



*A Little Game
About Little Heroes*

by John Wick

Cat

A Little Game about Little Heroes



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Cat uses the *Advantage System*.

<http://www.wicked-dead.com/advantage>

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Go give your cat a hug.

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I Know I'm Dreaming...

I know I'm dreaming. See, mummies usually don't do their Wednesday wash at my laundromat.

"You're right," says my cat, sitting beside me as I pile microwave dinners into the dryer. "You're dreaming."

"How do you know?" I ask him, fumbling for quarters.

"Because I'm dreaming, too." He licks his chin and watches the dinners cooking in the dryer.

The dryer buzzes and I pull out the tin plates filled with food. "So, why are you here?"

He starts snacking on the Southern fried chicken. "It's the only place you and I can really talk."

"We talk?"

"Well, I talk all the time. Problem is, you don't know how to listen." He chews more chicken and I start with the cherry desert. "And you usually don't remember when we're done. Sometimes, things stick in that little brain of yours. The important things, at least."

"So you have something to tell me?"

"Yup. A few things. But we don't have a lot of time. It took me all night to find you, and it's creeping up on dawn right quick."

I nod, and put the dinner back in the dryer. "Where are we off to?"

"Anywhere. I just want to get away from those mummies. They give me the creeps."

My cat and me, we walked through a city full of zombies. Not the flesh-eating, drooling, rotting kind of zombies, but the "Where the heck am I?" kind of zombies.

I ask, "Where did all these zombies come from?"

"They're you. Well, most of you. You know when you can't remember your dreams?" He shrugs at the zombies. "That's you."

I'm only briefly aware that my cat just shrugged, almost get around to asking how he shrugged when a beautiful brunette walks by and my head turns all the way around my neck.

"That's your problem," my cat tells me. "You men can't keep focused. It's why your dreams are filled with all this nonsense."

"Yeah," I say, my voice as far away as my cat's voice. "Whatever you say."

"Ugh," he says. "This isn't going to work. You're just not concentrating."

I shake my head. "No, no. I'm back. I'm back."

"Good. Let's get to work."

I look up and see us standing outside my house.



"... dreaming"



"Our house," my cat says. "Let's go inside." He opens the door and we go on in.

"Hey, how did you..." I realize I don't know whether to ask him how he read my mind or how he opened the door.

"Never mind that," he says. "Take a look around."

I look up and see my couch, my TV, my desk, my dining room table and... things. Black, inky things with eyes and pincers and mandibles and tentacles and mouths and teeth. So many mouths, so many teeth. They're made of teeth. Little, sharp teeth that bleed when the things smile.

"What are all those..." (I don't know what to call them) "... crawling all over the place?"

"That one over there," he points at the one crawling all over my favorite chair. "That one's a Lazy." Then, he points at the phone. It looks like a blood-bloated tick. "That one's a Fear. You made it real fat the last time you sat in front of the phone, trying to call the girl you met in class."

I nod. "I think I'm getting the idea. But what are they?"

"The fewer names you give them the better," my cat tells me, licking his paw, washing out his ear. "My grandpa called them 'Boggins.' It's a pretty harmless name. I've heard them called a lot worse."

I watch them oozing all over the furniture for another moment or so, then I ask him something. "These things are dangerous?"

"Oh yeah. Mostly because you can't see them."

"If they're so dangerous," I ask, "why are they all over there?"

My cat smiles. "Because I'm over here." He jumps up the stairs. "Come on. I've got more to show you."

I'm gonna let you in on a little secret, he tells me. You aren't in charge. Sure, I know you like to think you are, and with your guns and lights and cars, you can kill just about anything you want. But killing a thing with a gun or a car isn't the same as killing it with your claws, and that's where you all fall short. When it comes to fierce fighting, your kind are about as helpless as kittens.

That's why, every thousand years, we win the contest, and why, every thousand years, you all come in dead last. Your champion shows up all half-witted and naked, no more ready for battle than a white blister ready to be popped. You've got no teeth and you've got no claws, and you just don't remember how to fight. It's a shame, really. You know why? Because the less you know about protecting yourselves, the more we have to know about protecting you. That's our job. Well, one of them, at least.

We get to the top of the stairs, and the door opens up on a sky full of stars. "Come on," he says, and jumps on one of the stars. I give it a shot, only make it halfway. I nearly fall all the way through the sky to the water below – all full of sharks and telephone booths – when he catches me with his teeth.

"You're better at this than most," he says through the grip he's got on me, "but not by much."

He pulls me back up to the star. "Hold on to my tail, but don't tug." I do what he says. He keeps talking.

For as long as anyone can remember, he says, there's been the Contest. Every thousand years, we all meet here in Dream and fight it out for the right to rule the world. Last time, it was us who won. The King of the Cats, he



Cat



beat out the Bitch Queen for the rights, and her kind ain't given us no quarter since. They're a jealous breed, them dogs, and they don't like being in second place.

Now, us ruling the world is all well and good, but there's a catch. The one who wins has to look out for the one who comes in last. We won, you lost. You lost big time. You trim off your claws, you dull down your teeth and you don't pay attention to anything that's important.

That's the difference between us and you. We know Dream is the "real" world, and this, the flesh and stuff, that's nothing. We may be small there, but in here, we got it all over you.

"When did you get all mean?" I ask him.

"Sorry. I get caught up in the bragging." We're not in the sea of stars anymore, but we are on a boat. The crew is all made of candy and we're sailing over soda pop.

"Don't drink the water," he tells me. Then, he tells me more.

So, anyway, you all came in dead last. That means you need protection. No, not from the dogs. You need protection from the Boggins. Yeah. Boggins. Monsters. Bogeysmen. Those things.

I know, you never seen them. You can't. We can. That's where the protection comes in.

Boggins are bad. I mean real bad. They hook into your soul with those barbs of theirs and they hang on. They sink their teeth into you, and they drink, and they drink. Worst part is, you can't see it. You can feel it, but you men come up with fancy explanations for some pretty simple stuff, all because you don't want to look at the truth. You wake up one morning and you feel about as tall as a turnip and you

call up your doctor and he gives you pills and you think you feel better.

It's the Boggins that do that to you. Drinking up your dreams. Soon, they get in there with you. I see it all the time. Some man walking around with his chin on his chest, walking like he's got no tomorrow, and he's got Boggins hanging on him like leeches, sucking and sucking. I hate the sound of it. Yeah, I can hear it. I hear it all the time. There's Boggins everywhere you look. Everywhere but where there's one of us, that is. There ain't no Boggins where there's one of us, because we kill 'em, and we kill 'em dead.

"If you're doing such a good job, why are there so many Boggins in my house?"

"You should have seen it before I got there," he tells me. The crystal ship lands on the Moon and he starts chewing.

"What?" he says, looking at me looking at him. "You didn't think we came all the way up here because it's made of rock and dust, did you?"

I pick up a hunk of it and give it a taste. Now, I know why he wanted to come up here. I chew and listen, and he does his best not to talk with his mouth full.

There's lots of kinds of Boggins, and if you're good, you know all kinds of different ways to take care of 'em. You know the saying, "There's more than one way to butcher a Boggin." But it's dangerous work. Too many Boggins, and even the best of us winds up losing lives to ditch the bunch.

Yeah, I said lives. We won the contest, we get nine of 'em. Dogs say they get seven 'cause they came in second, but who believes what a dog says? Now, go west – that's right – for



"... dreaming"



another mile or so. When you hit the Jewel Pool, let me know. I want to stop for a drink.

Another thing you should know about Boggins. They're contagious. Got them a system of dropping off eggs with a touch, and it's bad. You gotta keep yourself clean of the eggs, or they hatch and dig right in. Damn hard to get out, too. I know you won't remember much of this when you go back to the Wake, but if you remember one thing, remember this: them that smell bad, they've got the Boggin eggs all in 'em and around 'em. I know your nose is about as good as your teeth, but even the dumbest man can smell a Boggin. You've just got to concentrate and not ignore the warning signs.

Heh. That's kind of funny. For all your lack of skill in other areas, there's one thing you men are damn good at: ignoring things. You never see anything you don't want to see.

Some Boggins you got to kill with teeth and claws, but others are less tough and a whole lot more stupid, and you can use tricks. Sometimes they sneak into the house in disguise. That's the worst. Them we call "changelings." Most of the time, you can smell a changeling right out, but other times, they use Boggin tricks to sneak by you. Worst kind is the ones posing as kids. Had to kill one in the crib, once. That lost me my man. Nearly lost me a life. His woman was one mean woman, so covered in Boggins, you couldn't even see her face. Just her eyes, shining in that bright light. I'll never forget that.

"Is that why you were in the adoption agency?"

He nods. "Let's not talk about that, okay?" We catch a moonbeam back down to the street.

"See, I make sure you don't have to worry about the Boggins. I'll take care of them. As soon as we don't have a Boggin problem anymore, and I go somewhere else, and help somebody who needs me."

There's a bit of sun on the horizon as we step back into the house. The Boggins scatter under the furniture when they see him, but he doesn't seem to notice.

"You came all this way through Dream to tell me about all this?"

"That was a secondary goal," he tells me. "I tell you about the Boggins every night. Sometimes you remember, as best as a man can, that is. Most of the time you don't."

"So," I ask, giving my squirming couch the evil eye. "What did you want to tell me?"

He looks up at me with his big green eyes. "Not so much 'tell' you, as 'ask' you. See, I need a favor."

I looked over at the things staying far away from me and my little friend, and I nod. "What is it?"

"Something you can do that I can't. And, after seeing the Boggins, I hope it isn't too much to ask..."

"Anything you want."

He smiles and gives me a wink. "Glad you said it that way." Then, he walks away and stops in front of that big tan litter box.



1: Cat Characters

Cat is a game for telling stories about cats protecting people from Things they can't see, both in the real world and in the Kingdom of Dreams.

Storytelling games are the oldest kind of games in the world (despite what fans of *Go* think). People have been telling stories since they first wondered what the stars were and what made those scary sounds in the dark of night. *Cat* is a game in the tradition of those stories, where players explain just why cats always jump at things that aren't there, refuse affection one moment, then rub up against your hand the next, and otherwise act in completely irrational ways. The easiest answer to these questions is: cats see things we can't.

