lot of importance, and the unknown can totally shape the way you think and act.

## The Women's Secret

The laws of cause and effect are not entirely known in **Dreamtime**. If you throw a rock up into the air, it *usually* comes down again. If you scatter seeds on the ground, *sometimes* they come up again. What the women of the Tribe know, and the men do not, is that it takes a man to help a woman have a child. As is, while men are stronger and faster, women are the ones who bring life to the Clan, and this gives them a permanent status in Clan affairs that they might otherwise lack. While the Clan or village leader may be a man, since men are expected to fight, the elder women and female shamans are the advisers and guides to these leaders, and their word is held in high accord.

While mating can be fun, and is often with an exclusive partner, it is not seen by men as leading to pregnancy. To become with child is just something that happens to women sometimes, when the Earth Mother blesses them. The male takes a protective interest in the child because the welfare of his mate is involved. This is another of those things that "just is". It would take more than casual disclosure of the secret to make it believed, and no woman would do so, for it would raise the hands of all women against her for the rest of her life. And to be honest, as long as the men get theirs, they don't really care. All of the gendered spirits know the truth of things, as do a few of the others, but they have no reason to say one way or the other. The Storm shakt knows, and has the power to make it believed if he so chooses. When and how he does reveal this is certain to be to his advantage, and not just on a whim.

As far as female characters go, contraception is a matter of abstinence. There are not any herbs known for this purpose, though poetic magic can always work the desired effect. This is not done lightly, as to spurn a child is to spurn the gift of the Earth Mother to all women. While the Earth Mother sleeps soundly and dreams, she may still notice what her child has done, and all shakt return to her eventually. In times of privation and need, the women elders may sanction this, and the woman avoids a taboo the men do not know of. Also in time of need, a child may be left to die of exposure so that others will have the food to live, but these things are not spoken of often.

In campaign terms, players can assume that any female character who has a mate will eventually have children, unless they have a Physical Lim of sterility (4AP or SP). And if their mating is known to the womenfolk and the character does not get pregnant eventually, they will get 2 Levels of negative Fame, since the Earth Mother has obviously turned her face from the character, and withheld her blessings. Assume casual encounters have a 1 in 10 chance of causing pregnancy (which may be avoided with 1ASP if it happens, or made to happen with 1ASP if it doesn't).

Since a **Dreamtime** campaign is designed to cover the lifetime of a character, with long pauses at certain points, it is possible that a female (or male) character could settle down, start to have a family, and 5 or 10 years later be yanked out of a secure life by some threat to People, Clan and loved ones. If this is a village or Clan decision that asks sacrifice of a character, then of course it is the village or Clan responsibility to take care of and protect the children until the character returns.

**Side note** - A side effect of the women's secret is that selective breeding of animals like Dog is an unknown concept, and a child with red hair born to dark haired parents is not viewed with any suspicion by the male mate...

### Taboo

A taboo is a serious thing in **Dreamtime**. There are certain natural laws of cause and effect that are not violated casually. For instance, pre-meditated murder is virtually unknown. The body of the victim is a naturally aspected site for asking the dead person's spirit who the killer was, and if this does not suffice, the Clan shakt is most certainly interested in the untimely death of one of her children. Interclan fights, challenges and natural causes are part of the natural order, however, and accepted as a part of life.

In addition, there are other taboos which are not lightly violated. There are certain animals which the Clan shakt finds unclean and which must never be eaten, as well as the flesh of any person, especially a member of the same Clan. Certain places are also taboo, or doing certain things in certain places. No one knows exactly why these things are taboo in many cases, just that they are. Often, sickness is associated with a taboo, but one that the sick person does not know they have violated. The shaman must find the proper atonement, and the victim has atoned, the taboo can be properly lifted. A few taboo are just groundless superstition, but many are true, little pockets of chaotic energy left over from Creation, where doing certain things causes serious repercussions.

A person who violates a taboo usually feels the backlash by the next sunrise or sunset, in the form of an appropriate curse. This is represented by a 1 point Subtract on an attribute, with a permanent duration. Since this is a spiritual backlash for being stupid or evil, then the exact attribute affected should be related somehow to the type of taboo violation.

*"...and he who walks through the forbidden woods shall be made weak, that they walk there no more..."*

*"...for Windstrider was blinded by pride, and saw not the nature of the food he ate, and the evil spirits that dwelt within it churned his bowels and stole his health..."*

A curse of any kind can be negated by an opposing Subtract of permanent duration (the two cancel each other out and vanish). However, a taboo is more than just a game mechanic, it is a cause and effect part of everyday life. If the taboo is because of lingering spiritual forces best left undisturbed, then the curse can be removed normally. But if the curse is brought about by breaking a taboo that is an affront to the Earth Mother or the Clan shakt, then anyone who removes that curse instead has it transferred to themselves instead. Such a curse can only be removed without risk if the cursed person undertakes a task to purify their spirit. Once this is completed, the curse can be safely removed.

Understandably, any shaman asked to remove a curse will first undertake a lot of research to identify the type of curse that is being dealt with.

### Challenges

Peace is largely maintained between the Clans. Organized warfare is not actually taboo, but there are enough natural resources that it is unnecessary, and the deliberate killing of another just to walk upon a different part of the Earth Mother is considered a Bad Thing, done only in necessity.

Upon entering the territory of another Clan's village, it is customary for a group to be challenged. Someone in that village will offer challenge to the leader of the visitors, usually some form of Brawling (unarmed, completely tool-less). This challenge lasts until one party gives up or no longer able to continue. How real or symbolic this combat is depends on how the Clans feel about each other at the time. This satisfies the need to symbolically protect the territory of the Clan, without resorting to bloodshed. If the village champion wins, the guests are obliged to provide some form of payment for hospitality, or may simply sleep within any defensive hedge the village might have. If the visitors win, the village is obliged to provide a night's food and shelter. This provides for interesting politics between the village champion (who does the fighting), and the village elder (who gets the payment for hospitality).

## Clan Moots

Once each year, on the longest day of the year, all the Clans in the region meet at the Meeting Ground. This is an island on a river flowing through the region, and it is agreed that it belongs to no Clan. All Challenges are suspended for anyone who is travelling to the Moot, but only shelter is obliged to be provided. With Clans having physical borders and human emotions being what they will, conflicts will arise between Clans. Each village may send one person to represent them at the Moot, and each Clan chooses one person to represent them in disputes. It is considered a great honor to be chosen as Clan or village representative, and a lot of politics goes on behind the scenes for the choosing. If a village has a shaman, the shaman is usually the representative, and the wisest shaman is hopefully the one chosen to be the Clan representative. This small group of people hears all disputes between people of different Clans, and all agree to abide by the decision of the Moot, whether they like it or not.

In addition, there are certain "disputed territories" between Clans, such as river islands, a particularly nice valley for hunting, etc. Each Clan has a Clan champion, which is chosen during the two weeks of the Moot. Each Clan's champion fights the champion of whichever Clan the territorial dispute is with. The winner's Clan holds that land until the following Moot. This particular ceremonial combat is also a prestige event, and one which requires a certain amount of wit and guile. Since the preliminary fights are over only two days before the main challenges, a person can fight their way up to Clan champion position and end up being too badly beat up to do well against other Clans. While a challenger always has the option of using fists and feet, most challengers use holds and pins, to force an opponent to give up because they are immobilized. However, if another Clan's challenger specialized in punches and kicks, you might end up at a disadvantage.

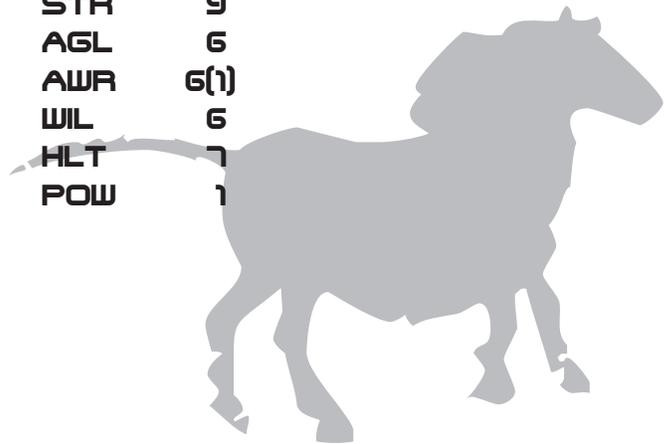
Usually, the magically toughest and physically strongest bruisers are the Clan champions, and the fights have been known to take hours, with long pauses to recover stamina, wary circling and muscle-bulging stalemates. A lot of side bets take place in these fights, and attempts to rig the fights are not unknown. However, such bad sport is usually uncovered by shamans, and the offender beaten to a bloody pulp.

## The Pohnee

Pohnee are small beasts of burden that the Earth Mother gave your people at the end of the Creation. Their shakt would rather they die than allow themselves to be ridden, but if captured young, can be trained to carry burdens. Large scale fencing is impractical, so domestic Pohnee are hobbled to prevent them from running away. This and the sure supply of food they get from the village keeps most close by when needed. Dog can be trained to protect the Pohnee from Wolf, but Dog hasn't learned yet how to herd them for the People. Pohnee are essential to carry heavy burdens when a village moves, and they provide meat and hides without hunting if you do not use too many of them. The killing of Pohnee must therefore be sanctioned by the village elders, and the Pohnee divided according to need (which is often influenced by status).

### POHNEE

<b>STR</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>AGL</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>AWR</b>	<b>6(1)</b>
<b>WIL</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>HLT</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>POW</b>	<b>1</b>



### Description

Compact muscular body and short legs, usually in a solid shade of brown or grey. Pohnee run wild in many areas, and travel in small groups for protection from Wolf.

<b>Mass:</b>	230kg
<b>Variation:</b>	±40kg
<b>Length:</b>	2.5m
<b>Size modifier:</b>	-1

<b>Good reaction roll:</b>	Ignore you
<b>Neutral reaction roll:</b>	Move away warily
<b>Bad reaction roll:</b>	Run away

<b>Climate:</b>	Temperate
<b>Terrain:</b>	Plains

<b>Special abilities:</b>	Toughness x.7 Run at up to 14m/sec
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<b>Skills:</b>	Bite (DV1 combination), skill 2 Kick (DV3 combination), skill 2
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**The Dog**

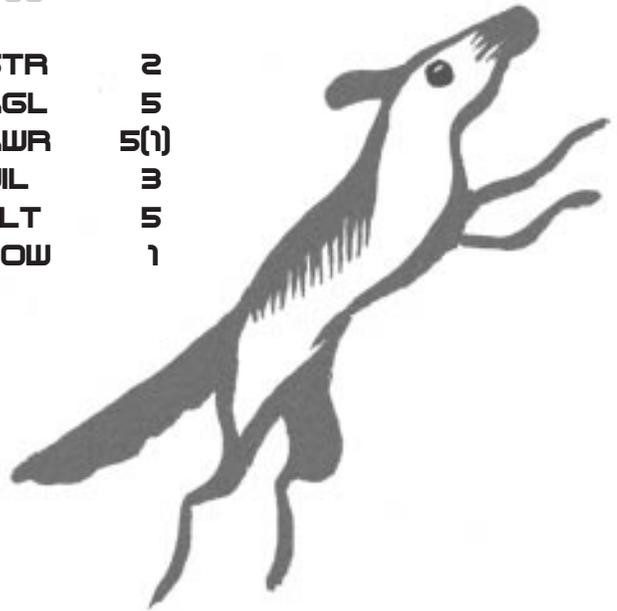
When the Moon shakt fought with the Earth Mother during the Dreamtime, the Moon did not fight alone. Some of the lesser shakt fought on her side, just as many shakt fought on the side of the Earth Mother. The greater Wolf shakt fought with the Moon, while a lesser shakt fought with the Earth Mother. When the Earth Mother won, she made it so the Wolf shakt would always be displaced by the People, and raised the lesser Wolf shakt to be the companion of the People, for the Wolves would bear them eternal enmity. This is why the dogs stay with the People and protect them, and why they hate the wolves. And the wolves, lonely for their Moon shakt, howl to her in the night, and the Wolf shakt plots mischief against the People and the animals we use.

There is only one kind of dog, the Dog. Its shakt is a lesser one, and easily distracted, but usually an ally of the People. Her children will treat the people as part of their pack, and if raised well, will protect the People and their animals from harm. To teach Dog to do a specific thing is unknown, and the best that can be expected is that it will sense its pack-mates mood and act accordingly. Dog is not killed and eaten except in the worst of times, for Dog shakt is a friend of the People. It is not forbidden to kill the young Dog when there are too many, for Dog is greatly blessed by the Earth Mother and the People know Dog shakt is not smart enough understand the limits of what She can provide.