What You Need

In order to play *Cat*, you need some pencils, photocopies of the Catsheet, and a copy of this book. One copy will do the trick, but the Author encourages you to purchase as many copies as you like, including copies you don't need, to share with friends.

Before you play the game, you must first have a cat character. Photocopy the Catsheet at the end of this book for each player in the game. Next, look at the sheet. You'll see a list of physical descriptions: Face, Tail, Legs, Claws, etc. These are called "Traits," and they describe your cat's abilities. Now, proceed step-by-step below.

Making a Cat Character

Step 1: The Traits

A cat's Traits represent his physical and magical prowess. Each Trait is important to a cat in specific ways. Your cat has a total of six Traits. Let's take a look at them and see how they help your cat.

*A cat's **CLAWS** are important for fighting and climbing.*

*A cat's **COAT** shows off his colors and protects him from claws and teeth and helps him persuade others.*

*A cat's **FACE** is his sensory center. It contains his eyes, nose, ears, tongue and whiskers, all of which help him sense the world.*

*A cat's **FANGS** are important for fighting and carrying things around.*

*A cat's **LEGS** are used for jumping, balance and other quick movements.*

*A cat's **TAIL** is important for using Magic.*

Picking Traits

Now you know what the Traits do, it is time to figure out which Trait is his BEST TRAIT and which of his Traits are his three STRONG TRAITS. The remaining Traits you don't make his Best and Strong Traits are GOOD.

First, take a look at the Traits, and think about which one is the most important to you. This is your BEST TRAIT. This is your cat's shining, defining Trait, used for the actions he is



Cat Characters



known for. Write "Best" in the Rank space next to the Trait. Notice that under your Best Trait is a space "Bonus." Write 5 in that space.

Second, pick three other Traits that you like more than the rest. These are your cat's STRONG TRAITS. These Traits aren't as good as his Best Trait, but they're better than average. Write "Strong" in the Rank space next to these Traits. Again, with each there is a space for "Bonus." Write 4 in this space for all your STRONG Traits.

Finally, all the other Traits on your Catsheet are GOOD. These Traits are no better or worse than any other cat's Good Traits. Write "Good" in the Rank space next to those Traits and 3 under "Bonus" for all your GOOD Traits.

For example, look at the Catsheet on the next page. This is Roland, my cat character.

Claws = Strong (4)

Coat = Best (5)

Face = Good (3)

Fangs = Good (3)

Legs = Strong (4)

Tail = Strong (4)

Roland's BEST TRAIT is his COAT, which helps in his attempts to persuade other cats and keeps him warm at night. His three STRONG TRAITS are his CLAWS (for fighting and climbing), his LEGS (for jumping, running and balance) and his TAIL (useful for Magic, which we'll talk about in a minute).

As I do this, I write "5" for my Best Trait (Coat), "4" for my three Strong Traits (Claws, Legs and Tail) and "3" for the remaining two Good Traits (Face and Fangs).

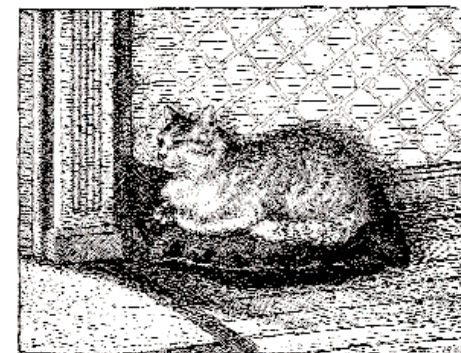
Step 2: Names

One for a secret, one for a riddle, name puss twice and befuddle the devil.

– Folk Saying

Once you finish assigning your Traits, it's time to give your cat his names. As T.S. Eliot suggested in his *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, cats have many names.

Your cat has three names. His first name, or given name, is the name men know him by. His second name, or cat name, is the name other cats, mostly trusted friends, know him by. Finally, a cat has a secret name, one that no-one knows, not even trusted friends. To know a cat's full name is a powerful secret, one that opens up many forbidden magics. If a Boggin ever discovered a cat's secret name – well, let's just leave that thought alone.



Step 3: Reputation

While Mr. Eliot knew about names, he failed to learn from his feline friends that each cat also has a number of titles, also known as Reputations. A Reputation is something a cat is known for, a particular skill, knack, or quirk. If you're good at catching rats, you might have the Reputation "Rat-catcher." If you're good at hiding, you may have the Reputation "the Unseen."

Like Traits, a cat's Reputations have Bonuses. Beginning cats (like yours) start with 7 points of Reputations (and no beginning Reputation should be higher than 3).



Cat



Step 4: Lives

A cat has nine lives. For three he plays, for three he strays, and for the last three he stays.

- Another Folk Saying

Because the King of the Cats won The Contest, every cat is blessed with nine Lives. A cat's Lives are very valuable to him, something to be cherished and protected. Some cats are reckless with their Lives, but most protect them. Write down "9" in this space on the Catsheet. You don't need to know how to use your Lives yet; we'll talk about that soon enough. Perhaps too soon...

All Done!

That's it! Your cat character is all set to protect his family from Boggins. Now, all you have to do is learn how and that takes just a second.

Taking Risks

When your cat tries to do something feline during the story, he usually succeeds (he's a cat, after all). But, there are times when the task is difficult, and the success of a cat's action is questionable. In these times, chance has as much to do with his success as his skill does. In *Cat*, we call this a "risk." To sort things out, we use your cat's Traits to determine the outcome of a chancy action. Use this simple system to determine if his action is successful or not.

All risks can be classified in three categories: Easy, Moderate, and Hard.

Easy

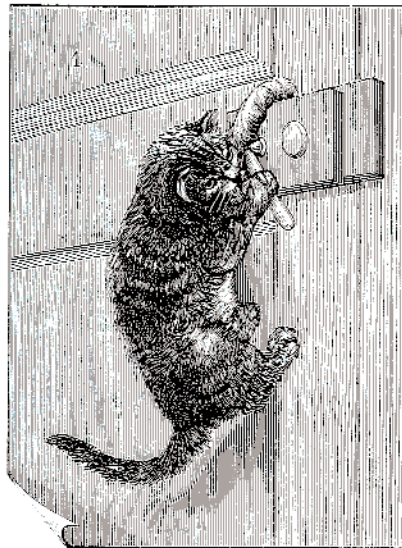
An Easy Risk is something nearly any healthy cat can pull off without any degree of difficulty. Swatting a ball of string across the room, jumping over a low wall, or climbing on the back of the couch are all good examples of Easy Actions.

Moderate

A Moderate Risk requires a bit more finesse. Catching a clever mouse, jumping up to the top of the refrigerator from the kitchen table, or climbing a sheer wall are all good examples of Moderate Risks.

Hard

Hard Risks are those that truly test a cat's skills. Jumping up to the top of a high ledge without making a sound or toppling the Tupperware, catching two mice with one strike and sneaking by a sleeping dog to steal his bone are all good examples of Hard Risks.



Testing Fate

There is a way for a cat to perform Risks that are beyond his capabilities... but it's uncertain. Whenever a cat takes a chance, it is said he "tests fate."

Whenever you Test Fate, roll a number of six-sided dice equal to the appropriate Trait. Count each die that rolls an even number (2, 4, or 6).



Taking Risks



To beat an Easy Risk, you have to roll at least one even.

To beat a Moderate Risk, you have to roll at least two evens.

To beat a Hard Risk, you have to roll at least three evens.

If the number of evens is equal to or greater than the Risk's difficulty, your cat beats the odds and succeeds. However, if you less than the required evens, fate gets the better of him, and your cat's action fails.

For example, Roland wants to jump from the kitchen floor to the kitchen table. The storyteller determines this is an Easy Risk for Roland. I take a look at his Catsheet and see Roland's LEGS are Strong, so he can do that with ease. I roll four dice (for my Strong Legs) and roll:



That's two evens. Because I only needed one, I succeed in my Risk.

Next, I decide I want Roland to jump from the kitchen table to the top of the refrigerator. The GM decides that's a bit more difficult of a jump because the top of the 'fridge is quite a way up. The storyteller decides this is a Moderate Risk. Again, Roland's Legs are Strong, so he gets four dice to roll. But the storyteller lets me know that the top of the 'fridge is covered with empty Tupperware bowls, and if I do make the jump, I'll cause most – if not all of them – to fall to the ground, making an awful racket. He says, "Making it to the top of the 'fridge without dropping the bowls is a Hard Risk."

I roll four dice:



This time, I roll two evens again. Because I needed three evens, the GM decides whether

Roland falls down to the kitchen floor or makes a noise when he lands on top of the 'fridge.

Advantage Dice

One of the most important elements of *Cat* system is Advantage Dice. These are dice the GM hands out to players for showing initiative and for good roleplaying. Each Advantage Die is another die the player can roll for a chance of rolling another success.

Advantage Dice represent advantages your cat has in any given Risk. GMs should not be shy about giving Advantage Dice; they are here to reward good roleplaying, planning, and innovative thinking.

A cat tries to hide from a dog. The player says, "I have three advantages. First, it's dark, lending to my hiding skills. Second, it's raining, which makes it hard for the dog to catch my scent. Finally, I'm up high, hiding on a dumpster. High above the dog's head."

The GM agrees and says, "Okay. You have three advantages. You can roll three additional dice to hide."

Scars

Despite their natural graces, cats get hurt. When they do, they sometimes walk away with a Scar or two. Whenever your cat tests Fate while doing something dangerous, there's a chance he will fail and get Scars.

For example, jumping from one rooftop to another is "dangerous." Catching a fly with your paw is not, so you can fail that Risk without taking any Scars.

When your cat fails a particularly dangerous Risk, check your dice. The lowest odd you rolled is the number of scars your cat gets for failing his Risk.

When you get Scars, you choose where they go. You can apply all your Scars to a single Trait or divide them up as you see fit. You



Cat



Advantage Dice

Hey, Mr. and Mrs. GM! Don't skimp on the Advantage Dice! They're what make the world go 'round.