**Dog**

<b>STR</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>AGL</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>AWR</b>	<b>5(1)</b>
<b>WIL</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>HLT</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>POW</b>	<b>1</b>



**Description**

Dog, with thick fur in shades of black, brown and gray.

<b>Mass:</b>	20kg
<b>Variation:</b>	±5kg
<b>Length:</b>	1.0m
<b>Size modifier:</b>	+0

<b>Good reaction roll:</b>	Friendly approach
<b>Neutral reaction roll:</b>	Watch and do nothing
<b>Bad reaction roll:</b>	Threaten to attack or attack

<b>Climate:</b>	Anywhere the People are
<b>Terrain:</b>	Anywhere the People are

<b>Special abilities:</b>	Frailness x2.0 Run at up to 11m/sec Enhanced sense of smell
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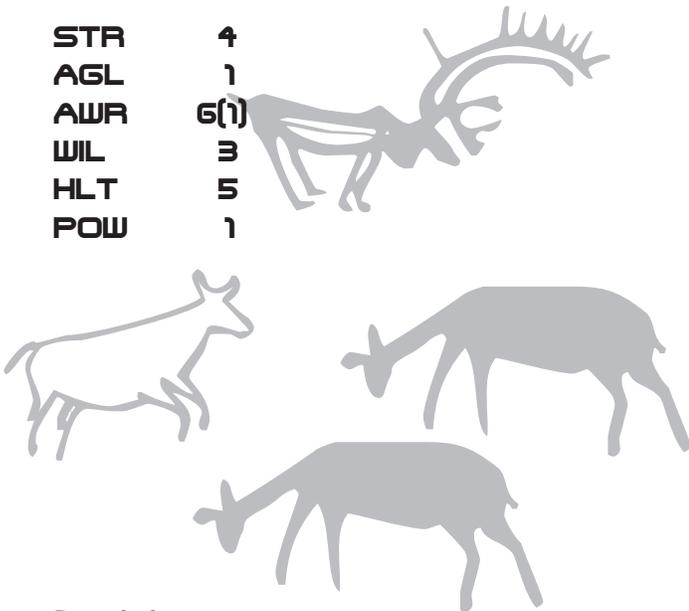
<b>Skills:</b>	Bite (DV1 lethal), skill 3
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## The Deer

The Deer are the beasts the People love the most, for they give us warm furs, strong horns, good meat and sinews for our bows and lashings. They are shy, for Deer shakt does not want us to take her children for granted. She smells us sneaking upon them, or sees us with her wary eyes, and her children flash their tails at us and run away. The clever hunter can sneak upon them though, or a group can scare them into the spears and bows of others. We take of Deer shakt only what we need, so that she does not drive her children away from us.

### DEER

**STR** 4  
**AGL** 1  
**AWR** 6(1)  
**WIL** 3  
**HLT** 5  
**POW** 1



#### Description

Brown to reddish-brown medium herbivore, males being somewhat larger and seasonally equipped with antlers.

**Mass:** 75kg  
**Variation:** ±15kg  
**Length:** 1.6m  
**Size modifier:** +0

**Good reaction roll:** Ignore you  
**Neutral reaction roll:** Watch warily, fleeing if you approach  
**Bad reaction roll:** Run away

**Climate:** Any  
**Terrain:** Plains, Forests, Mountains

**Special abilities:** Toughness x1.0  
 Run at up to 15m/sec

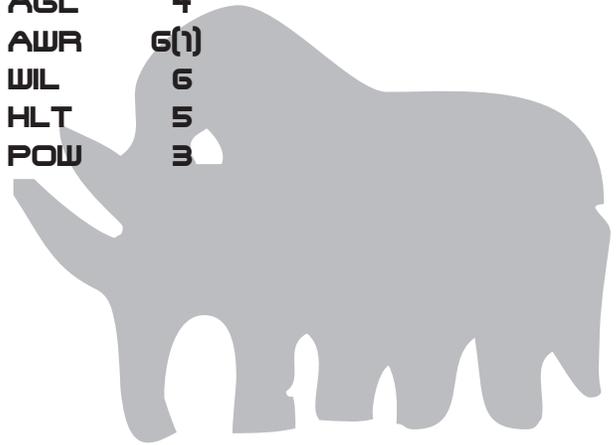
**Skills:** Gore (DV1), skill 4  
 Stealth, skill 5

## The Tusks

These are the greatest of the true children of the Earth Mother, standing as tall as one person upon another, and with a great hairy hide large enough to make a hut by itself. The Tusks are seldom seen anymore, for the People offend the Tusk shakt. Some hunted with plants of ill shakt, and others drove many tusk off cliffs, because they lacked the skill or courage to take one with weapons. Many tusk bloated in the heat of Sun shakt, their horns and hide and meat feeding only the eaters of the dead. Tusk shakt was wroth with the People, and drove her children from our lands. If they return, we take only one, so that Tusk shakt sees we pay her the proper respect.

### TUSH

**STR** 24  
**AGL** 4  
**AWR** 6(1)  
**WIL** 6  
**HLT** 5  
**POW** 3



#### Description

Very large quadruped with coarse long brown hair, with prehensile trunk and mighty curled horns upon its jaw.

**Mass:** 5,000kg  
**Variation:** ±1,000kg  
**Length:** 6m  
**Size modifier:** -3

**Good reaction roll:** Ignore you  
**Neutral reaction roll:** Move away from you  
**Bad reaction roll:** Defend its herd mates

**Climate:** Temperate or equatorial  
**Terrain:** Plains

**Special abilities:** Toughness x.2  
 Run at up to 13m/sec

**Skills:** Grab, skill 4  
 Tusk (males only)(DV6 comb.), skill 4  
 Trample (DV12 comb.), skill 2

## The Elder Beasts

When the Earth Mother made her Dream real, that she might dream of it again, Her first works were not what She truly wanted. While they walked or flew or flopped upon the ground, they were not Her Dream, so She took them back unto Herself and started over. A very few of their shakt, seeing their time at an end, hid in far places where the Earth Mother did not see them, and came back out when She fell asleep. The elder beasts are terrible to behold, and eat not only their own kind, but any who enter their places. For this reason, their valleys and woods are taboo, lest you be eaten, or entice them to leave their hidden places and come to the places of the People.

The greatest of the elder beasts is the Thrasher, that stands above the greatest tusk, whose teeth tear one in half, and whose tail crushes bones like men snap twigs. Thrasher runs like the Pohnee, and the ground shakes beneath his feet. If you fight him, you will be forever lost, for there will be no bones left for the calling of your spirit.

### THRASHER

**STR** 22  
**AGL** 5  
**AWR** 5(0)  
**WIL** 9  
**HLT** 7  
**POW** 3



#### Description

Large bipedal creature with small foreclaws and a tail that represents about half its body length. Powerful jaws, forward-facing eyes, lousy disposition.

**Mass:** 10,000kg  
**Variation:** ±2,000kg  
**Length:** 10m  
**Size modifier:** -3

**Good reaction roll:** Ignore you  
**Neutral reaction roll:** Watch but not attack  
**Bad reaction roll:** Attack you

**Climate:** Average to wet equatorial  
**Terrain:** Plains

**Special abilities:** Toughness x.2  
 Inherent AV of 2/2 on body  
 Inherent AV of 3/3 on head  
 Run at up to 15m/sec

**Skills:** Bite (DV6 lethal), skill 4  
 Tail (DV5 comb.), skill 2

The Lesser Thrasher is perhaps as strong as a warrior, with claws that rend and teeth that tear. The shakt of the Lesser Thrasher speaks to the Wolf shakt, and the lesser thrashers hunt together, with the cunning of wolves. They are more to be feared than the Thrasher, for they are small and fast, and can see things the Great Thrasher cannot.

### LESSER THRASHER

**STR** 6  
**AGL** 6  
**AWR** 5(1)  
**WIL** 7  
**HLT** 5  
**POW** 1



#### Description

Medium bipedal creature with powerful foreclaws and a tail that represents about half its body length. Powerful jaws, forward-facing eyes, a wary but aggressive disposition.

**Mass:** 150kg  
**Variation:** ±30kg  
**Length:** 2.5m  
**Size modifier:** -1

**Good reaction roll:** Ignore you  
**Neutral reaction roll:** Watch but not attack  
**Bad reaction roll:** Attack you

**Climate:** Average to wet equatorial  
**Terrain:** Plains or forest

**Special abilities:** Toughness x1.0  
 Inherent AV of 1/0 on body  
 Inherent AV of 1/1 on head  
 Run at up to 15m/sec

**Skills:** Bite (DV3 lethal), skill 4  
 Claw (DV3 lethal), skill 4

The feeblest of these is the Great Spined Bull, which is often eaten by the Thrasher. It does not eat the People, but only the things that grow from the ground. It is still a great beast, and can be aroused to wrath by spears and arrows. While it is eaten by the Thrasher, not all Thrashers survive the fight, and they are overtaken by the great wounds left by the spines of the Bull.

There are more of the Elder Beasts, but they are not proper creatures, and if you stay out of the taboo places, you have no reason to know of them.

## Chaos Things

There also also *other* things, things that gnaw at the Earth Mother, for they are what should have been unmade. When She made the Greater Shakt, some were not of her Dream, but of a past nightmare. These She banished Elsewhere, but some clung to her by a tooth or claw, and where that tooth or claw touched Her, unwholesome things spread like a festering wound. Earth Mother is great, and the wounds are small on Her, but they are large to the People who live upon Her. These things are not proper, and have their own shakt which the People do not understand and dare not speak of. It is good that these things cannot stray far from the area from which they come, but in bad years the places grow larger, and the beasts stray farther into our lands. Since we are of the Earth Mother, and someday we will rejoin Her, we must fight these things and drive them back, challenging their shakt and unmaking those of the People seduced by the promises of these ones from Elsewhere. The lands in which the Chaos Beasts live are the Bad Places. They are taboo, and none may go there without the blessing of the Clan elders. Speak not of these things under the open sky, lest things from the Bad Place hear you.



## The Underpeople

When the Earth Mother first thought of the People, She was not satisfied with Her first creation, and this She set aside for later. By the time She made us, She had forgotten about these first people, and they were not unmade like many of the creations we see buried in Her rocks from time to time.

They are not People, for they have not the Earth Mother's gift, but they can speak some of our words and play with our things as though they understand them. They can be dangerous if there are many of them, but they fear us, for they know we have the Earth Mother's blessing and they do not.

The Underpeople are somewhere between beasts and People. They have a small vocabulary which can be used in simple sentences. They can fashion and use crude tools, but that is about it. They are no match for any Clan, and have been pushed out of prime lands into less hospitable territory. In a few generations they will be all but extinct, and in a few more they will be only a memory. For now, most Clans have them as peaceful neighbors who only occasionally have to be killed for killing animals on Clan land. The Underpeople's only real skill is at woodcraft, and they can often be bribed to give guidance through strange forests, provided you can find them and communicate what you want. The Underpeople can work no magic, and are born with a 1 point Block vs. *all* magics. They are basically too simple to understand taboos, so this is a good thing. Since most Clans will not live in taboo places, Underpeople there have a bad reputation, and are either considered tools of evil spirits, or so fierce and skilled in magic that they can live in taboo areas without harm, neither of which is actually true.

## UNDERPEOPLE

<b>STR</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>AGL</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>AWR</b>	<b>4(2)</b>
<b>WIL</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>HLT</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>POW</b>	<b>1</b>



### Description

Medium bipedal creature that looks like a cross between a beast and the People.

<b>Mass:</b>	50kg
<b>Variation:</b>	±10kg
<b>Length:</b>	1.5m
<b>Size modifier:</b>	+0

<b>Good reaction roll:</b>	Approach you
<b>Neutral reaction roll:</b>	Watch warily
<b>Bad reaction roll:</b>	Run screeching and climb a tree

<b>Climate:</b>	Average to wet equatorial
<b>Terrain:</b>	Forest or nearby plains

<b>Special abilities:</b>	Frailness x1.5 Run at up to 10m/sec
<b>Skills:</b>	Bite (DV1), skill 3 Tool use, skill 2

**The Spirit World**

The world is full of unseen forces, usually called shakt, a term which is both singular and plural. Each shakt has a name and purpose, which the People can often shape to their advantage.

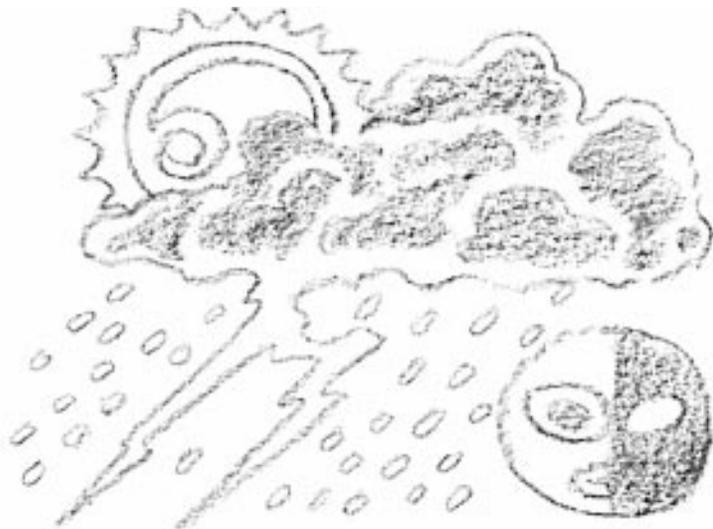
**Earth Mother**

She is the all-encompassing force which created the universe. Her body is the world, from which all living things spring. She is everything, and Her attributes are reflected in the shape of the world to those who have eyes to see. She sleeps now, somewhere in a remote region of the spirit world. She can be roused from Her slumber by great magics to speak to Her children, but all Her children, even the greater shakt, hesitate to do so. This is because She Who Made the World does not like to be roused without good reason, and if Her Creation gives Her too many problems, She might just unmake the whole mess and start over again.

**The Greater Shakt**

When the Earth Mother saw the greatness of Her Dreaming, She saw that it would require constant maintenance to stay in harmony. To this end She created the Greater Shakt, each with their own mandate and place to fill. Some of these spirits did not work out, and were banished from this existence to "Elsewhere", and others were determined to be superfluous but possibly useful, so they were exiled to places far from Her work. A few of the greater shakt fell into peril after She fell asleep again, and are either asleep or unconscious, but still powerful and influence the world in subtle ways.

In game terms, the greater shakt have an effective POW of approximately 100, an innate and perfect use of all magic associated with their nature, including Area, Power, Target and Time Multiples, and an ability to manifest in human form. Each of them also has weaknesses associated with their nature, weaknesses which they might not even be aware of.



**The Storm shakt**

He is the most powerful of the Earth Mother's spirits. The Sun shakt hides behind the world each night, but the storms are with us always, and the Sun shakt is never brave enough to actually descend below the clouds. When the Earth Mother separated the wholesome creatures into male and female, she temporarily imbued the Storm shakt with the "primordial maleness", to help her in her work of creation. When she retired to her cosmic bed after creation was finished, she took back what she had given the Storm shakt, but not the memory of it. The Greater Shakt, being genderless, knew neither the male or female emotions or desires, went about their appointed duties and cared not for the wants or needs of the other aspects of the Earth Mother's creation. The Storm shakt however, had known desire and ambition for a short time, and the memory lingered. After the Earth Mother went back to sleep, he stole the "primordial maleness" from beside her sleeping mat, and returned to the world. These male attributes are why he is a capricious and ambitious shakt. While the sun shakt follows his appointed path, the moon rises and sets, and the rivers flow to the sea, the storms arise where they will, the blessings of rain given or withheld as he sees fit. He looks upon Creation, and sees himself as the most powerful force in it. As long as the Earth Mother sleeps, he sees no reason why he should not manage all things in Her absence. Her creation is resistant to change, however, so his plans are only now coming to fruition. In addition, the Earth Mother was a little more clever than he, and put in some safeguards to prevent tampering. Powerful though he is, he cannot bypass these spiritual traps himself, and requires lesser creations to slip in unnoticed and open the gates from within.

**The Moon shakt**

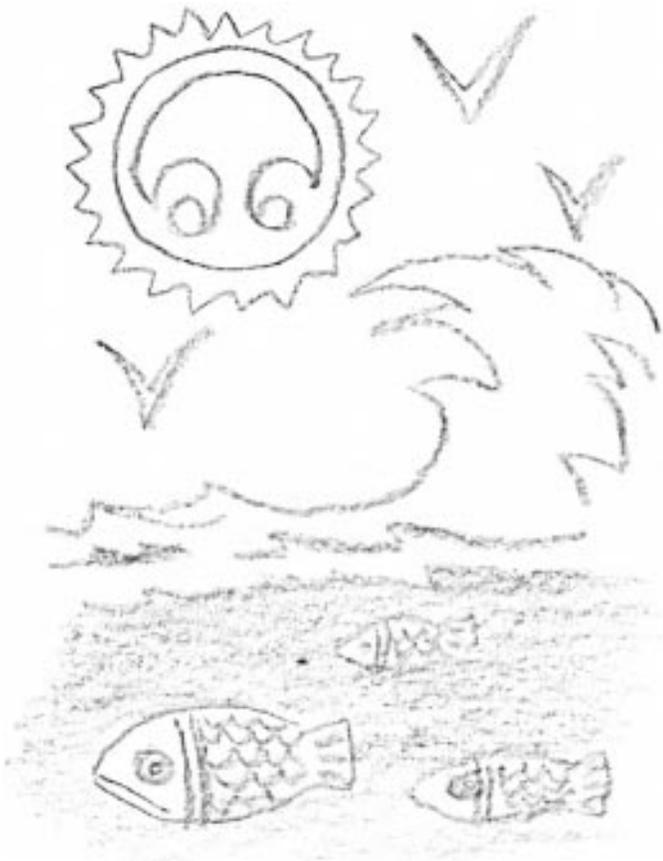
She is the only other Greater Spirit to have gender. The Earth Mother originally wanted to have a portion of Her awareness always watching over Her Creation, and created the Moon shakt from Her own essence to be this watcher. Eventually, She decided that this was not a good idea. She could not banish part of herself to "elsewhere", so She exiled the Moon shakt far from the other parts of Creation. The Moon shakt was most unhappy with this, but has remained bound to her place in the sky, her countenance brightening and darkening with her moods. She is almost alone, for few other shakt are so high in the sky, and few of the People have been elevated into the points of light that shine down upon their children. She is a pale and unblemished disk, her spiritual features hidden from mortal eyes. She is a powerful shakt, and despite the distance of her exile, she still calls to the Sea shakt for help, but it cannot reach her, and sometimes challenges the Sun shakt to battle, which she always loses. As the most powerful female shakt, the Moon also calls to all women, and they feel the pain of her exile, and the wounds she suffered in her struggle to escape exile.

### The Sun shakt

The Sun is the second most powerful of the shakt that affect the world on a daily basis, and probably the smartest. While the Storm shakt is here and there, doing many things all at once, the Sun shakt moves far above the clouds and looks down on all things. The Sun sees all things that move in the daylight, and the Sun thinks long and hard upon what it sees. The Sun lacks the male attributes and passion, but is capable of understanding their benefits. He has lived through the eyes of men in past generations, and each time gains a little more wisdom and ambition. Like the Storm shakt, the Sun shakt's plans have been thwarted by the Earth Mother's protections, and the Sun also needs tools or champions to further its ambitions.

### The Sea Shakt

The Sea shakt is the slowest of the greater shakt. The Sea is tossed by the Storms and pulled by the Moon, but remains calm beneath. The job of the Sea is to provide a place for all those creations whom the Earth Mother does not tend for Herself, to be a place to which the rivers can flow, and a way to divide Her separate Creations so that they do not interfere with each other. People realize this, and know that grave perils can befall those who journey beyond sight of the Earth upon the Sea. Legends tell of grave perils and strange and distant lands, but few voyage outwards, and fewer still return.



### Great Shakt

Each creation of the Earth Mother has a great shakt to tend to it. These are female shakt, since they are the mothers of all their kind. Each one see the comings and goings of its children, and whispers guidance in their ears. The Shakt of the Geese whispers to them that North Wind shakt comes, and they fly away, and it whispers to them when it is time to return in the spring. The Shakt of the Deer whispers to them when hunters approach, and they flee our bows. But, she does not whisper to all of them, because it is their part of the Earth Mother's plan that some be killed to be our food and clothing. For that, we give thanks to Deer Shakt for each one we kill, and kill no more than we need, lest Deer Shakt whisper to her children to leave our lands and not return.

The Great Shakt are not omnipresent, but one does not treat them lightly. They are still more powerful than any person, and they can withhold their blessings from an entire Clan for the actions of an individual. Great magics have been worked to call, appease or even bind the Great Shakt, but these are risky, and the price of failure is too high to even think about. If a Great Shakt is harmed in any way, it reflects in the health of her children. If Deer Shakt is hurt, then she cannot whisper to her children, and they are more easily hunted. She cannot give the does new spirits for their fawns, and they are stillborn or malformed. The deer will sicken and die without her protection, since the lesser spirits of sickness are not warded off by her presence.

Each Clan also has a Great Shakt, the mother of the Clan. She whispers to her children in dreams sometimes, but more often than not, she sleeps herself and does not wish to be roused. Making of a people is hard work, and like the Earth Mother, she rests afterwards. Each Clan has a day each year in which the shamans call upon the Clan Spirit at her shrine, thank her for the blessings she has bestowed, and ask for continued blessings in the next year. In times of great crisis, some may dare to petition her individually, but to do so without the permission of the shamans is a great taboo, for if the Clan Shakt is displeased, her wrath may affect all the people, not just the petitioner. In game terms, the great shakt have an effective POW of approximately 25, an innate and perfect use of all magic associated with their nature, including Area, Power, Target and Time Multiples, and an ability to manifest in human form. The nature of their magic is much more specific than that of the Greater Shakt, however. Each of them also has weaknesses associated with their nature, weaknesses which they might not even be aware of.

## Lesser shakt

In modern times, many of these might be referred to as the "laws of nature". Lesser spirits inhabit all places and things, put there by the Earth Mother as part of her greater plan. It is the job of plant shakt to make sure the plant turns its face towards the Sun shakt, the job of the brook shakt to bring waters to the river spirit, the job of the lesser wind shakt to herd the clouds at the Storm shakt's behest, and so on. These lesser shakt are almost always under the domain of a greater shakt. While their comings and goings are usually not noticed, any great mischief will certainly be found out eventually, since lesser shakt are none too bright, and fairly talkative. In game terms, a lesser shakt has a POW of 1-10, a limited magic associated with its nature, and a pretty good knowledge of all that happens in its sphere of influence. Only the more powerful ones can manifest in any form. All of the lesser shakt tend to have similar personalities, associated with their nature. Fire shakt are like puppies, allies of the People from way back, eager but not very bright. Larger ones tend to be a bit surly, though. Plants are slow and may take a while to notice you. Rivers are placid or aggressive, depending on water level, and gusts of wind see a lot, but have tiny attention spans.



## Manifestations

Most shakt can manifest in physical form. While they can technically manifest in any form they want, most are bound by their nature to a single form or a select few forms, as befits the shakt in question. For instance, the Storm shakt appears as a large, well-muscled man of dark complexion. The Sun shakt appears more as a bronzed Adonis, not as powerful looking, but still formidable. The difference is that the manifestation of the Storm shakt is in all respects a man, while the Sun shakt is actually genderless where it counts.

Lesser shakt are fully bound up in the process of manifestation, using all their POW to achieve the desired form, while greater shakt only put a part of themselves and an independent part of their awareness into lesser manifestations. If the Storm shakt were to dedicate his being to a physical manifestation, he would stand taller than the clouds and stride across the mountains. As is, he is just a very powerful man, and the storms continue unabated around the world, since so little of him is actually needed for the manifestation.

When a greater shakt manifests in this way, the personality is that of the greater shakt, but the thoughts and memories are its own, until such time it chooses or is forced to depart the world of the flesh. So, if you are going to hurt a manifestation of a greater shakt, you better make sure he, she or it doesn't see it coming.

Shakt do what they do because they were made that way. We see because we have eyes, and hear because we have ears. The storm shakt makes the winds blow because he has «ΔΔ^», and the Sun shakt lights the world and moves across the sky because it has °\_ι\_ψ°. If these terms mean nothing to you...then you understand. A mortal can't ask the Storm shakt for wisdom about weather or the winds, because the Storm shakt doesn't know. It is just what he *is*. They are raw power with purpose and personality, and usually have little practical knowledge to give to the People. This is not to say they are lacking in insight, or do not have great and terrible wisdom to impart, it is saying that the People seldom have the understanding of the answers, or even what questions to ask.