Advantage Dice came out of a response to watching another system in action. (The system shall remain nameless, but its initials are DAD.) In that system, all the advantages a character could have were pre-loaded: right there on his sheet. The player didn't have to think about how to gain bonuses because all his bonuses were already in front of him. Besides, the wimpy circumstantial bonus (+2) didn't match the Feats he had on his sheet.

This led to the classic "I roll to hit" syndrome that drives me crazy. So, I decided to come up with something I liked more.

Advantage Dice make the player engage the world around him, make him look for any advantage his character can get. Rather than rely on his sheet, the player has to think outside his sheet and think of ways to gain advantages. The advantages aren't front loaded and calculated ahead of time.

When all the thinking is already done for the player, he resorts to "I roll to hit." He doesn't even address the situation with an in-character voice. "I roll to hit."

With advantage dice, he must think about the fight in-character. He must address the situation going on. If he just "rolls to hit," he's missing out on all the goodies. As the GM, it is your job to reward his creativity. Do it. You might be surprised at the response.

have to explain to the GM why you got a Scar in a particular Trait. If you can't come up with a compelling reason, he'll tell you where to put the Scar (usually in the Trait you tried to use).

If you get three Scars in one Trait, that Trait drops down to the next Rank.

If you get three Scars in a Good Trait, it drops to a **Hurt** Trait. Hurt traits have a bonus of 2.

If you earn three Scars in a Hurt Trait, it drops to **Crippled**. You may not take Risks with a Crippled Trait.

Healing

A cat heals one Wound at the beginning of each game session. Cats also heal one Wound per week (if time passes quickly in a game session).

Fighting

Cats fight. They fight each other, they fight Boggins, they fight lots of things. There are two circumstances under which cats fight: they fight other cats or they fight non-cats. The rules for each are as follows.

Fighting Other Cats

Cats do not fight to kill each other: just to prove who the better fighter is. Cats only fight for one round; one quick scuffle to prove dominance.

Both players roll either their Fangs or Claws (cat's choice). Compare the number of evens. Both cats take a number of Scars equal to the other cat's evens. Whoever got the most evens (took the least number of Scars) wins the fight.

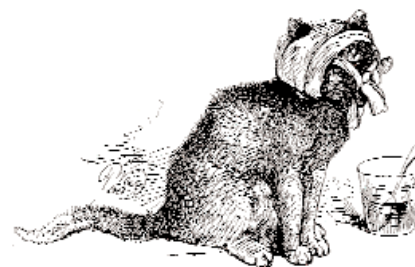
You may use Lives or Fighting Magic (see below) to dodge Scars as usual, which means cats may get into a fight and lose but take no Scars. However, the winner of the fight is always the cat who rolled the most evens.

Reputation

Fighting Non-Cats

When fighting dogs, rats, or Boggins, the system is a little different. Cats only fight each other to prove dominance; when fighting a Boggin, your cat is fighting for his life.

Use the same system as above with each throw of the dice representing one round of fighting. At the end of each round, each combatant takes a number of Scars equal to the number of evens his opponent rolled.



At the end of each round, check your Scars. If you have to adjust Traits because of Scars you've earned at the fight, do it now.

Dodging

During a fight, you cat may try to dodge instead of scoring a hit on his opponent. Note that if you dodge in a fight with another cat, you inflict no Scars at all and you are automatically considered the loser of the fight.

To dodge, roll your Legs instead of rolling your Claws or Fangs dice. This way, your cat tries to dodge the hits rather than deliver one of his own.

You may also dodge a Boggin's hits in the same way. Remember, you deliver no hits at all when dodging.

Death

A cat can only take so much damage before he loses his grip on life. When three of a cat's Traits are crippled, he's in real danger. When four of his Traits become Crippled, or if he uses his last Life, he dies.

Reputation

Your cat can have up to five Reputations, and each Reputation has both a Trait and a Rank. A Reputation's maximum Rank is 5. As an example, Roland has the following Reputations:

Boggin Killer 3

Rat Catcher 2

Good Kisser 2

Using Reputation

Whenever your cat takes a Risk, look at your Reputations. If the GM agrees that one of your Reputations is appropriate to the Risk, you can add your Reputation in dice to your roll. This gives you more dice for a better chance at more evens.

Losing Reputation

If your cat ever takes an action that goes against his Reputation, he stands a chance of losing it. If he doesn't fix the problem *in the very same session*, taking an action that would restore his Reputation, he loses a point of that Reputation.

The GM is the final judge of when a cat may lose or restore his Reputation.

Getting a New Reputation

Cats can earn new Reputations by doing things other cats hold in high esteem. If another cat sees your act he can declare that you deserve a new Reputation. The cat



Cat



“spends” one of his own Reputations to give you a new Reputation at half the value of his own. He must spend a Reputation that’s appropriate to your new Reputation. Here’s how it works.

Roland saves another cat from a nasty dog (using some good ol’ fashioned cat magic). The other cat – Sylvia – decided Roland needs a reward, so she decides to give him a new Reputation.

Sylvia has a Reputation for outsmarting dogs: Hound Huckster 3. She “spends” her Reputation to give Roland the same Reputation at half her Rank (rounded up). This means she can’t rely on her Reputation for the rest of the game.

So, Roland now has a new Reputation: Hound Huckster 2.

Lives

A cat has nine Lives and may use them in two ways.

First, you may spend a cat’s Life to succeed in any Risk, regardless of your Trait or the difficulty.

Second, you can use a Life to dodge any Scars gained from a single round.

Once your cat runs out of Lives, he’s out for good. Although, there are rumors of cats who find a way to refresh a Life... although nobody’s actually met a cat who has.

Style

Finally, cats have Style.

A cat’s Style comes from his confidence (some say his cockiness) and assuredness in his manner and physical prowess.

In other words, dogs just get the job done and cats do things with panache.

Whenever you make a roll and have more evens than you need, the evens become Style Points; write them down on your cat sheet. You can use Style in one of two ways.

First, you can keep them to use later. Each even kept in this way counts as an automatic even you can use later in the game. You may use your Style Point whenever you like and you may use as many Style Points on any roll you like – you are a cat, after all.

Second, you can use extra evens you just rolled to creatively edit the that particular moment of the scene. In other words, you can use your Style to put yourself in a better position, becoming the GM for a moment to add some zest to the scene. While you cannot subtract anything that already exists from the scene, you can alter established facts.

For example, while running away from a dog, Roland makes his way across a busy street. The GM tells me I have to make a Hard Legs roll to not get hit by the cars. I roll and get:



Four evens! Because I only needed three, I have one additional even to use for Style. I tell the GM that one of the cars spins out of the way, cutting me off from the dog; he’s gonna have to wait a few moments while I continue darting down a dark alley, clear out of sight.

Magic

A cat’s Tail is his soul, his source of power and magic. And while it is called “cat magic,” cats don’t cast spells... they play Tricks.

The stronger a cat’s Tail, the mightier his magic and the more clever his Tricks. We’ll learn more about Tricks in a moment. First, let’s talk a little bit about the limits of cat magic.



Magic



Magic Points

Tricks don’t happen all by themselves; a cat has to *make* a Trick work. He does this by using Magic Points and rolling dice. The harder the Trick, the more magic it requires, the more evens you have to roll to make it work.

Each cat has five Magic Points, plus one Magic Point per Tail Rank. In order to use any magic at all, a cat has to spend at least one Magic Point which gives him a number of dice to roll equal to his Tail. Each additional Magic Point gives you an Advantage Die to roll.

The Bauble Curse

Long, long ago, a sorcerer dog tricked the King of the Cats, putting a curse on him and all his kind. Known by cats as “the Bauble Curse,” it is one of the more humiliating aspects of cat nature. If you’ve ever seen a cat chase a ball of twine or a feather on a long piece of string, you’re familiar with the Curse.

As long as the object is in his sight (and active), a cat is under the thrall of the curse. He remains under the thrall of the Curse until he makes three Hard Risks with his Tail. Until he does that, the Curse holds him tight, making him completely helpless and under the thrall of the Curse. If he fails all three Risks, he is suddenly free from the Curse. A cat

cannot take any Risk while under the effects of the Bauble Curse.

Getting Wet

If a cat gets wet – and we’re not talking about drops, we’re talking about the drowned rat kind of wet – he can’t use his magic for the rest of the day, even if he gets himself dry again.

No Tail

Some species of cat have no Tail. While they may have no *physical* tail, they still have a Tail Trait, just like other cats.

Using Magic

Listed below are the many Tricks cats use to befuddle their enemies. Each Trick has a Tail Rank indicating how strong your cat’s Tail needs to be to use the Trick. If your cat’s Tail is equal to or greater than the listed Rank, you may use the Trick. If the Trick’s Rank is greater than your Tail Rank, you cannot use the Trick.

Some Tricks have a “Variable” Tail Rank; this means the Trick has a number of effects based on your cat’s Tail Rank. You can pull off the effects equal to or lesser than your Tail Rank but not those greater than your Tail Rank.

For example, Roland wants to use a Trick. His Tail is Strong, so he can use any Trick in the





Cat



book that requires a Poor, Good, or Strong Tail. He cannot use any Trick that requires a Best Tail.

Fall on All Fours (Variable)

Whenever scientists study how cats fall, they always get very strange results. That's because cats are using magic to keep themselves safe during the fall and some cats are just better at magic than others.

Good: A cat with a Good Tail can fall twenty feet and take no Scars.

Strong: A cat with a Strong Tail can fall forty feet and suffer no Scars.

Best: A cat with a Best Tail can fall seventy feet and suffer no scars.

Hide in Plain Sight (Variable)

Cats have an amazing ability to disappear almost before your very eyes. Once a cat disappears, he remains hidden as long as he remains still.

Good: A cat with a Good Tail can disappear if everyone in the room has their back turned to him.

Strong: A cat with a Strong Tail can disappear if no-one is looking directly at him (i.e. he's in the corner of your eye).

Best: A cat with a Best Tail can disappear, quite literally, "in the blink of an eye," even if you're looking straight at him.

Sneak (Variable)

Cats are sneaky; they move very quietly without drawing any attention to themselves.

Good: A cat with a Good Tail can move through a darkened area (room, alleyway, etc.) without being seen by anyone.

Strong: A cat with a Strong Tail can move through a room full of people without being seen.