A side effect of this is that when they manifest, they are perfect, strong and dextrous, but have little or no idea of how to use tools or skills. They are far from helpless, but at the start of a **Dreamtime** campaign, they will have few skills above their Aptitude, or have Familiarity at best. The skills they do have will be ones that were useful in previous manifestations, or which draw greatly from raw physical force, like running and brawling.

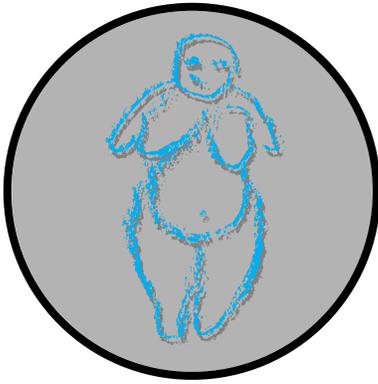
Shakt may also manifest by entering the body of another. This gives them the physical stats of the body, but the mental stats and lack of skills of the shakt. If the shakt gets a being with child, or becomes with child, that child will be born as a weak manifestation of the shakt. A person who goes into a taboo place might possibly become possessed by a shakt that was banished "elsewhere", and find a way back to Creation by this route. Most times, the thread is seen early, and the child killed right after birth, but sometimes the mother will find a way to hide the nature of the child, and it will gain power as it grows, and try to find a way to open a path for the other shakt to return. This is usually considered a *Bad Thing*, and Clan differences are temporarily forgotten in a combined effort to rid the body of the Earth Mother of such an aberration before she wakes up angry and irritable.

### Challenging a shakt

Each shakt has a day of the year that it considers special for one reason or the other, or a time and place when they look more carefully upon the world below. For instance, at noon, on a hot long day, upon the highest place within sight, you are as close to the Sun shakt as you are likely to get, and it to you. If you call loud and long enough to the shakt you seek, it may notice you, and if there is something about you that piques the interest of the shakt, it may manifest to see what the tiny child of the Earth Mother is up to. The greater spirits can often be persuaded to enter into challenges (remember, they are not that bright), with each side offering something substantial as a wager, of approximately equal value. If the deal seems lopsided in your favor, perhaps you are not looking at it the right way. And such is the way of the world, that these deals *are* binding and irreversible.

**Example** - Shenna Earthdaughter gains the attention of the shakt of the North Wind, for she and her companions sorely need a fast way to cross the great inland sea to the south, and they remember a legend where the hero was carried a great distance by a wind shakt. The North Wind sees this young woman who dares to challenge it to a bareknuckle fight, and agrees, provided that if it wins, she will name her first child after its unpronounceable shakt name. Of course, the shakt does not say that this is a way for it to cheaply manifest in human form, and eventually gain experience into the true nature of the People, as it hears rumors the greater shakt are doing. If she loses, her first child will be human in body, but with a spirit not of man, but of the North Wind.





# THE CLANS

### Character backgrounds

The People are also known as the Tribe, and the Tribe is made up of three Clans: Far Traveller, Ugrik and Sem, of which the Clan shakt are Travelling Woman, Small Woman and Mother Sem.

Each Clan has separate burdens its children must bear, and the reasons for this date back to the oldest Clan legends.

### Clan Ugrik

Where the Earth Mother made Small Woman is a sacred place, and spring where she knelt to take her first drink is the shrine of Clan Ugrik. It is taboo for anyone to enter that valley save on the Day of Remembering, or without the permission of a Ugrik shaman.

For many generations the people of Clan Ugrik lived in this valley, and when there were so many people the animal shakt had no place to live, Clan Ugrik still would not leave, but hunted elsewhere and always returned to this place. The Earth Mother was eventually awakened by so many feet walking upon her in the same place, and She was angered. She drove Clan Ugrik from the valley, and told them that never again could they live there. And because they had small minds and small goals, they would always be a small people, with small lands.

And so it has been. Clan Ugrik has always been in disfavor and gotten the least of the blessings whenever great gifts have been given by the shakt. Their lands are the smallest, and their people are the shortest.

### Limitations

All Clan Ugrik characters may never have a great Destiny, and no Clan Ugrik character may start play with any Attribute or skill higher than the best character from another Clan in the same Attribute or skill. This is worth no points.

### Clan Far Traveller

The place where the Earth Mother made the first Clan mother is a sacred place. When the Earth Mother made Travelling Woman from Herself, and set her down to walk upon Creation, where her feet first touched ground is the site of the Clan shrine. No one knows exactly where this is anymore, for the nature of Far Traveller is to seek new places. The Clan shakt still hears her children on the proper days, however, for she understands and loves her children, even if they don't visit her anymore.

Far Traveller took much of the Earth Mother when they were new, more than they needed, and many times just for the taking. When they had taken all the Earth Mother and the mother shakt could give, they moved to a different place. The many shakt conferred among themselves to punish Far Traveller as they could. Since Far Traveller had hurt the mother shakt, the mother shakt would not hear their calls. No woman of Far Traveller may ever call upon a mother shakt, for they will not hear, and will not respond. This is their eternal shame for abusing the Gift of the Earth Mother.

### Limitations

Female Physical Lim. +10 Difficulty to call upon any female aspected shakt other than the Clan shakt, Earth Mother and Moon shakt (basically they are forbidden to call upon any animal shakt). This is worth 10AP or SP.

Clan Far Traveller lives mainly upon the plains, and is known for their skill with the bow. They are hardy and accustomed to walking long distances across the hilly grasslands which they prefer to call home.



### Clan Sem

Mother Sem was set down upon a hilltop where she could see the great Inland Sea, and her people strive to walk down that hill on the path she took at least once in their lives, for this hilltop is the shrine to Mother Sem.

The people of Clan Sem did not have the plains of Far Traveller, nor the great and deep forests Clan Ugrik lives in, but a land less blessed by the Earth Mother, with some plains and some forests. The Clan argued among themselves on which was best to live in, some spreading nuts on the plains that new trees might grow, others hewing down the trees that there might be plains, until the land was neither plains nor forests, but clumps of trees and great amounts of bushes and scrub and rocks. And finally they called upon Mother Sem to ask for guidance, and she woke and was terrible in her anger to her own children. She said "What have you done to the great and green land which the Earth Mother gave to you to live upon?" And they argued among themselves, each village elder blaming the others, until she silenced them with a wave of her hand. So angry was she, that she cursed her own children and all their children forevermore, that if they will not have peace among themselves, they will never have peace with others. And though Mother Sem wanted to take this back as soon as she said it, her words had great power and linger to this day. The people of Clan Sem still fight among themselves with words, and no matter how they try not to, they always find a way to make enemies of friends, and turn both the hand of People and shakt against them. Their fighting has made them powerful, for none want them as enemies, but it has not made them great, for none want them as friends.

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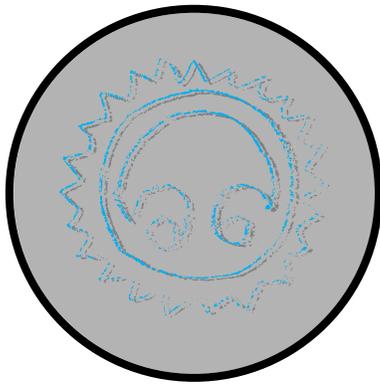
### Limitations

All	All members of Clan Sem must have the Psych Lim "doesn't trust outsiders" at Level 2 or better (4AP or SP).
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Clan Sem lives mostly along the shores of the great Inland Sea, and the rivers that run into it. Only they may have skill at handling boats upon the Inland Sea.





LEGENDS OF  
THE PEOPLE

The Blood of Heroes

For those who think that a **Dreamtime** campaign is set in too simple a world to have great adventures, or that you cannot find enough challenge in a world of stone and wood and leather, let us present the short histories of two NPC characters, who lived through a Dreamtime of their own, and which the adventure provided is based upon. If you don't use these characters as *powerful* NPC's, then use them as examples of legendary figures from the past, leaving out or editing those parts which you choose to incorporate into your own **Dreamtime** campaign.



SHENNA EARTHDAUGHTER

	LVL
STR	4
AGL	7
AWR	6
WIL	5
HLT	6
POW	6

Skills	Level
Brawling	7
Kicks	+3
Survival	5
Spear	3
Armory	6
Bow	7
Spirit knowl.	3
Poetry	4

- Gifts
- Wind bow (DV2)
  - Stoneskin (AV2/0)
  - Firemaker
  - Walk-on-water
  - Rockshaper



Shenna is an outcast daughter of Clan Far Traveller. For her birth, her mother made an epic poem asking the shakt of Earth, Wind, Fire and River to bless her child. The spirits came, but Shenna was born in the heart of winter, and the Fire shakt that came was unhappy. It gave its smallest gift, and then burned down most of the village. Shenna and her mother were both outcasts, and barely tolerated in all parts of Far Traveller. Shenna grew up having to defend herself against others who bullied her. She was small, but hard to hurt, and this gave her the time she needed to learn how to fight back. Her mother died before Shenna became a woman, and Shenna has lived alone ever since. She is outcast because of her birth, but tolerated because she can make the finest spear points and arrowheads by turning hand-mixed clay and mud into solid stone. She is not liked, but few try to harm her more than once because she fights like a trapped yeowler. One of her fighting secrets is to use her ability to turn mud on her hands and feet into stone before a fight, which does +1 damage.

Shenna is somewhere between her 15th and 18th year, and she is tired of being an outcast. She will seek adventure with anyone who promises glory and renown, that she might clear her name.

### Shenna's Saga

Shenna Earthdaughter was a slight maiden with a fire in her eyes and pain in her heart. Without any mate, she went on adventure to get away from those who shunned her, and to make a name for herself, to escape a past that she was not responsible for.

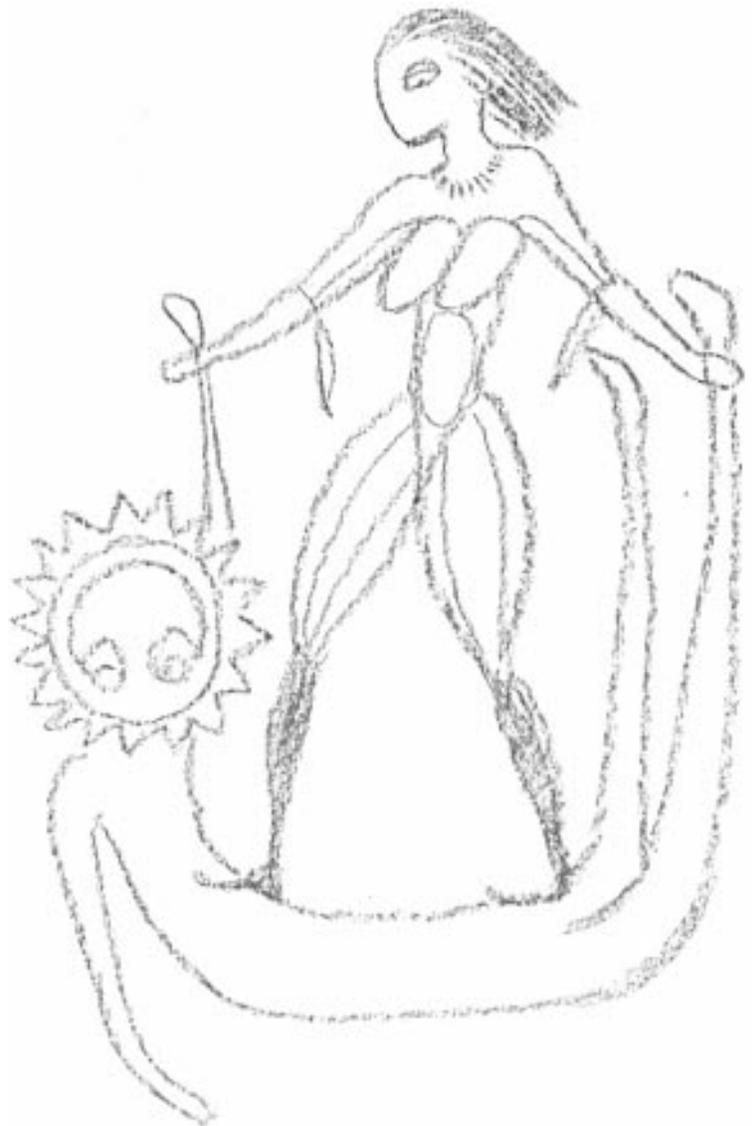
She fought many creatures, both natural and unnatural, and carried many scars as a result. She upset the elders of the Clan by entering the challenge to become Clan champion, for in those days it was not a thing done by the women. Many wished to ban her from the Moot ground, for she would not still her voice until allowed to fight, but the Clan women persuaded the elders that she should have the chance to be defeated as any other, and that it might teach her a lesson.