Best: A cat with a Best Tail can pass over sleeping people (and other creatures) without disturbing them from their rest.

Doorslip (Good)

A cat must have a Strong Tail to perform the Doorslip Trick. It allows a cat to slip by a locked door. It requires a small sacrifice (a rat, mouse or rabbit) to be placed before the door. Once the Ritual is complete, the cat slips by the door as if it were open.

The Dinner Dance Ritual (Good)

The Dinner Dance Ritual (some precocious cats call this the "DDR") is a favorite of toms and requires little preparation. All you need do is walk around a human three times and he'll grant a single request (bring me food, give me shelter, etc.). The request must have something to do with fulfilling a basic need.

Dream Bite (Good)

It's hard to find humans in the Dream, especially the ones who don't pay attention. A few bites (just two or three) mark a human with your scent (clawing works as well), making the human easy to find in the Dream. Dream Bite also works on Boggins, making them easy to find (and kill).

The Chase Your Tail Whammy (Best)

A not-very-nice Ritual that befuddles dogs. If you can jump over a dog – head to tail – he gets confused and starts chasing his tail. This lasts for 1, 2 or 3 minutes (roll a 6-sided die and divide the result).

Fighting Frenzy (Good)

When a cat needs it, he can enter a kind of wild frenzy of claws and teeth. The price is high, but sometimes, a cat needs it to survive. By spending one Life, a cat may gain a number of actions in a fight equal to his Tail bonus. This means a cat with a Good Tail (3) can take three actions during a round. He can attack three opponents, attack an opponent three times, or whatever else he needs to do. This particular trick has a high price, however: it costs the cat one of his Lives.

Storytelling

This is the Game Master's part of the book. It contains Advanced Rules to help the GM tailor the game to his liking, advice on making and telling stories, running the game, storytelling in the Kingdom of Dreams, a whole bunch of Enemies and a few other helpful hints.

Advanced Rules

Below are a few extra rules you can put in your game. You don't have to use all of them, you can pick and choose. If you feel more rules get in the way of enjoying the game, leave them alone.

Increasing Your Traits

At the end of the game, each cat gains a Trait Point to allocate to one of his Traits (plus one or two for good roleplaying).

You can increase a Trait with Trait Points. You must invest three Trait Points in a Trait to increase it one Rank.

Experienced Cats

You may want to play a more experienced cat at the beginning of the game. Before you even begin the story, you can spend one Life to increase a Good Trait to Strong or two Lives to increase a Strong Trait to Best. You can spend up to three Lives this way.

Legendary Traits

Some cats have "Legendary Traits" (6). To increase a Trait from Best to Legendary, you must spend 6 Trait Points. Remember, a Trait cannot increase if it has any Scars.

GM Advice

Storytelling is not an easy job, but it's a very rewarding one. This chapter is dedicated to making his job easy and fun. In order to do that, I've divided storytelling up into three simple steps: #1 Writing Stories, #2 Telling Stories, and #3 Running the Game.

Step No1: Writing Stories

Before we get too far into how you write stories for *Cat*, we should stop a moment to consider a question: what kind of stories do you want to tell? Problem is, that's a trick question. As GM, you don't tell the players stories, you help them tell stories to each other.

Storytelling is a lot like being a tour guide for a group of people going to an amusement park. They're all eager to play your brand new storytelling game, but the problem is, they all like different kinds of stories. Some folks like horror stories, some like romance, and others like action.

Some people like to be scared. They enjoy stories of ghosts, bogeymen and other things that bump your bed in the night. Others can't stand scary stories, and want to stay as far away from them as possible. Some folks like stories with a lot of action, suspense and drama. Others like softer, quieter stories, where there's no doubt the hero wins in the end. Your job as a GM is to make sure everybody has fun, so you have to figure out what kind of stories they like. Now that may sound hard, but a couple of tricks make it easier than it sounds.



Cat



Trick 1: Ask Your Players

It's so simple, you'd never think of it, but actually sitting down and asking your players what kind of story they'd like to tell is a really good way of making sure everybody in your game is happy.

Trick 2: Look at their Catsheets

Another good trick is taking a peek at their Catsheets. Players looking for an action-filled fight fest make their Claws and Fangs their Best and Strong Traits. Folks who want a little romance make their Coat their Best Trait. Players looking to use Magic and wander through the Dream have a thick, bushy Best Tail. Take a peek at those Catsheets, figure out what your players want and give it to them.

It's All About Drama

When writing a story, it's important to include an element of drama. Now, this little word gets tossed around a lot (like its cousin "irony") but what exactly does it mean? Well, drama is conflict. Without conflict, cats sit around all day and get very little done. However, when you give a protagonist a goal, then put something between him and that goal, you have drama.

For example, let's say there's a little boy haunted by a very exotic Boggin nobody's ever seen before. It's mean and ruthless and sends all the neighborhood cats away licking scars. The boy is dying and the Boggin is laughing. The cats have to do something before its too late.

Here you have goal ("protect the boy") and obstacle ("Boggin is too tough to beat up alone"). The heroes of the story have to find a way to save the boy, but in order to do that, they must defeat the Boggin. Now that you know the goal, you set up complications and smaller obstacles the players must overcome on their way to the big goal. They hear a rumor of an old cat who lives across town who knows all sorts of things about Boggins.

Maybe if they get to him, he can tell them how to defeat the Boggin?

This sets up all sorts of obstacles for the heroes. First, they have to discover where the old ratter lives. Second, they have to get out of the neighborhood and across town. That means a whole city of dogs, mean people, stray Boggins and animal control people to dodge. That city's worth three nights of adventures all by itself. Then, once they've found the old cat, they have to convince him to pass on his knowledge. Finally, once they know the method for dealing with the Big Bad Boggin, they have to get back across town and deal with it.

Another example: Your child goes off to summer camp with a fat Boggin sitting on his back. You have to find a way to smuggle yourself on that bus and make sure that thing doesn't spread Boggin eggs all over the camp. You know, most summer camps have dogs...

But even simple circumstances can inspire epic adventures. Fleas, disease, ticks, even a messy house can inspire cats to incredible methods to get their people to pay attention to their actions. As the opening story suggests, just getting them to clean out the litter box can be a challenge.

Step №2: Telling Stories

Some people say the oldest rule in storytelling is: "Show, don't tell." They're probably right, but in my head, it isn't the most important. It's more important to keep your audience entertained at all times.

How do you do this? Well, the Japanese swordsman-scholar Miyamoto Musashi once suggested that swordfighting had a lot to do with carpentry. I think its safe to say that storytelling does, too. After all, both of them employ toolboxes...



Telling Stories



The Two Toolboxes

A storyteller has two toolboxes: his Voice Toolbox and his Body Toolbox. Let's look at each in turn.

Using Your Voice

The human voice is a powerful tool. Like a musical instrument, it's capable of all kinds of sounds. However, no instrument in the world is as versatile as your voice. With it, you can create lightning, thunder, dogs barking or howling at the moon. You can create characters, each with their own unique voice and mannerisms. Use funny voices, scary voices, guttural voices, high pitched voices, ticks, stutters, slurs and anything else you can think of.

Spend one day, just one day, listening to the world around you and pay close attention to how things sound. Then, try mimicking those sounds. You may be amazed at how close you get. Or, just sit in your kitchen for ten minutes. Turn the TV and music off, and just sit and listen. Listen to the hum of the refrigerator, the sound of neighbors outside, cars starting and driving by, water flowing through the walls as someone turns on the shower, a distant phone ringing, and pets running around downstairs. The world is seldom, if ever, silent. Cats know this. So should your players.

Using Your Body

The Body Toolbox is just as powerful, although not as subtle as the Voice Toolbox. The easiest example of using your body to help communicate information to your players is through the body language of non-player characters. Each character should hold himself differently. Like the exercise I mentioned above, go the mall or some other place were people congregate, and watch them. Just over lunch, sit for an hour with a sandwich and watch as people walk by. Note where they hold their hands, how they hold their heads, how they dodge the glances of strangers, how they get out of the way, how they drop eye contact to the floor, how they recover from a stumble, how they hold themselves in a large group of friends, how they hold themselves in lines and how their entire body language changes when they need to apologize. It's amazing to watch, it really is.

And you can learn so much from just an hour of paying attention. And don't spend all your time watching people; spend some time watching cats, too. The more you know about our feline friends, the more you can communicate their actions and voices to your players.





Cat



Step No.3: Running the Game

Finally, a quick discussion on how to run the game. First, a look at the rules. Second, a discussion of one of the oldest storytelling tricks in the world. Finally, a chat on how to reward your players.

The Rules

As was stated at the beginning of this book, the only rule you really have to follow is HAVE FUN! Now, that's easy for me to say: I wrote the rules, I know how they work and I know which rules to ditch when I need to, right?

Well, frankly, so do you. I have a lot of faith in you. I designed the rules to be simple and easy to fudge with so you could do just that. Everybody's got their own house rules for MONOPOLY, and there's no reason why everyone who owns a copy of this game shouldn't have their own set of house rules for it as well.

Yes, dropping and changing rules changes how the game works, but that's the point of dropping and changing rules: to make the game work differently. I don't expect everyone to like every rule I've written in the book. I expect people to change them, tweak them or just ditch them all together and create

an entirely new rule set. That's half the fun of a roleplaying game: watching how other people play the same game with different sets of rules.

In fact, while running Cat, I found myself changing the rules every session or so. One player had to make a jump and failed it by one even (he needed 3 and rolled 2), but he said, "My cat just landed on the other side, just a paw short, right?" I nodded. "So, he could use his Claws to climb the rest of the way?" I nodded again. "You can make a test with your Claws to try climbing up the rest of the way."

Nowhere in the rules does it say a player can do that, but his solution to the failure was so cool (it made everybody's eyes shine – he really needed to make that jump), I let him get away with it. And just like that BANG! a new rule. If I played the rules hard and fast, he wouldn't have made the roll and fell for some Scars. Instead, because I was willing to bend the rules for a creative player, the game proceeded and he managed to save a mommy from a nasty Boggin.

So, if you don't like how Lives work and think they should have a more important role in the game, make them more important. Don't worry about "game balance" or any of that nonsense. The only "game balance" to worry about is when one player takes advantage of the rules and exploits them at the



Running the Game



expense of other players. It doesn't matter what rule set you put in front of him, he'll ruin any game he can get his hands on. That's his brand of fun: enjoying himself at the expense of others. That's why other games have "game balance": to ensure the rules monkey doesn't "abuse" the game system.

I want you to abuse the game system. Make it work the way you want it to work. But if one player spoils everybody else's good time, don't blame the game system, blame the player.

And don't invite him back next time.

Let Them Do All the Work

This is a trick the best storytellers know: there's a lot more of "them" (the players) than there are of "us" Fortunately, they haven't figured that out just yet, and you can use it to your advantage.

In a movie or a book, the author has complete control over every aspect of the story. He controls the thoughts, actions and dialogue of all the characters, but more importantly, he also controls the setting, scenery and props. Most roleplaying games use the premise "the storyteller is the author and the players are the main characters." We're not gonna go in that direction. I suggest to you the players are authors as well. Your chief role as GM (a purposefully misguiding title) is to help the players tell their own stories.

When their cats enter a room, tell them to describe it. Let them fill it with props. Fill in the blanks as you see fit, but otherwise, let them do all the work. Let them describe the family they live with, the house they live in and the surrounding neighborhood. Let them name the dog next door. Let them name and describe the hawk that lives just up the way in the forest off the main road. Let them come up with the backstory of how they found that hawk with a broken wing and brought mice and rats to it and nursed it back to health, thus

making an ally for life. Let them detail their own past adventures, but when you do, listen closely and keep notes. You'll find all sorts of adventure seeds in their descriptions, as well as possible future allies and enemies.

The more control you give your players over their own characters' destinies, the more they'll invest into not only their own characters, but the world surrounding them. If you introduce a secondary character, they decide whether or not they want to invest any time with him. If they create the character, they've already got a say in his look, his mannerisms, his habits and flaws. In other words, they'll create characters they want to interact with.

In other words, they're doing all the work.





Storytelling in the Kingdom of Dreams

When your characters enter the Kingdom of Dreams, you have many challenges before you. Dreams aren't like the real world, they have qualities that make them distinct. In this section of the book, we'll talk about dreams and how to invoke their unique atmosphere.

The Quality of Dreams

The most important thing to remember about telling stories in the Kingdom of Dreams is atmosphere. Dreams feel a certain way, and if you can invoke that sensation, you can make it really feel like your players are walking through a dreamscape.

The Dreamer

The first thing to consider when describing Dream is the environment of the dreamer. If a dreamer is snuggled up in a cozy blanket with his favorite pillow, the Dream is a friendly, warm place.

The sun is high in the sky, sending delicate drops of warmth down on your head. It's not too hot because a cool breeze keeps you company. The tall grasses wave, the trees sway and the air is fresh and cool. And you're pretty sure if you jump hard enough, you can fly off into that beautiful sky...

On the other hand, if the dreamer falls asleep in a cardboard box with rain pelting through his makeshift home while sirens blare and the growl of a dog can be heard somewhere in the darkness, a dreamer's experience is very different.

It is dark. And wet. Lightning flashes, but gives no illumination. The drooping limbs claw the earth below them, hoping to dig up something buried long ago. You think you hear screaming, perhaps below those trees. And now a sucking sound, perhaps at the roots. You are cold, alone and in the dark. You're pretty sure if you don't keep walking,

the mud will suck you down. Maybe that's where the screams are coming from. Someone who couldn't keep walking. And your feet are so heavy...

Details are important. Use colors to communicate mood. Use sounds, use smells. Use everything at your disposal to invoke the atmosphere of dream.

Symbols and Absurdity

Yes, sometimes a cigar is just a cigar, but that means other times, it isn't. Symbols are an important element of Dream, although the symbolic world doesn't always make sense. That's probably because it isn't supposed to make sense.

Symbols communicate information to us, but sometimes that information isn't supposed to be interpreted in a logical way (the surreal films of David Lynch are called "dream-like" for a reason). Sometimes, dreams present images that don't "mean" anything, but communicate a sensation or an emotion.

A strange man approaches you. His eyes are black, his hair is blond and his fingernails are made of alabaster. "There is something I need to do," he says, and he reaches forward and kisses you with his corpse-cold lips. His breath smells like burned rubber. When he's done, he whispers, "Thank you," and walks away. Roses drop from his trousers as he leaves, filling the room with their scent.

The above paragraph could very well be a dream, and there are a dozen different ways to interpret the experience. However, what is more important is the emotion you get from the experience. When describing dreams, use surreal experiences to elicit response from the dreamers, rather than fill their heads with "What did that mean?"

We almost never understand our dreams, but we always remember the way they made us feel.



**Exaggeration**

In the Kingdom of Dreams, everything is bigger than it should be. Or, if you like, everything is much, much smaller. Either way, exaggeration is a great tool for invoking the atmosphere of dream.

You approach Charlie's house. You remember you owe him that ten bucks you borrowed for lunch the other day. The windows open wide, staring down at you. The drapes curl into smiles. The wooden fence twists into an iron gate as you pass through, slamming shut when it is behind you. The grass murmurs. The trees chortle. The door swings open by itself as you approach. You want to stop; turn back and run, but your feet keep carrying you forward...

So much of the geography and architecture of Dream is exaggeration, reflecting the mood of the dreamer, or the subject of his dream. If he's facing his fears, everything is dark, gloomy and sharp. If he's comfortable, everything is soft, warm and inviting.

Time

In the Kingdom of Dreams, time only exists as a variable, an elastic element. There is no consistency to its passing. A journey that should take weeks lasts mere moments, with no recollection at all of the events between Point A and Point B. A second can take hours to pass, especially when running away from a nightmare. Things speed up and slow down when they feel like it.

Jumping, Flying and Other Amazing Acts of Physical Impossibility

Anything is possible in dream, but most of it is unintentional. Some dreamers can control their actions, flying when they feel like it. Others stumble on minor miracles and enjoy them while they last.

Cats can control the landscape of dream (see Dreaming Rules, below), but humans make everything difficult. Because they can't control their dreams – only a few, very

talented humans can – their psyches manipulate and warp the dreamscape beyond any hope of repair. In other words, cats have to make do with the world humans make.

Nightmares

As if Boggins weren't enough.

In the Kingdom of Dreams, cats have to look out for nightmares. Like Boggins, nightmares can do little to danger cats... unless they're powered by the fears of dreamers, that is.

Nightmares feed on human fear, and seek out dreaming humans to quench their hunger. Many nightmares even collect human dreamers, keeping them trapped within cages made from their own phobias and insecurities.

Dreaming Rules

Cats have great power in the Kingdom of Dreams. Because they won the Contest, they have the ability to alter and manipulate the Dreamscape. However, because mankind's control over the Dreamscape is random at best, they have a lot to do when looking out for their people while they dream.

A cat uses his Tail to manipulate dream. Unlike Tricks, however, he can only alter the dreamscape by taking Risks. Listed below are the ways cats can change the Dreamscape along with the Difficulties.

Change Yourself (1 Even)

With a Good Tail you can jump a mile into the sky, grow wings and fly, grow gills and swim, and anything else that affects you, only you, and nothing else.

Change Something Else (2 Evens)

Your cat can make an alarm clock ring, a computer shut down, a wound stop bleeding and a mean lady fart in a public place. You can change any object as long as it is not permanently destroyed by the change and it is something it can do.

**Alter Something Else (3 Evens)**

If your cat's Tail is his Best Trait, your cat can make something (not a person) do something it can't do. You can make a clock face laugh or a pig fly or a candy bar turn into a flower.

Create or Destroy Something (4 Evens)

If your cat's Tail is Legendary, he can completely destroy one thing. It can't be something made out of more than one part like a gun or a clock, but you can destroy a part of that clock, so it doesn't work anymore.

Completely Change One Place (5 Evens)

Finally, a cat can completely change his surroundings into something else. He can't predict what it will be, but the entire situation changes. This is an act of incredible will, demanding every bit of magic a cat's got. It is no ordinary feat, but it can be accomplished.

Cat Adventures

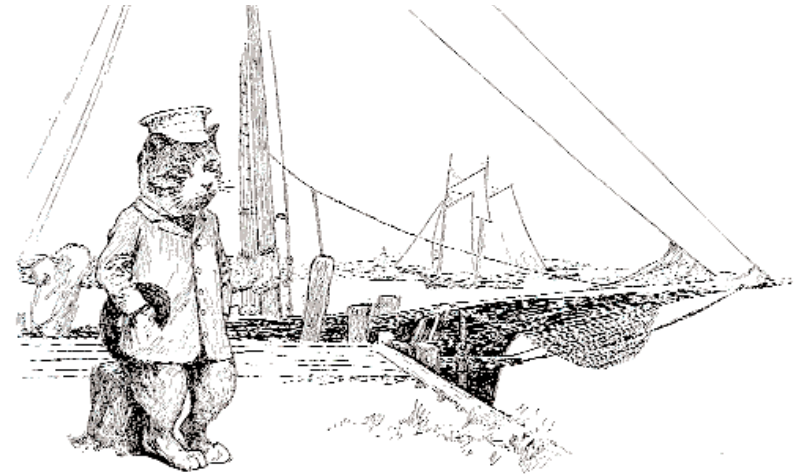
Listed below are a few story hooks for you to incorporate into full blown stories. Make sure each fits your own group's style of play and use the tricks you learned in the previous section.

A New Secret Name

If Boggins ever discover a cat's secret name, they become invisible to him, just as they're invisible to humans. It also means Boggins can haunt the poor cat and steal his magic from him.

If a cat ever "loses" his secret name this way, he must find another one. The only way to do that is in Dream. The Well of Names is hidden (to keep Boggins and Nightmares from discovering it) and only the most knowledgeable creatures in the world know where it is. But getting that knowledge isn't easy and probably requires a quest.

Once the knowledge is gained, the journey is only half done. Journeying through Dream to the Well of Names requires cunning, courage and stealth (to make sure no Boggins or Nightmares follow you). It rests in a hidden valley just off the shores of the Sea of Flame. Once there, the cat whispers into the Well and the echo tells him his new name – depending on what he whispered into the Well. What should he whisper? That's up to the cat.