Although she fought well, and defeated many, there was always at least one who fought better and she never became Clan champion. However, she did become a war leader second only to Frehd the Fearless, and a hero for all the women of Far Traveller. When the Storm shakt revealed the women's secret to men, she and her followers tried valiantly to suppress it, ultimately to no avail. So she searched the world for knowledge, and stole secrets from beneath the notice of the Storm shakt. These she changed and taught only to women, so that they might be strong in ways that the men could not be. But she learned things the greater shakt wished to remain hidden, so they bedeviled her and those she taught, until she made rivals of one against the other, and so engaged, they forgot about her. She learned a way to use a spear with a broken point as a new weapon, and to dance while fighting so that none could strike her. These were New Things, and her Clan benefited much from them.

In her later years, she used magic to call the shakt of the North Wind to her, and bound a spell of love upon its heart, so that it became her mate, and she became Shenna Windwalker. In time, the North Wind truly fell in love with her, and learned of the ways to become a man from the other shakt. She journeyed many weeks to find the Clan shrine in the distant lands, and fought the guardian of the dead to gain entrance to the underworld. There she secured a blessing for her unborn child from her ancestors, and some say the Earth Mother herself. She had three children, whom she fought to protect, and who became mighty heroes in their own right. She taught the People how to build huts of stone, and to entice the lesser plant shakt to do her bidding, that the Clan never need forage for grains.

Shenna also reaped the sorrow she had sown in younger years. In her greed for wisdom many years past, she had released forces best left bound and spoke poems best left unsaid. They came into their own and brought great, great sorrow upon the Clan. Many of the Clan died to set things right, and she was very nearly among them.

Her magics kept her healthy, if not young, but the world had changed, and her part was drawing near an end. Shenna Windwalker challenged the Sun shakt to a last fight to secure a lasting blessing for her people. He was wise to her ways, for she had bloodied the nose of the Sun in her youth, and Sun shakt declared the challenge to be of grabs and holds, not of fists and feet. Shenna was dismayed for she was old, and strong only in magic. She fought well, and fought until almost defeated, but surprised and pinned the Sun to the ground by using a magic boon from the Storm shakt, which she had guarded for many years for such a dire need. Her husband and lover, the shakt of the North Wind, then used his powers to make Shenna into a lesser shakt, and she disappeared from this world to the invisible world. She still speaks to her people if they call, and when the winter winds howl down from the hills, but fall gently on the villages, Clan Far Traveller knows it is because Shenna remembers them.



## FREHD THE FEARLESS

	LVL
<b>STR</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>AGL</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>AWR</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>WIL</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>HLT</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>POW</b>	<b>4</b>

Skills	Level
Brawling	4
Punch	+2
Hold	+2
Flame touch	4
Survival	5
Poetry	5
Spirit knowl.	3
Singing	3
Dance	3
Seduction	3



### Gifts

Keen vision (+2 AWR to spot things)  
 Clear voice (+2 AWR on social skills)  
 Stonebody (AV of 4/0)  
 Flame touch (melee DV4)

Frehd was born to great power, and has never needed to learn much else. He has a well known reputation that no weapon can harm him, and no man can resist him. He is the current Clan champion of Far Traveller, though it should be noted that he cannot use the flame touch in challenges, which are supposed to be tests of raw talent. His supernaturally tough hide is an incredible advantage, and Frehd is an excellent brawler and wrestler. He was born with no spells to aid others, so he will never be a shaman, but he can handle the backlash of failed spells more than others, and has become an accomplished poet, with other skills to bolster his words. He can bring the spirits to his aid to help when his own lack of skills harms him. His voice, strength and skill do him no harm with the womenfolk either.

Frehd is in his 22nd year, sees that he may someday become a Clan elder, and is seeking wisdom. His pride demands that he find it far from most of Far Traveller, so they will not see the knowledge he lacks.

### Frehd's saga

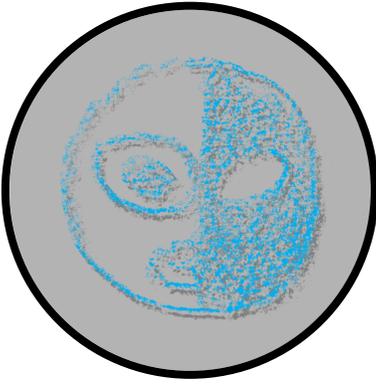
Frehd was born to be a warrior and leader of men. Strong in battle, many would follow if he was the one who would lead and brave the spears and arrows of those who opposed the Clan. It was Frehd who helped rescue the shakt of the Pohnee from the evil shamans of Clan Ugrik upon the Forbidden Isle, and he who gained the blessing of the shakt of the Pohnee to ride all her children, and their children, forever more.

By his heroism, Frehd gained the attention of the Storm shakt, who looked upon the world of men with ideas of great change in his heart, and needed a voice to speak them. It was to Frehd first that the women's secret was given, and to him that the word of the Storm shakt was first preached. He was sent on many vain and fruitless quests to distant lands by the Clan elders, urged by the elder women who hoped fervently that he would not return. But return he did, with even more glory than he left with, and men finally heard the women's secret and believed, thus changing forever the way of the People.

Frehd witnessed and survived the return of the Moon shakt, when she became flesh and fought the Earth Mother for dominion over Creation. The earth is still scarred from where they stepped and their bodies fell, and Her blood still flows from some of the great rents their bodies and fists and feet made during the battle. With the help of the Storm shakt, the Moon shakt lost the battle, and was hurled back into the sky, where her scarred body has remained ever since.

When the Shaman who was Not allied with the shakt who were banished, and chaos came forth from the Bad Places, it was Frehd who led the first army of all the Clans, and crushed the forces of the shaman in the Great Battle. The wholesome shakt who were threatened by the shakt from Elsewhere blessed Frehd with the knowledge of how to put the magic of the world into things that would do your bidding, and the Storm shakt gave Frehd the knowledge of making a thing that was only the thought of a thing, and not the thing itself. This was a great magic he struggled with for many years, and which only the wisest could learn from him.

In the fullness of time, Frehd became the Clan Elder of Far Traveller, had many children, and wrought mighty magics with the secret knowledge he taught only to the men. He lived long, and even when he was old and feeble, no other Clan would raise their hand against Far Traveller, so great was his reputation.



## ADVENTURE

### Pohnee

The author is partial to Clan Far Traveller, so this adventure is designed around a problem for a group of up to six characters from Clan Far Traveller, although the problem is one that all Clans will find important for one reason or the other. If you have a small group, take into account that some may be incapacitated, weakened or dead by the time of the final confrontation. Read through the entire adventure and adjust the threat level accordingly. The adventure may be straightforward, but is not necessarily easy. Point out that stupid actions, even heroic ones, can get you killed. Understanding the dangers of **Dreamtime** is a lesson best learned early.

### Intro

The adventure begins about a month before the Clan Moot. It is a time of barter and preparation. The local challenges are finishing up, and soon the champions of many villages will be travelling to the Moot to decide who is Clan champion, and in the end, who is champion of the People for the year. Many People from all Clans will be there, and those who have skins, beads or other things to trade will be there as well, to trade for other things from distant Clan lands.

Beyond the normal barter and fighting and preparations, there is an undertone of concern. No Pohnee were born this spring around the village, and travellers say the same is true around other villages. In some years, some places have few or no Pohnee, but it is very rare that no Pohnee are born over such a wide area, and there are rumors that no Pohnee have been born anywhere for many months.

This is a greatly disturbing thing, for Far Traveller relies on the Pohnee to carry the baskets and draw the sledges the Clan uses when a village is to be moved. Without Pohnee, life will be harder and less prosperous. As a result, those who have Pohnee that come when they are called, or who have Pohnee hides for barter, are much more loath to trade them, and much more wary of strangers around the areas where the Pohnee graze.

It is a thing the elders and shaman speak of in hushed tones, and many who would not normally hazard the journey are going to the Moot, to seek and gain wisdom.

The characters will have varying reasons to go the Moot, and should not need to be prodded. A character could easily be village champion and thus go. A craftsperson might have wares to barter, and a shaman could seek other shamens for wisdom or trade of knowledge. It also makes for easy travelling, since village challenges are often suspended since so many village champions are not at home. Hospitality may not be great, but villages welcome the barter and news brought by travellers.

### Moot Isle

Moot Isle is a substantial piece of real estate on a great river that marks the boundary between Clan Far Traveller and Clan Ugrik. The river runs wide on one side, and narrow on the other, and can be reached from the one shore by a great shaping of stone done by shamans generations past. The bridge sees constant traffic, for the isle never has enough dry wood for fires, and the small game is found and eaten well before the Moot actually begins. So, those who did not heed their elders advice on bringing much food are going hungry and having to hunt or barter at a disadvantage for food. Treat all foraging survival rolls as +2 Difficulty before the Moot, and +3 Difficulty during and after the Moot. Survival skills with a specialization in fishing are only at +1 Difficulty, and professional fishers usually have fresh fish for barter for only slightly outrageous offers.

The Moot itself takes up about a week, and is filled with barter, challenge and meetings of elders and shamens who arbitrate disputes, discuss taboos, the weather and just about anything else at extraordinary length. Characters will only be hearing things secondhand, since they are unlikely to be in on privy council. However, people involved in these councils may have their eye on the characters...

### Moot challenges

Characters can be involved in Moot challenges, even if not a village champion. Wagers of one person against another are common, even if neither party is a major contender, simply for the gain of goods a win will bring. A Moot challenge requires only an agreed on piece of ground, usually about 6 meters across. Rules are simple: No maiming, no weapons, and the first person to leave the ring, admit defeat or be rendered unconscious is the loser. Characters who get involved with this can face a number of styles of fighter. First is the conventional brawler, who pummels you into unconsciousness. Second is the proto-sumo, who uses sheer bulk and strength to force you from the ring without ever hurting you. Last is the grappler, who uses strategic holds and pins to cause you unbearable pain and force your submission. All of them may have a gift that enhances their ability in hopefully surprising ways. And if they made it this far, the challengers are probably built with about the same amount of points as the player characters, some a bit less, some a bit more. Someone dishonest might hire a ringer to challenge a character and fight dirty. This may get the ringer expelled, but if the character is badly hurt, it makes it easier for the other.

Spice the days with challenges and rumors, and let the characters do what they want in the way of finding out information, trying to make advantageous trades and so forth. These things take time, so a handful of questions and some well played challenges can take up most of the early days of the Moot. This is appropriate to the leisurely pace of life the People usually have.

One departure from the normal schedule becomes apparent about two days into the Moot. The elders of the three clans have agreed that the final champion challenges will be held a day early, and no reason is given. This creates a stir, since the last day of the Moot is given to judgements and the possession of disputed lands that will be decided by the Clan champions. It seems that if the champions fight a day early, then the business of the Moot will be over a day early, and all those trades that people were waiting on until the end of the Moot suddenly take on a little more urgency.

On the next day, anyone who cares to be observant will see a number of elders and shamen watching preliminary challenges, and murmuring among themselves. What is odd about this is that they are also closely observing challenges made between people who are already defeated, and who may be engaging in a friendly wager, or just plain practice. Moot only comes once a year, and many have travelled a long way to get there, so you might as well hang around, even if you stand no chance of being Clan champion.

If any of the characters are demonstrating extreme martial prowess, or using other gifts or talents in a public and creative fashion, someone important may come by their place of encampment and just watch for a while.

Not much will be said after this, although the elders and shamen will still be looking around, although not so obviously. At least one of the characters will be approached by a messenger from the elders, and asked if they plan on staying until the last day of the moot. If the answer is "yes", the messenger will tell the character that there may be a special pronouncement after the last judgements are made. If the answer is "no", the messenger will ask the character to reconsider, for they may have a great opportunity come their way. No detail will be given.

### Behind the scenes

The failure of the Pohnee shakt to protect her children has been a matter of much discussion and great concern. Secretly, and without permission of the Ugrik Eldest, a group of Ugrikan shamen has woven a great spell to capture and bind the Pohnee shakt, for Ugrik is a people of the forests, and do not use Pohnee for much. It is thought that this will weaken the other clans, and through this, allow Ugrik to expand and prosper.

The Ugrik Eldest is at the moot. He is a good person, but is getting old, and his mind has weakened to where he does not see the treachery of his most powerful shamen. This makes him the perfect dupe, since his words will always ring true. Magical attempts to see if anyone here knows what is truly going on are more likely to be aimed at the most powerful, and so will fail to see the true culprits. The other Ugrik elders and shamen here do not know of the plot, save for one, a shaman by the name of Basa, who is appearing at the moot as a minor shaman, and excluded from the most privy meetings. He is actually quite powerful and clever. He knows much of what is going on in private council by deduction and observation, and can infer more from the scraps of conversation he picks up from loose lips.

Basa is making himself known as having a reliable talent or two useful to what he thinks the elders are up to, and makes sure he is observed using them. He also is watching to see how well others fight, and making mental notes on who he thinks will win.

### The Champion's Challenge

The characters have a few days before the final challenges are made, with the last day beforehand generally reserved as a day of rest so that any bruises accumulated will have a chance to heal. Since the final challenges have been advanced a day, the preliminaries have also been advanced, and characters involved will probably be a little busier than they thought.

A typical challenger is on the next page. This person could be of any Clan, and is someone who might have already defeated several lesser opponents. Characters with good fighting skills can be presumed to mop up anyone of lesser prowess than this.

## POHN-SA

	LVL
STR	6
AGL	5
AWR	6
WIL	6
HLT	6
POW	3

Skills	Level
Brawling	5
Holds	+2
Kicks	+1



If you want a character to fight several people, the same basic stats will apply, but the level and specialization of skills will be a little different from person to person.

When it comes down to the semi-finals, each Clan will have a strong contender, plus possibly a character or two. Characters aren't actually expected to make it this far, but if they do, they will have a stiff fight vs. one of these people before they face the other Clan champions.

## JOHULH (CLAN SEM)

	LVL
STR	5
AGL	8
AWR	6
WIL	5
HLT	6
POW	4

Skills	Level
Brawling	6
Blocks	+3
Kicks	+3



Jokulh has the power to Subtract his POW from the Armor Value of anything he touches, which makes his kicks much more effective against tougher characters (can't reduce Armor to below zero). He is hard pressed to escape if grabbed by a stronger character, so he usually covers his skin with grease before a fight, giving him a 2 point edge when trying to avoid being grabbed or escape from being grabbed. His nickname is "rockcrusher", but he mostly uses his talent to shape wood into bowls, hammers and other useful items. He has a selection of wares here for sale, and they are fairly popular.

## SREB, SON OF MORIT (CLAN UGRIK)

	LVL
STR	9
AGL	5
AWR	5
WIL	7
HLT	7
POW	3

Skills	Level
Brawling	5
Grab	+2
Grab legs	+1
Grab fish	+1



Pain Tolerance  
Increased Size (one level)  
Woodskin (inherent Armor of 1/0)

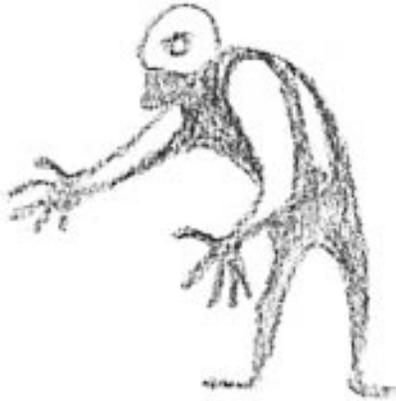
Sreb is the son of Morit, an ogre-like hunk of a woman, all of whose children have been large and powerful, but none so much as Sreb. Many would think of someone so powerful as a sullen nasty sort, but Sreb is actually highly thought of among those who know him. He *can* fly into incredible rages if provoked, but it is hard to provoke someone who can ignore the punches and kicks of ordinary people, and who can pick up and carry a grown man under each arm. His fighting technique is rather simple. He grabs an opponent by the legs, and then uses them as a human club, beating them against the ground until they give up.

Sreb is a hunt leader, and usually uses a great bow that only he can draw. He hones his brawling skills by wading the turbulent river near his village and catching fish with his bare hands.

**BNIRRUT (CLAN FAR TRAVELLER)**

	LVL
<b>STR</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>AGL</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>AWR</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>WIL</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>HLT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>POW</b>	<b>4</b>

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Level</b>
Brawling	6
Block	+1
Punch	+3



Pain Tolerance

Bnirrut has the Dominate power at low levels, which he can only use to influence existing emotional traits. In a fight, he tries to gauge an opponent's spirit, and amplify any traits that can be used to his advantage. Any time he can push a Psych Lim to more than a character's WIL, he can alter the level of caution or aggression his foe has by the the difference. For instance, if a person's overconfidence was made to be 2 more than their WIL, then he could alter their modified defense down by 2. This power only works as long as he can maintain eye contact, and his fighting style is based on this fact. If a character is affected by Bnirrut, they can make a single Spirit Knowledge task vs. his skill at blocking to see this aspect of his style.

**The Final Day**

The GM should properly represent the spectacle of the Champion's Challenge, even if characters are not directly involved. The moot and the challenges are the most entertainment a person is likely to see all year, and the challenges are a good place to make bets and possibly go home with more than they came with. Roll randomly to see who is favored among the three clans. A bet on the favorite would net a value of half again what is offered, the median challenger would double your bet, and the underdog would triple it. To prevent spiritual interference, all the challengers are examined by shamans for any magics that could be used to alter the odds.

After the feasting that lasts well into the night, comes the following day. The three Clan champions, and a number of other worthy fighters (which should include at least one character) are summoned to the great lodge where the Elders hold session. Here they are told the terrible truth of what is going on. The Elder of Clan Ugrik will rise to his feet with the aid of a younger shaman, and address the group.

"As many of you know, the Pohnee are weak, and their mother shakt does not protect them. This is not just a problem of one place. All the clans have seen their Pohnee weaken over the past year, with many born without life, or too weak to survive. The great shamans of the the three Clans have undertaken quests to speak to the Pohnee shakt, but she is not to be found. The lesser shakt say that she has been taken from the lands of the shakt, and is being held among the lands of the People.

This is a terrible thing, for it means that among the People are those who would bind the shakt and wish her children harm, a great abuse of the Earth Mother's gift. If such a thing had been done in the sight of the People, we would know how and where. Pohnee shakt has been hidden, and hidden well, but we now know she is somewhere in the lands of my Clan, a thing which shames me and my people. If she is here, she must be in one of the Bad Places where we do not go, and we of Clan Ugrik feel that our squabbles are but a bending of grass compared to the great wind that will sweep the lands should this thing be allowed to continue. The Elders have decided that great warriors must travel into the Bad Places of our Clan, to seek out the Pohnee shakt, and free her, that all of the People may have her blessings again."

Each of the other Clan Elders will rise and deliver a similar speech, if only for the benefit of those in the audience who do not speak all the Clan tongues well.

The warriors and challengers are being split into groups based on their prowess and the combined Elder opinion on which Bad Place is most likely to have the captive Pohnee shakt. The three Clan champions are being sent with shamen and blessings to the most likely place, and lesser places are doled out to other groups.

Basa has been involved in these plans for he has shown a great knowledge of Ugrik territory. Through his connivance, he has managed to arrange to be the main shaman of whatever group is going to the *true* area where the Pohnee shakt is being held, and the group he will be leading is none other than the characters.

After the selection is over, the Elders will grant lifting of taboo to each group, based on the taboo that is to be violated and the specific nature of each group. Since all the most powerful shamans are here, they all know that if the heros complete their quest, it is right for any taboo they have picked up to be lifted from them. The resources of the Elders are not great, but their influence is. If there is any small thing that a group feels they need for their trip, the Elders will attempt to help, based on the Influence of the group, the length of their trip and perceived danger. This could range from a skin for water to a fine spear or some parts of a powerful poem. Since characters have no Influence at this point, they are not likely to get much.

## The Deceptions of Basa

Basa is clever and will work hard to gain the character's trust, so that he has more tools to use against them. He has an arsenal of hidden knowledge and dirty tricks to use. He will play as many as possible in a manner so as to seem to be actually helping the group. Aside from his machinations, the roughly one week trip to the Bad Place will be relatively uneventful.

### BASA

	LVL
STR	5
AGL	4
AWR	6
WIL	6
HLT	5
POW	5

Skills	Level
Brawling	4
Spear	3
Survival	5
Clan lands	5
Spirit knowl.	5
Ceremony	3
Theater	3
Legends	4
Poetry	4
Herbalism	4



Basa knows the rituals of Banishing the Unwholesome, Speak with Ancestors, and Bind the Angry Spirit. He has a spear, knife, travel sack, waterskin, a variety of pouches on a thong around his waist, some ceremonial jewelry made of bone and beads, and skins with an AV of 1/1 on his torso and lower legs. He also has a single Black Tear, which has a handful of uses left. His possession of such a valuable thing and willingness to use it is one reason why he was chosen for this quest over a more qualified shaman.

**Day 1** - Basa will meditate each night in an obvious fashion, claiming to try and speak to shakt to glimpse the future. Most of the time he actually *is* trying this, mainly to see if his deceptions will be unmasked, and how he can cover himself in that event. In game terms, characters who find out about him and plan a surprise will find that he has a contingency plan of some kind.

**Day 2** - On the second night, Basa will claim to have seen visions of unwholesome shakt emanating from a great hole in the ground, and piercing the bodies of the characters. He offers a remedy to this potential problem. He will perform a solemn dance and chant around the campfire, while the characters sit inside the circle he dances and pass around the special jerky, made from the meat of an Afflicted beast. Thus will the characters be invisible to the unwholesome shakt, who will search in vain until daybreak, when they must return to their dark places. This whole charade is just a way to get characters to eat human flesh, for that is what the jerky is truly made from. The strip of jerky that Basa eats is of course untainted. This is a taboo violation, and before sunup those who partook of the forbidden food will lose a point of STR until the taboo is lifted.

*"If a man eat the flesh of another, he thinks he partakes of the strength of that man, but he shall not gain that strength, and shall lose his own besides..."*

This is a serious taboo, and will stick with the characters until they can find a shaman who can give them a suitable quest of atonement. This does not have to be a great quest. It could be something straightforward, but difficult, like finding and asking forgiveness from the living relatives of the person whose flesh they ate.

**Day 3** - Basa, who will *appear* weaker and more haggard to match the characters, will take a path that leads along the sandy, lightly wooded banks of a river. At some part of this journey, the sand will actually be quicksand, and the lead character will be sucked in. It is unlikely that this will kill any characters, but if the group has taken a wide front through this open area, two or more characters could be trapped at once, and in their weakened state, Basa might have an opening to spear potential rescuers, and let the rest drown. If this seems unlikely, Basa will be heroic in his efforts to save the trapped character, and thus win some more trust.

**Day 4** - Basa claims to have had bad dreams about his personal future, and wants to let the characters know what he does about the Bad Place in case he doesn't make it. It is a taboo place, a swamp that gradually becomes dry land in the middle, and in the middle of the dry land is a lake. The taboo is one that one should eat or drink nothing from within the swamp, so all the food the characters will need for the journey to and from the center, and as long as they stay will have to be carried in or magically created.

In the center of the lake is an island, and this island is held to be the Bad Place itself, a corrupted wound on the body of the Earth Mother where a poison fang once touched her. In the swamp live the Underpeople, who are unaffected by the taboo, and who can provide guides through the most dangerous parts if bribed with polished stones. In the central lake lives a great serpent, who sleeps through the day, and leaves the lake to hunt at night. What is actually on the island, Basa is not sure.

Actually, Basa's supply of polished stones are pieces of polished Underpeople bone, one of the few ancestor worship concepts the local Underpeople have grasped. These were taken by Basa and other conspirators, and showing them to a group of Underpeople is likely to drive them into a nasty but probably futile frenzy. Basa will make sure and leave these behind if he has to make a hasty departure. There is a great serpent in the lake, but it only hunts during the day (not night). It becomes torpid if it leaves the lake at night, and only is active when it is sunny and warm. The taboo about eating or drinking any thing from the swamp is true, and is fairly common for swampy taboo places. The unwholesome shakt of the place will live in the body of one who violates the taboo, and make them ill, taking away their health (lose 1 HLT). The characters have dispensation to go into the Bad Place, so if they violate taboo, any shaman can lift it without harm. Basa told the truth about the taboo because it would seem suspicious to reverse the truth on this item, and if the characters decide he was lying about the rest of his story, they might think he lied about the taboo as well.