Cat



Rescuing the King of the Cats

A witch (typically a mean old lady, but there's nothing wrong with flying in the face of cliché) has captured the King of the Cats and plans on skinning him for his magic and knowledge. Of course, it's up to you to organize and direct a rescue plan.

The witch has all kinds of tricks and traps set up for cats who hope to rescue their King (just think of what the traps in *Home Alone* would really do to a cat and you've got the right idea). She also has twin Dobermans (named "Tooth" and "Claw") and a pit bull ("Esau") who have free run of the house. She also has a flock of crows who sit on the roof looking for cats. They're not really crows, but nightmares she pulled out of Dream. The other birds in the area don't like them and would be willing to help out a group of cats to get rid of them.

Finally, she has a little black cat she calls Circe. This cat has been possessed by a Boggin and has Boggin Points (see *Boggins*, below). It has a Best Tail and the rest of her Traits are Strong. She's always on the lookout for other cats and will kill them for their magic. She can use cat magic and has set up a ritual to warn her when cats enter the house. Circe is clever and knows she probably can't take on a group of cats by herself, but she can warn the dogs and isolate less clever cats with her magic, taking them out one-by-one.

The player cats may be armed with an army of neighbors (what cat in his right mind wouldn't want to have "saved the King of the Cats" on his name?) but they have very little time to get help and even less time to plan. They discover he's been captured one morning and they have until midnight to save him (that's when she plans doing the sacrifice).

Give the witch the same traits as a Mean Person, but also give her some Boggin Points

(depending on how many cats you have and how tough you think they are). She can do everything a witch should be able to with her Magic Points:

Flight: She can fly for 3 BP – no matter the distance – but she needs her broom to do it.

Curses: For 2 BP she can cause a cat to fail at a specific action (climbing, sneaking, fighting). The curse only lasts until the cat tries that action, then he fails and the curse is off his coat. She must point at the cat with her magic chicken leg (taken from a black feathered chicken) to cast a curse.

Potions: She has potions that stink (causing –1 die to all actions) and stick (3 dice of Advantage to keep a cat held). She also has a potion that makes her invisible (until she stands in sunlight). She also needs a potion to see and talk to Boggins. This potion lasts for ten minutes.

By the way, the witch is trying to become a Boggin. She wins their faith and trust until one of them possesses her, giving her exactly what she thought she wanted. Saving the witch from herself may be a secondary task here, but it is still a noble one.

Good Dogs and Bad Cats

As suggested above, there are "bad cats," but it have to take a Boggin to make a cat go bad. Like people, some cats are just born bad. Also like people, ambition, heartbreak, trauma, and other emotional landmines can turn a cat against its people.

Imagine a cardboard box full of abandoned kittens sitting in the August heat, left to die of exposure. Imagine a kitten with a rope and rock tied to its neck, thrown into a river. People are notorious for their treatment of cats, and there are those out there who feel people just don't deserve protection. What they do deserve is the same pain they give cats.



Kingdom of Dreams



"Bad cats" go out of their way to bring misery to humans, including one trick that no honest cat ever uses: stealing breath. It's an old ritual that's forbidden by the King of the Cats, but that doesn't mean his subjects never use it. If a cat sits on a sleeping person, he can steal the breath right out of them. The ritual takes 1 hour per Magic Point the person has, and at the end of the night, the person is one Magic Point less and the cat has three more. When a cat steals a person's last Magic Point, the person dies. An adult has only 3 Magic Points, teens have 4, adolescents have 5, toddlers have 6 and infants have 7.

For example, a bad cat named Klytemnestra is stealing a little boy's breath. The boy has 5 Magic Points, so the ritual takes 5 hours a night to complete. In the morning, Klytemnestra has 3 extra Magic Points and the boy has 1 less. That means the next night, the ritual only takes 4 hours to complete.

On the other hand, there is such a thing as a "good dog." Many canines resent cats for winning the Contest, but not all of them. A few – just a few – recognize a cat's duty to

protect people and actually assist them in their duties. After all, nothing on Earth knows duty better than a dog; it's just that duty sometimes turns into jealousy...

Often times, a puppy gets raised in a household of cats, learns how to see Boggins (not all dogs can see them) and helps out his feline fellows. He uses his own magic (see *Dogs*, below) to hunt down and kill Boggins, thus earning friendship and trust.

Now, with all that in mind, consider an adventure with a good dog and a bad cat. The cat is trying to get revenge on a family for giving away her kittens while the dog – a puppy named "Hijinx" – tries to get the help of his cat neighbors. The cats have never heard of a dog trying to talk with cats, so they have no need to trust him. Hijinx does his best to win them over, trying to show evidence of the bad cat's treachery. However, this bad cat is clever and uses tricks of his own to sabotage any trust Hijinx earns. Nobody listens to poor Hijinx and every night, the little baby in his care wakes with less breath...

Cross-Genre Cat

Nearly every roleplaying game in existence has rules for cats. If you'd like to play a cat from this game in another roleplaying game, it's pretty easy.

All you do is use the traits from the other game for your physical actions. Then, assume your cat's tail is his Best Trait (you need all the advantages you can get) and use the magic system in this book as is. If you use a Magic Point to disappear between the blink of an eye, that's exactly what you do. Assume cat magic always works and is stronger than any magic (or technology) humans have. After all, we're protecting them – whether they know it or not – and their little attempts at magic won't get in our way of doing our job.





Cat



Don't feel you have to stop at transplanting cat magic, however. Move over the Boggins as well. Humans can't see Boggins (most humans, anyway), and even if they do have a magic sword, magic armor and holy hand grenades, they still need protection from things they can't see. Nearly every hero of fantastic fiction and mythology has gone through long periods of melancholy. Ever stop to consider that may be a big, fat Heavy sitting on them, sucking their dreams dry?

People need cats, no matter the time or the place. And just because your Strength or Dexterity isn't 18 don't mean you can't be a hero.

(A quick aside: I remember watching Alien with friends during the writing of this book, thinking how little Jones the Cat using every last Magic Point he had trying to lead everyone away from the monster. Just imagine his consternation at the end: locked in a box, completely unable to help out his human friends. Now that's drama.)

Natural Enemies

Cats have a lot of enemies – most of them you and I can't even see. We'll talk about those later. First, let's talk about the kind of enemies you and I can see.

A Note on Traits

Not all Enemies have the same Traits as cats, and cats don't always have the same Traits as their Enemies. In a nutshell, this is how it works.

If a cat has a Trait an enemy doesn't have, there's no competition; the cat wins any contest involving that Trait. The same is true for the reverse: if an enemy has a Trait a cat doesn't have, the cat loses the contest. In other words, if a human tries to pick up a cat with his Thumbs, and a cat doesn't have any Thumbs to counter the action, there's very

little he can do. On the other hand, people don't have Claws...

Also, as a last ditch resort, cats can always try to run away with their Legs.

Some enemies have "Extra Scars" and "Less Scars." Extra Scars are deducted from a fight before any Scars go to Traits. Enemies with Less Scars can only take the listed number of Scars before they can't fight anymore.

Dogs

Traits

Jaws (for carrying and fighting)

Legs (for running and jumping)

Eyes (seeing)

Ears (hearing)

Nose (smelling)

Coat (for impressing other dogs and taking Scars)

Paws (for digging)

Dogs are very similar to cats, but with little differences in Traits. They usually rush headfirst into an attack, and they don't use their Claws, they use Jaws.

A dog's Jaws are just like a cat's Fangs, only they do a lot more damage. In a fight, if a dog wins a test with his Jaws, he's grabbed hold of the cat and can crush him. A dog's Jaws inflict a number of Scars equal to his Jaws Bonus each round. He doesn't need to roll any dice to do so. A cat's only hope is to spend Lives every round to avoid gaining Scars.

Every round, the cat gains one chance to escape the dog's Jaws. He cannot spend a Life to automatically succeed, he must Test Fate, and he may only use his Claws to do so.

Dogs also have their own kind of magic. It's less powerful because they didn't win The Contest, but it is still there. A dog's magic is



Enemies



based on loyalty to one person and he earns Loyalty Points as long as his bond with that person remains intact. Assume a dog has 3 Loyalty Points per year he's spent with a single owner (or family). A dog's magic can be spent in the following ways:

Find (1 Point): The dog can find his owner – no matter where he is.

Speak (3 Points): The dog can communicate a single word to his owner using non-verbal communication.

Defend (any Points): A dog can spend a Loyalty Point when defending his owner, adding 3 to any roll.

Smell Boggins (1 Point): Dogs can't see Boggins, but some of them can smell them. Just smelling a Boggins isn't enough; the dog has to pinpoint it before he can attack. A dog can spend a Loyalty Point to smell a Boggins haunting his owner. He can attack the Boggins after he's spent a Loyalty to find him.

Track (2 Points): A dog can spend 2 Loyalty to remember any creature's scent. Once he's spent the Loyalty, he can always follow that creature's trail.

Banish Boggins (3 Points): Dogs know a ritual that gets rid of Boggins. The ritual is complicated, but allows the dog to get rid of a Boggins forever. It requires an item and some (unknowing) participation by the owner. First, the dog chews on the item, spending 1 Loyalty. Second, the dog must get the owner to throw the item at the Boggins. (This usually requires several throwing attempts.) Once the item hits the Boggins in question, the dog spends 2 Loyalty, takes the item away from the owner and buries it. If it remains in the ground until the next dawn, the Boggins is banished.

Rats

Traits

Face (whiskers, eyes, ears, nose)

Legs (for running and jumping)

Teeth (for biting and carrying)

Tail (not an advantage; see below)

Swarm (a big advantage; see below)

Nails (for clawing, digging)

While one rat isn't much of a threat to a cat, many of them all at once can be a problem, even for the best ratter. Rats work well together, and when they do, they use their Swarm Trait. If a swarm of rats attacks a cat, they add their Swarm Traits together for any Risks against the cat.

Individually, if a cat wants to do anything to a rat, he always makes a test against the rat's Tail: a rat's Tail is always Poor (Bonus 1) and cannot be improved.





Cat



Mean People

Traits

Face (eyes, ears, nose)

Legs (for running and jumping)

Thumbs (for picking things up)

Tools (see below)

Mean People do mean things to cats. This is usually predicated by use of Thumbs. In order for a mean person to get hold of a cat, make a test between the mean person's Thumbs and the cat's Legs. Once he's in the Mean Person's grip, there's little he can do to get away – other than claw the Mean Person's eyes out. A successful use of Claws against the Mean Person's Face means the cat has scratched hard enough to escape the Mean Person's grip.

Tools give Mean People additional advantages. Small tools like hammers and knives give a Mean Person 2 Advantage Dice on all rolls. Larger tools like shovels, brooms and other two-handed implements give them 4 Advantage Dice. Guns, cars and other large and deadly weapons give Mean People 10 AD on all rolls.



Boggins

There are many different kinds of Boggins, but they all want one thing: physical form. Boggins don't cause fear and anger and other negative emotions for the fun of it. They have goals; notably to possess a mortal shell. Boggins can possess any living creature – including cats – but the process requires specific steps. Once the process is completed, the Boggin is in control of the body, with the thoughts and memories of the host shunted aside.

How do Boggins gain control of a host? There are many methods, but the most popular are listed below.

Note that all Boggins begin the same: formless, skittering shadow-like creatures. The first step in the process of possessing a host is finding that host's potential weaknesses and exploiting them. The shape of the Boggin is dependent on those weaknesses. In other words, it is the host who gives a Boggin its shape and power.

For game purposes, we call that power "Boggin Points." The more Points a Boggin has, the more potent a foe it is, and the more difficult it is to defeat. Each Boggin has different abilities, all requiring the use of Boggin Points.

Defeating a Boggin before it possesses a host is pretty straightforward. If a Boggin runs out of Boggin Points, it reverts back to its natural shape – a formless blob – and skitters back to wherever it came. But once it gets its hooks into a host, driving it away is next to impossible. Each is different, requiring a ritual known only to the oldest most experienced Boggin hunters. You'll learn all those tricks below.



Boggins



The Green-Eyed Monster

"The Green-Eyed Monster, as you may guess, sits on your shoulder, whispering all sorts of things into your ear. Most of them involve things that other people have and you don't."

Traits

Claws, Hide (Coat), Face, Fangs, Legs, Nose, Wings

Green-Eyed Monsters – otherwise known as "Greenies" – aren't very tough Boggins, nor are they as dangerous as Men Under the Bed or Heavies, but they are industrious and about as assiduous as Boggins come. Not content to work alone, Greenies work in groups, ensuring the host hears nothing but their own little wicked whispers.

When they first take shape, Greenies appear as tiny devils, complete with horns and tails. They have talons and teeth and tiny wings they use to fly about. Their skin is like hardened leather (thus, the "Hide" Trait), making them highly resistant to injury. They latch on to the host's shoulder, whispering into the host's ear all sorts of nonsense about everything he doesn't have. Soon, the host becomes completely distracted from his own life, losing his own identity in an obsessive lust for other people's belongings.

Greenies work together in small groups. Every day a host is infected with Greenies, the little beasts all gain a Boggin Point. Like other Boggins, when Greenies first take shape, all their Traits begin at Poor, but they can spend Boggin Points (one-per-one) to increase their Traits.

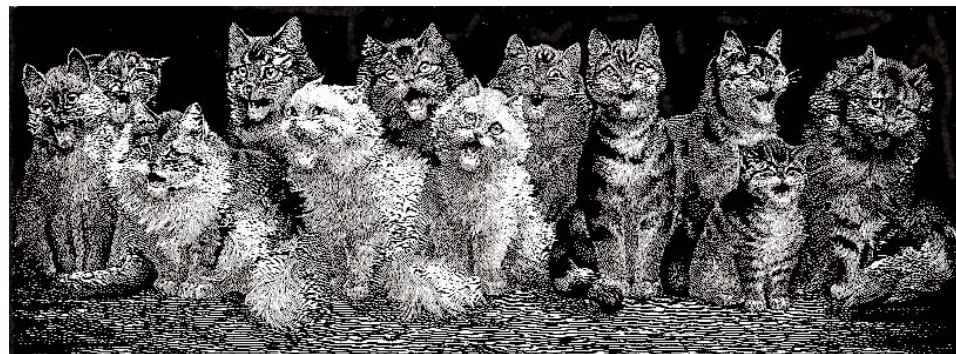
The Man under the Bed

"He's a nasty one. We called him 'The One Who Lurks.' I had to find my Tommy in Dreaming and have a long chat with him about it. Then, I had to do some fighting of my own. When my Tommy saw me standing up to it, he knew he could, too. And when he did, The One Who Lurks became The One Who Runs Away."

Traits

Claws, Face, Fangs, Legs, Nose, Thumbs

He's also known as The Man in the Closet, and The Man at the Window, but his purpose is always the same: to scare the wits out of children everywhere. The Boggin gains strength from children's fears, especially hopeless fear. They know parents don't believe in the Man under the Bed (despite their own childhood memories), and when a parent gives the "There's no such thing as monsters" speech, that's when the Boggin starts acting in full force.





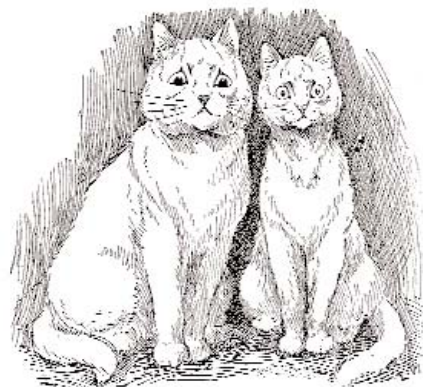
Cat



The Man under the Bed gains one Boggin Point every night it spends under a child's bed (in his closet, behind the drapes, etc.). It gains two Boggin Points every night after the "There's no such thing as monsters" speech.

The Man Under the Bed has the same Traits as Mean People, but when it first takes shape, all Traits are Crippled. The Man can take form, but it can only frighten the child by moving between shadows, giving the child a hint at danger. As it gains Boggin Points, it increases each Trait on a Point-per-Point basis. When all its Traits reach Good, it begins physically terrorizing the child. When all its Traits reach Strong, it possesses the child.

The best way to battle the Man is to help the child beat his own fear. If he isn't afraid of the Man under the Bed, the Boggin gains no power (Boggin Points). Encouraging the child in his dreams (children remember dreams much better than adults do) and fighting the Boggin while the child watches are both ways of showing him how to overcome his fears



Ghosts

"They think they're especially 'sensitive' because they can see these things. Truth is, what they are is vulnerable. The Boggin wouldn't be there if they weren't."

Traits

Claws, Face, Fangs, Legs, Thumbs

Ghosts are actually Boggins feeding on the regret of not saying or doing things before it's too late.

Ghosts feed on regret, taking the shape of lost loved ones to invoke feelings of helplessness and ennui (which are equally tasty). They want the future host to feel helpless, hopeless and pointless. Every day a ghost successfully haunt a host, it gains one Boggin Point. As soon as the host begins talking to the ghost (or acknowledges it in some other way), it gains two Boggin Points per day. Like the Man under the Bed, Ghosts have the same Traits as a Mean Person. When it first takes form, a Ghost's Traits are all Crippled, and it is incapable of interacting with the physical world. However, it increases its Traits by spending Boggin Points on a one-per-one basis. When its Traits reach Good, it can lift small, hand-held objects – including cats. When its Traits reach Strong, it can possess a human's body, thus making it nearly impossible to remove.

Heavies

"It's a sick sight. Watching that thing sit on your man, keeping him all wrapped up in a web that he can't see, but he can sure feel...."

Traits

Coat, Eyes, Fangs, Hairs (Ears), Legs, Web

Sitting on the couch, eating potato chips, sipping soda and watching a TV show that you just hate is the perfect way to spend the afternoon. But if you knew why you were sitting there, you'd get off your... backside



Boggins

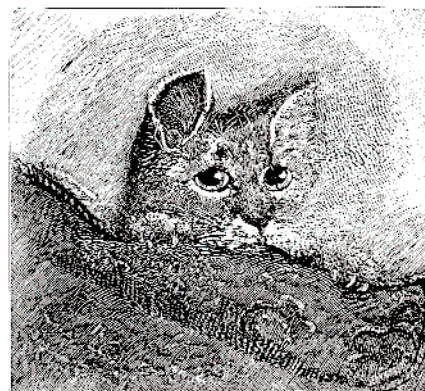


and go for a walk. Your cat can see why you're there, and the longer you sit, the harder it is for him to get you up.

Heavies are Boggins who feed on sloth. Ever try to get up from the couch and feel a heavy, warm weight just keeping you down? That's a Heavy. It takes the shape of a giant, furry spider, and it spends its day spinning a web, sticking you right where you are so it can dine on all that lovely apathy you're making.

When a Heavy first takes form, it's a tiny spider crawling over the host's body, feeding on little idleness. Then, as the Heavy's poison fills his veins, the host spends more time sitting down, doing as little as possible. That's when the webs begin. The spider gets larger, using the webs and its weight to hold the host down. Finally, when the host is nearly covered in webs, the Heavy lays eggs. Those eggs eventually hatch and the host has even more Heavies keeping him idle, feeding off his laziness.

When it first takes its shape, a Heavy's Traits are all Crippled. Every day it feeds off the host, it gains one Boggin Point. As soon as the host spends a night on the couch in front of the TV, it gains two Boggin Points a day. When its other Traits reach Good, it begins weaving its web. The web itself is like a Trait; it begins at Crippled and gains strength with



each day. A Heavy must either spend Boggin Points on its own Traits or on its Web, not both. As soon as all the Heavy's Traits (including Web) reach Strong, the Heavy lays its eggs. Once that happens, its only a matter of days (usually two) before the eggs hatch and the host is covered with tiny Heavies, all eager to keep the host on that couch.

The Shoulda Brothers

"These guys... what I wouldn't give to see them get a taste of their own medicine. Sitting around, wondering who to infect next, worrying about the person they infected last time, afraid to take even a single step just in case it's the wrong thing to do."

Traits

Claws, Hide (Coat), Face, Fangs, Legs, Nose, Wings

Tree brother Boggins – the Shoulda, the Coulda and the Woulda – are very industrious. Similar to the Green-Eyed Monster, they sit on a host's shoulder and whisper in his ears all the things he should have done, could have done and would have done... if only he knew better.