**Day 5** - The terrain begins to gradually thin out. The woods that make up much of Clan Ugrik's lands thin out and even vanish in places, and at the edge of one of these areas will be a Clan Ugrik village. Basa, as an Ugrik shaman will make the ritual challenge for the group, and explain the nature of their quest. This is met with grunts and nods of assent, and despite the bad news, people are eager to meet heros, and find out news of the Moot, since the characters are the first travellers to pass this way since then. The characters will have an opportunity to eat well and rest, but there is no one here who can help lift the taboo that Basa has hopefully laid on the characters (the local shaman is at the Moot). Basa will collect food for the remainder of the trip, and poison the food at the bottom of each sack with powder from a bag of herbs he carries. Detecting its taste is a Difficulty 8 task, and is only possible on AWR Aptitude or the regular level of any skill with herbal concoctions. After a full meal of the dusted food, a character must make a Difficulty 9 HLT task, or suffer the shakes or convulsions. This is an increased Difficulty to all AGL tasks equal to the amount the roll is failed by. This is recovered like a non-lethal impairment. It probably won't kill the characters, but it can make them easy targets for a day or so. Odds are the characters won't get to this food until they are already in the boundaries of the Bad Place.

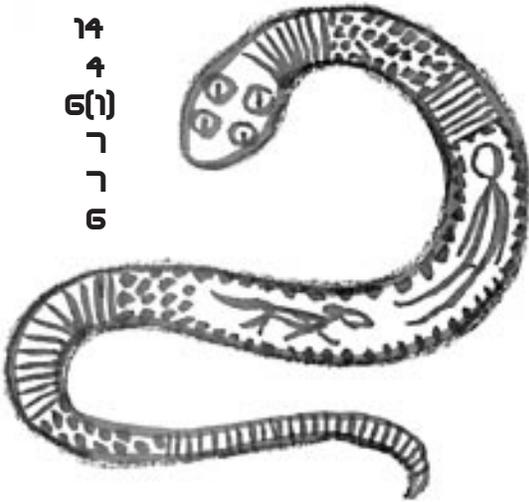
**Day 6** - The terrain becomes rocky, and there are numerous small cliffs as the characters head down into a large valley. The swamp can be glimpsed from vantage points on this descent. Basa will leave the party at this time if he has not done so already. At a particularly nasty narrow path on a cliff above a river, Basa will "slip" and fall, grabbing at a character in front of him as he does so. If he can make an AGL task vs. the character's STR+AGL, he pulls the character over with him. If he rolls a 10, he fails *and* his attempt is seen for what it is, a deliberate attack. In any case, he has a prepared poem that goes off, granting him the ability to survive the fall onto the rocks and the torrent at the bottom. He will pull his waterlogged self out of the current somewhere downstream and head off for the Bad Place by a shorter route. If a character falls at this point, treat it as a 20 meter fall, after which they have to make three Difficulty 6 swimming tasks. Each failed task adds 1 to the Difficulty of the others, and if they are *all* failed, the character drowns. A character who has ASP to burn should probably do so to avoid this fall if at all possible! Otherwise, the injured character washes ashore some distance downstream, probably in need of medical attention. If a character wants to try some poetry on the way down, or someone else wants to try and save a falling character by this means, they have 2 seconds to pull it off.

To top it off, when the characters get to the bottom of the cliff, they will find that there is no easy crossing of the river that bars their path. They can either lose an entire day by going back up the cliff and finding another route, or try to cross the narrow but violent torrent. A conventional attempt to swim across will be treated as if a character had fallen into the torrent, but at a base Difficulty of 4 instead of 6, since they get to pick the time and place of entry.

**Day 7** - The Bad Place is reached, and is pretty much as described. Characters will find it slow and rough going, and along hard day's hike will get them to the edge of the lake. This will entail accumulating 6 points of exertion per hour for unladen characters, so any further activity for the day is problematic. If they can get guidance from the fearful Underpeople, the journey will take only most of the day, and is not much more difficult than a normal hike through muddy terrain. The lake is deceptively placid, and is perhaps larger than the characters thought. The distance to the island is farther than most would care to swim, especially with a giant serpent in the lake, and the Underpeople have no boats. To get across, characters will need to build a raft or use magic. Construction of a usable raft will take about a day using hand axes. Magic will be substantially quicker, but remember that this is a Bad Place, and magic of making and creation will be at increased Difficulty. In this case the shores of the lake are at +2SP on poetry, and the island is at +3SP. Note that poetic magic of destruction and decay is at -2SP or -3SP, and cumulative penalties are not taken. Characters should be warned that many nasty spells could be waiting for them there.

## GIANT SERPENT

**STR** 14  
**AGL** 4  
**AWR** 6(1)  
**WIL** 7  
**HLT** 7  
**POW** 6



### Description

Extremely muscular and massive snake-like creature, with rough, raspy scales that blend in very well with the browns and green-greys of the local vegetation. It has four eyes set in a head the size of a large man's torso, and heavy scales and ridges protecting the eyes and other parts of the head.

**Mass:** 400kg  
**Variation:** n/a  
**Length:** 8.0m  
**Size modifier:** -2

**Good reaction roll:** Investigate and attack  
**Neutral reaction roll:** Attack  
**Bad reaction roll:** Attack

**Climate:** Temperate  
**Terrain:** Taboo lakes

**Special abilities:** Toughness x.5  
 Swim at up to 4m/sec  
 Slither at up to 7m/sec  
 Armored head/neck (AV1/0)  
 Pain tolerance

**Skills:** Strike (DV4 combination), skill 4  
 Crushing bite (DV4 combination), skill 4  
 Grab, skill 4  
 Stealth, skill 4

Remember to take into account the extra size of the giant serpent both to be hit, and to give it extra reach and other benefits in melee.

The giant serpent is a slightly chaotic beast left over from Creation, and has lived in this lake since the beginning of time. It sleeps at night upon the island, and swims in the lake during the day. It mainly eats large fish, but often goes ashore and lies in wait for something to walk past its huge,

stationary bulk. It strikes with its powerful head and jaws, crushes the prey, and swallows it whole. It will sense any major disturbances in the water of the lake, and will assume it is something tasty to eat. It will grab and attempt to drag down any bulk that is moving across the water, like a swimmer or raft. If taken by surprise, anyone on the raft when it is struck will need to make a Difficulty 7 AGL task to avoid falling off. Tasty characters are preferred to crunchy rafts, and since characters are a big mouthful, once the serpent has one, it will swim off and attempt to consume its meal.

The bite of the serpent is a blunt combination damage of 4, and will be repeated once a turn until the prey stops struggling, or the serpent has taken +2 in impairments, at which point it will let go and swim rapidly away.

### The Island

The island has no name that anyone knows. It is simply the Bad Place. It is perhaps big enough to support a small village, but there seem to be no large animals here, or even birds flying over it. The grasses are tinged with gray, and the bushes and trees are stunted and twisted. Rocks permeate the soil, and in the center of the island is a small, rocky hill that bleakly dominates the surrounding terrain. A quick investigation of the island will reveal a number of things. First, this island has seen many visitors, some of them recent. A pair of hide boats are pulled up on shore, and footprints in dried mud show that several people have been here for some time. A character with any sort of Tracking skill can make a Difficulty 5 task to recognize some of the more recent tracks as made by Basa's feet. How recent depends on whether or not he is still alive. Second, this island is a regular home of the great serpent. Its spoor and trails are unmistakable, and seem to be more numerous on a particular side of the island.

The main conspirators in this drama have been living here for several months, tending and guarding the captured Pohnee shakt. She was tricked into assuming material form, and then knocked out. For many months, she has been kept drugged into a stupor from which she cannot recover. She cannot find enough awareness to abandon her material form, and her weakening state is reflected in the health of her children. She is kept in a cage in a cave in the central hillock, and does not see the Sun shakt or Moon shakt, or feel the rain and wind of Storm shakt. She eats and drinks enough to stay alive, purely from instinct. The rocks of this place are permeated with the Earth Mother's suffering, and no divinations can see the Pohnee shakt through it.

The center of the island is the center of the Bad Place, and characters will eventually need to go there. There are a number of well-used paths that lead in that direction, and which lead directly to the mouth of a large cave. The first character to see the cave will see a figure with a spear outside the cave entrance. If the figure sees the characters, it will duck back into the cave and will not reappear.

Even if Basa has not made it this far, guests were eventually expected, and preparations have been made.

### Preparation One

Deception in depth. The path to the cave is uphill through a tangle of small boulders, and characters can either follow it, or leap from rock to rock. The easiest path from rock to rock has an illusory rock in the chain. Anyone who jumps onto it will take an involuntary 2 meter fall onto a handful of sharpened stakes, for three DV2 lethal attacks in addition to falling damage (nasty GM's can have the stakes be hollow and full of swamp muck). Making a Difficulty 8 AWR task before the final leap will tell a character there is something fishy about the "rock". The path itself has a pit trap with similar stakes, but this is disguised by a layer of mud and grass with footprints across it. Characters stumbling into this will take a DV2 lethal attack to each foot. In addition, there are stakes pointing down and at an angle from the sides of the pit, and anyone who falls in will be pinned in place, as the stakes will pierce them if they try to free themselves. The first part of the pit trap is reasonably well disguised, and small enough to jump over. The trap actually extends a meter or two *past* its apparent edge, and will neatly catch anyone who sees it and tries to just jump over it. Digging and disguising this pit took a significant amount of work, and it is expected to get some results.

### Preparation Two

You have to come in *sometime*. The entire mouth of the cave is the triggering area for an area effect flame Blast spell. The first character to get even with the cave mouth without saying a key word in Ugrik tongue will set it off. It is an 8 point lethal Blast in the central and adjacent hexes, a 4 point Blast in the next two hexes, and a 2 point blast in the last two hexes. Invisible characters or those who can be so stealthy as to avoid been "seen" by the spell (AWR 5, zero range) can avoid this.

### Preparation Three

The cave has natural ventilation, and characters nearing the cave mouth will smell the scent of damp underground, and human and Pohnee habitation. Shortly after entering, they will also smell choking smoke pouring down the tunnel. A fire is kept lit in the cave for warmth and light, and damp bundles of stinging ivy have been laid on it. This acrid smoke will make characters take a Difficulty 6 HLT task or take a +1 Difficulty to AWR tasks and HLT tasks, which they recover like exertion losses.

### Preparation Four

Anyone making it this far will have to engage in combat to defeat the Ugrik shamen and their allies. The darkened cave is lit only by diffused sunlight and small bowls with tallow and reed wicks. In addition to the guards and shamen, they have a pair of dogs who are actively hostile to everyone except those who belong here.

There are no villains cackling over prisoners here. Those in the cave will neither give nor expect mercy. There are no slaves and no prisons, and no expectation that any Clan would raise a hand to help these shamen or their helpers. What is likely is a dark nasty struggle in the fetid dampness of the underground prison, desperate men fighting desperate battles, knowing that their lives depend on it.

## SZALL THE AFFLICTED

	LVL
<b>STR</b>	6
<b>AGL</b>	5
<b>AWR</b>	5
<b>WIL</b>	5
<b>HLT</b>	5
<b>POW</b>	1

Skills	Level
Brawling	5
Punch	+2
Knife	4
Spear	3
Survival	5
Bow	4



Szall is the healthiest of those on the island. He can work no magic, but the taboo of the place has no hold upon him, unlike the shamen and other warriors. He is here because he believes it is for the good of his Clan, even if her personally has some doubts. He has a bow, knife, a pair of spears and AV1/1 hides upon his torso and lower legs. He will shoot at the first person to come down the tunnel, and then grab a spear and interpose himself between the characters and a friendly shaman. One of the dogs especially likes Szall, and will not leave his side. It will try to grab and hold onto/gnaw the leg of anyone who attacks him, and won't let go until it is knocked out or killed.

## POIMAR

	LVL
<b>STR</b>	5
<b>AGL</b>	4
<b>AWR</b>	4
<b>WIL</b>	5
<b>HLT</b>	5
<b>POW</b>	4

Skills	Level
Brawling	5
Punch	+1
Thrown axe	4
Axe	4
Survival	5

### Gifts

Starsight (can see in the dark very well)  
Ambidextrous



Po!mar was a strong and agile warrior, but he has been in this place too long. Even Blackwing's shamanic talents cannot help the taboo, for Po!mar cannot make proper atonement, and Blackwing does not want to bear taboo for both of them. His stats and those of the others reflect their current state of health, and should not be adjusted down for taboo violations. Po!mar was humiliated badly once when challenged in Far Traveller lands, and this shame has followed him so much that he has negative Fame from it. He is here and suffers taboo because it is his revenge against Far Traveller. He will attack anyone who appears to be Far Traveller in preference to other Clans. He carries an axe in each hand, and two more on easily broken thongs around his waist. He has thick skins on his torso (AV1/1), and a headdress made from the skull and hide of a wintersleeper (AV3/1). This protects his head and neck except for his face.

## SHYCATCHER

	LVL
<b>STR</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>AGL</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>AWR</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>WIL</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>HLT</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>POW</b>	<b>4</b>

Skills	Level
Brawling	3
Block	+1
Survival	4
Animal handl.	3
Poetry	4

### Gifts

Walk-on-air (can fly at 1m/sec)

Beast-friend (can Add to a beast's WIL for reaction purposes only)

Skycatcher has the ritual of Speak with Ancestors, but no others. He is an assistant to Blackwing, and tends to the health of Pohnee shakt. In the long-term, he is probably the most important person here, for without his knowledge, Pohnee shakt would probably die or escape. He will attempt to hide if combat commences, and recite a poem to change himself into a talen, and fly off the island and away to safety if his side loses. He has no weapon save a stone knife, and only wears skins on his torso and feet (AV1/1). Skycatcher doubts the wisdom of Blackwing's actions, but is loyal to him regardless. He will kill for Blackwing, but would much prefer to escape with his skin intact. Only the most treacherous of actions towards him by his own side would make him change his mind.



## BLACKWING

	LVL
<b>STR</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>AGL</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>AWR</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>WIL</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>HLT</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>POW</b>	<b>6</b>

Skills	Level
Brawling	2
Block	+1
Bow	4
Survival	4
Poetry	7
Ceremony	5
Theater	5
Herbalism	5
Dance	3
Legends	4

### Gifts

Gaze of pain (2 point mental blast, targeted like a bow)

Blackwing is the leader and instigator of this Ugrikan plot, and is a powerful shaman who knows all the rituals of his Clan. It was he who called the Pohnee shakt to the world of the flesh, and who enthralled and captured it. He is old, has only his skins, and is not a warrior. In a fight, he will draw back and weave poems as fast as he can. Ideas might be:

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An Area effect Subtract so that only someone who can see in the dark can act freely

Shapeshifting a dog into something more chaotic and nasty

A wall of fire (Area effect Blast) around himself as protection

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Pick an effect desired, then roll 1d10 and add 1. This is how many seconds it will take to generate the effect. Assume he is successful on any roll except a "10". In addition, he has 2 ASP to use, either to make skill rolls or avoid injury.

If defeated, he does have one final weapon to use in this struggle. If he is mortally wounded or about to be struck with a death blow, he will look upon his attacker, smile a faint smile and hoarsely whisper "I prevail". On his death, a great burst of magical energy will pour forth from his eyes and mouth, swirling violently around for several seconds before vanishing into the rocks of the cave wall. All will remain still for several seconds, and then a low rumbling will be felt underfoot. The walls and ceiling of the cave will begin to crumble, raining stone upon the hapless characters, the Ugrik foes and the Pohnee shakt. Roll with a skill of 1 vs. a Difficulty of 10 each turn for each person in the cave, and decrease the Difficulty by 1 every other turn after the first. If this "skill roll" is successful, a chunk of rock is about to strike that person, with a combination DV of 3. A character *can* forfeit their action to get out of the way of this.



If a character declares they are leaving, it will take them 5 turns to get out, plus 1 for each time they lose ground by dodging rocks. If the character can't get out by the time the rocks are falling every turn (about 20 seconds), the ceiling and walls will collapse, burying them under hundreds of tons of rubble.

### Final resolution

A number of things can happen over the course of this adventure, each with its own repercussions.

**Characters are all killed.** Bummer. They either had extraordinarily bad luck, were really stupid, or you put in far too many antagonists. There really shouldn't be more than one person dealing with each character in the final confrontation. Think about what went wrong, discuss it frankly with the players and try to do better next time.

### Characters find out the truth, but are not successful.

They will have to escape the Bad Place and get help, probably at the last village they stopped at. The local shaman will be back by then and may be able to help the characters recover from wounds or taboos. If the characters are slow, Basa or one of the other shamen will arrive there first and poison the village with stories of the character's treachery (how they shoved him off a cliff, etc., etc.).

### Characters prevail, but cannot rescue the Pohnee shakt.

If the Pohnee shakt is crushed in the rubble of a collapsing cave, she will become a formless shakt again, and be free of the bondage she had endured. Not knowing exactly what transpired, she will not know or really care how that she was freed, but will make sure that any surviving conspirators come to bitter grief. If at some later date she should ever speak to a character and realize that they were one of those who had helped her, she may offer them a valuable boon in gratitude.

### Characters succeed mightily, vanquishing foes and rescuing the Pohnee shakt from her imprisonment.

She will regain her awareness in a day or so. When she does, she will act as a frightened Pohnee would, rising to her feet, snorting and backing away from the characters. When she senses the intent of the characters, she will calm down, but still be a little skittish, and will eventually speak to the characters in a melodic and seemingly distant feminine voice. Characters can tell the tale of what has transpired in the time she was absent, and Pohnee shakt will listen intently, pawing at the ground occasionally and turning her ears to better hear what any given character is saying.

If she is impressed, and she probably is, she will offer a boon of some type to the group as a whole. This could be something as basic as lifting all taboos the characters have accumulated. Or, it might be something valuable, but which is cryptic and requires hard work to gain the full blessing. Pohnee shakt is not the wisest of the shakt, but she knows

the People have a great cunning to understand and make new things, which she does not. Something that she sees has great power, but cannot herself fathom would be a suitable gift. Such things might be:

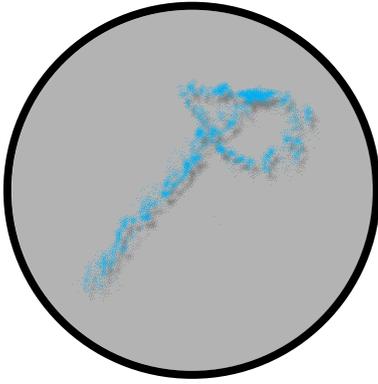
**The Medicine Wheel** - A carved wooden handle that forks to a "Y". Between the prongs is strung a braid of beads on rawhide, and on this string of beads is a stone disk with a hole in the middle. When the stone is spun by rolling it across a hand, it makes a rattling, chattering sound. It is not magical, and has no shakt in it. If you do not understand it, then it is sufficiently cryptic. Take our word that it is a thing of great importance in the Dreamtime.

**The Pohnee's Burden** - Just as the characters carried the Pohnee shakt from the cave, so shall she let her children carry the characters. The characters get the idea that this can be done, and nothing more. Learning to ride, bridle and otherwise harness the Pohnee are skills which they must learn on their own. You can decide whether or not this gift is only to the characters and their children, or all the People.

**Mark of the Pohnee** - Before she vanishes to the spirit world, she will walk over to a rock, and strike it with her hoof. Sparks will fly, and left upon the rock is a curious mark. "Whenever you see this mark, you will think of me", she says, and then vanishes. It may be some years before this idea truly takes hold in the characters, but eventually they will realize that even though it looks nothing like a Pohnee or the hoofprint of a Pohnee, when they see that mark or shape in nature, they think of the Pohnee shakt. The only ones who can understand it are those who were there, or their children. Someday, they may find the wisdom in this, or it may come about many generations later, if the characters and their descendants have many children.

**Heart of the Pohnee** - Pohnee can walk and run far, something she has not been able to do for too long. In return for rescuing her, she will give each character the blessing of her health, which they may call upon *once*, whenever they choose. This will give the character +5 HLT for a week after they call upon the blessing.

**Gift of the Pohnee** - Since you have returned her to beneath the rain and sun, and she can drink from the rivers and run along the sea, she will intercede for the characters if they ever need help from the Sun, Storm, Sea or a single River shakt. When any member of the group asks a boon of these shakt or does a poem that calls on them, *and* calls on the favor of the Pohnee, the Difficulty of the task is reduced by 5. Only one such boon is granted with each shakt for the entire group, *not* one per shakt per person. That is, there are four boons to be split among the entire group, and any person can call upon one of those boons without the consent of the others in that group. Yes, this can cause friction and problems for the characters, but we *did* say that Pohnee shakt was not the wisest of the shakt.



## EQUIPMENT

Ranged weapons	Caliber	DV	Initiative mod	Range mod	Size	TL	Mass	Extra clip	Rate of fire	Clip	AV	Cost*	Origin
Thrown rock (comb.(b))	n/a	STR/4(n)	+1	-1	2	1	.4kg	-	1	-	2	0	-
Thrown spear (leth.(p))	n/a	STR/4(n)+2	-3	0	7	1	1.5kg	-	1	-	2	12	-
Thrown axe (leth.(c))	n/a	STR/4(n)+2	-3	-1	3	1	1.2kg	-	1	-	4/2	12	-
Bow 4 (lethal(p))	n/a	2	+1	0	5	1	.7kg	-	1	-	1	5	-
Bow 5 (lethal(p))	n/a	3	+1	1	6	1	1.3kg	-	1	-	1	6	-
Bow 6 (lethal(p))	n/a	4	+0	1	7	1	1.9kg	-	1	-	1	7	-
Bow 7 (lethal(p))	n/a	6	+0	2	8	1	3.0kg	-	1	-	1	9	-
Arrows, 6	n/a	-	-	-	3	1	.6kg	-	-	-	1	3	-

Melee weapons (skill modifier)	Damage	DV	Initiative mod	Length	Size	TL	Mass	Prim.	Sec.	Tert.	AV	Cost*	Origin
Small knife (-1)	lethal(c/p)	+0	+1	2	1	1	.3kg	Melee	Knife	-	2	4	-
Large knife (+0)	lethal(c/p)	+1	+0	2	2	1	.6kg	Melee	Knife	-	2	6	-
Hand axe (+0)	lethal(c)	+2	-3	2	3	1	1.2kg	Melee	Axe	-	4/2	12	-
Large axe (+0)	lethal(c)	+3	-4	3	5	1	2.0kg	Melee	Axe	-	5/3	20	-
Club (+0)	combination(b)	+3	-4	4	9	1	2.5kg	Melee	Club	-	4	20	-
Spear (+0)	lethal(p)	+2	-3	5	7	1	1.5kg	Melee	Spear	-	2	12	-

Armor	TL	Armor Value	Protects	Mass	Size	Cost*	Special notes
Skins	1	1/1	Torso	.7kg	-	10	Applies normally vs. most weapons
			Arms	.5kg	-	5	
			Lower legs	.7kg	-	5	
Winter skins	1	2/2	Torso, arms	3.5kg	-	20	Applies normally vs. most weapons
			Legs	2.0kg	-	10	
Animal skull helmet	1	3/1	Head & neck, not face	2.0kg	-	20	Applies normally vs. most weapons
Fur cap	1	0/1	Head & neck, not face	.5kg	-	3	Applies normally vs. most weapons

Equipment	TL	Mass	Size	AV	Cost*	Special notes
Jewelry	1	.3kg	2	1	10	Strictly ornamental or status-related
Waterskin	1	2.0kg	3	1	2	Holds enough for a person for a day
Carrying sack	1	2.0kg	50	1	2	Holds up to Size 40 of items
Armory tools	1	1.0kg	3	2	20	Things needed to make any type of weapon
Wicker carrying basket	1	1.0kg	50	1	5	Holds up to Size 45 of items
Belt pouch	1	.2kg	5	1	1	Holds up to Size 4 of items
Leather rope, 10 meters	1	5.0kg	5	2	10	Strong enough to support a large person
Hut, per person	1	30kg	200	2	100	Room for a person to sleep and store things
Sleeping mat	1	1.0kg	10	1	2	Usually rolled up and carried when travelling
Fur blanket	1	2.0kg	10	1	5	Provides a 10°C temperature shift
Pohnee	1	-	-	1	50	
Pohnee sledge	1	15kg	200	3	20	Can also be used to move an injured person
Dog	1	-	-	1	10	Loyalty and intelligence varies

\*Cost is *not* in Cr and is given only for comparison purposes, and all values are subject to supply, demand, and how much the seller likes you.