The Shoulda Brothers create self-doubt in their victims until all his confidence is lost to hesitation. They sit and whisper, sit and whisper, sit and whisper until the host begins saying the words himself. Like other Boggins, the Shoulda Brothers gain a Boggin Point every day they infect the host. As soon as the host says "I should have," "I would have," or "I could have" three times in one day, they gain two Boggin Points per day. And, like other Boggins, their Traits begin at Crippled, but can be increased with Boggin Points.

(A strange cousin of the Shoulda Brothers is "the Gotta" which appears as a big bundle of threads and hairs; a twitching, nervous thing full of static electricity. As its name suggests, the Gotta keeps its host on its toes, running back and forth, making sure everything gets done on time...)



Part 9: Fictional Facts

& Factual Folklores

Because of The Contest, a cat's reputation has greatly fluctuated through history. Sometimes worshiped as gods, sometimes reviled as devils, cats have always been associated with magic, the diabolical, and the divine. In this section is just some the knowledge men have on cats. Some of it may be true, but only cats know for certain, and like their names, they just ain't tellin'.

"You've got that right."

"Roland?"

"Yeah. Did you think I was going to let this be a one-sided discussion? I can't say much, but I'll add what I can."

With as much knowledge we do have on cats, there is still so much we don't know.

"You said that already".

(Let me finish the thought, okay?)

Even the things we do know, we don't always understand. For example, we know that cats purr, but exactly how they do it is still a mystery. However, we do know people have been keeping cats for a very long time. The earliest evidence of "domestic cats" comes from ruins in Jericho from approximately 6,700 B.C. Yes, we know cats have been protecting us from Boggins for the almost nine thousand years.

"This is because claw marks don't show up very well on stone sofas. Also, it took you humans a few hundred years to develop art that could withstand the test of time. It has been more than nine thousand."

Let's take a look at what man knew, knows and thinks he knows about cats.

"And what cat thinks about what man thinks he knows."



Facts

What we know about cats can be found in thousands of books, most of which can be picked up in the bargain bin section of your local bookstore (trust me, I know this first hand).

"And did you get me out of a bargain bin, too?"

(No, I got you from a little girl giving away kittens in front of the grocery store.)

As far as his biology goes, a cat really is an amazing creature. To begin with, he smells with over 200 million olfactory mucosa cells; twice as many as humans (but not as many as dogs). However, a cat doesn't just smell with his nose. His "Jacobson's Organ," located in the upper surface of the mouth, provides additional olfactory information. His hearing is also pretty amazing. His ears have 40,000 nerve fibers (the human ear has 30,000) and can distinguish between sound sources 3 inches apart from up to 7 feet away or those from 1 inches apart from up to 70 feet away.



One study showed three-week-old kittens hear twice as well as adult cats.

"What?"

(Nothing.)

"But can kittens read?"

(Ugh.)

A cat's night vision – thanks to his famous pupil and a reflective layer in the back of his eyes – is fifty percent better than a human's. However, he has one-sixth the number of cones (the color sensitive cells in the eye) and can only see some blue and green, but are not sensitive at all to the red spectrum.

"I have a cousin who lives with a bullfigher. She can't understand what the fuss is about."

A cat's eyes are also especially sensitive to movement, activating a "predator behavior" especially keen in the cat's brain. The parts of a cat's brain that control hunger are separate from the parts of the brain that control the hunting instinct. Therefore, a cat's desire to hunt can be triggered independent of its desire for food. The hunting instinct also has a connection to the pleasure centers in a cat's

brain. In other words, kitty hunts because it makes him feel good, not because he's hungry.

"If you don't believe this, remember those gifts we leave you don't usually have bite marks beyond the mortal wounds."

Incidentally, a typical meal of dry or wet cat food is the approximate equivalent of five mice.

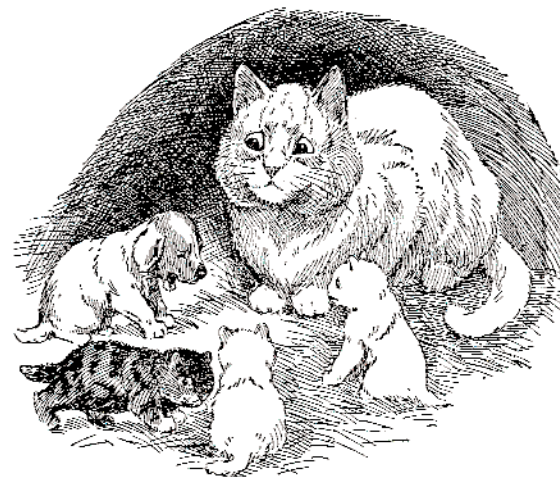
"Less fur in the canned food, unless the can opener is shedding. Or balding."

A cat's whiskers are more important than his eyes or ears, sensing changes in air movement, helping him navigate through the dark. Even blind cats can make their way around obstacles, thanks to the sensitivity of their whiskers. Also, when he's trying to get through a small opening, he uses his whiskers to judge the size. Because your cat lacks a true collarbone, he can generally squeeze his body through any space he can get his head into.

"Your cat lacks a true collarbone, too."

(True, but he really has a huge head.)

"Touche."





Cat



A cat's cerebellum, the part of the brain controlling physical coordination, is proportionally larger than in most other mammals. Cats jump far enough above their target to gain a hold with their back claws, then fall forward and balance on their front legs. Your average housecat can jump seven times his own height.

"That would be like you jumping up a five story building."

(But if I was on all fours like a cat, my height would be under three feet. Pole vaulters jump almost 21 feet.)

"I could jump 21 feet with rocket shoes."

The tail, an organ with more bones than the human spine, also helps for balance. And while cats may be fast, they aren't built for speed. A cat's anatomy is built for quick jumps and short runs. After a few moments, they burn out their batteries and have to stop to recharge.

"And most cats will have put their batteries to good use so they have a snack while waiting to recharge."

(Food helps to speed up the recovery process, anyways.)

Speaking of agility...

"We were?"

(Hush.)

Why does a cat always land on his feet? Well, he doesn't always, but he's got a pretty good chance of making it nearly every time. Within 70 milliseconds of the beginning of a fall, a cat's biology is in action. An automatic sequence of responses begins with the eyes sending information to the brain and the vestibular system takes over. The cat first turns its head so it is upright. Then, the front half of its body flips 180 degrees. Nerves in the spine turn the rest of the body. A fact most people miss: it isn't really amazing the cat

turns so quickly to put its feet under its body. What's really amazing is that it never turns too far, but always turns precisely the necessary distance to get its feet under it.

"The whole process is as natural as breathing. I don't think I could land wrong if I wanted to. But why would I want to?"

A cat's skin is thinner than most mammals, but it is also more flexible. It also contains sebaceous glands which secrete sebum, an oily substance that waterproofs the cat's fur and makes it shine. Apocrine sweat glands secrete a fluid that lets other cats know when he's "in the mood for love."

"Before you say anything, John, I'll have you know that my sweat glands do not hyperfunction. The ladies love me for my charm."

(Of course they do.)

A cat's skin contains 130,000 hairs per square inch. They actually have two kinds of hairs: overfur and underfur. Overfur is coarse and protects the underfur which is finer and grows in clusters, providing a cat with insulation. There are even different kinds of underfur, all of which have their own functions. But not all cats have the same kind of fur. There are dozens of different hair types, making each cat breed unique. Finally, a cat's hairs are part of a complicated sensory system including its paws, whiskers, eyes and ears. Hairs, penetrating three times deeper into the skin than human hairs, can sense particle changes in air density.

"And we more than feel it when your pet a cat from back to front."

(Is it really that bad?)

"Sometimes it feels like a splinter being bent the wrong way when it is pulled out. Or an ear being tugged in the wrong direction."



Fictional Facts



Like dogs, cats mark their territory with scent, but do so in a very social way. When a cat rubs against you, he's not only passing his scent on to you, but he's also getting your scent on him. Cats create a complicated "family scent" that includes all members of his family (including the dog). Thus, when he goes out on the town, he carries your scent along with him, to show others he belongs to a family. When a stranger comes into the house, a cat smells him out to determine if he wants the stranger's scent to become part of the family scent. It may take a while for the cat to accept a new scent into the family, but when he does, expect him to get snuggly. It's also the reason cats claw furniture: a cat's claws carry a lot of his scent. So, when kitty claws the furniture, he's marking it as part of the family. Self-cleaning is also a way of spreading his scent. Your cat's saliva is rich with scent, and by constantly cleaning himself, he's spreading that scent over his fur.

Also, when a cat picks a fight, he scratches in front of another cat, kind of drawing a line in the sand saying, "This ground right here belongs to me. Cross it if you dare." Finally, a cat's scent communicates how old the cat is, his sexual status and what mood he was in when he made the mark.

"I personally feel this is a mark of a highly evolved species. Noses don't lie. Neither do cats, really. We're an open book. If you know how to read, what the language is, and how to open the book."

(Yeah. You and women.)

"What's that..."

(Nevermind. I'd better stop while I'm behind.)

When cats communicate with each other, they do so with a silent body language that involves dozens of different signals. The position of the body, ears, tail and whiskers all go into this elaborate communication process.

"I dance with my face and my feet. But when a cat is clumsy with it, do you say he has eight left whiskers? Or two left ears?"

Cats seldom, if ever, communicate verbally to other cats and only in times of great emotion. It is believed (but not proven) that cats communicate verbally to humans because they perceive us as parents, or caregivers.

"That's mostly untrue. Humans never seemed to catch on to the nonverbal cues. So we're left with the blunt and inefficient 'meyow' noises. And dreams, of course."

(I'm getting to that.)

Kittens communicate verbally to their mother, and thus, if cats do indeed perceive us as caregivers, they may feel the need to communicate to us verbally. Some scientists believe that cats save verbally because we're too dumb to understand the non-verbal talk they're trying to tell us. But that's just a theory...

"And for those of you who cling to the belief that cats think they are little people: you've got it backwards. People are big cats."

A cat's paws are also versatile tools. They are padded for silent movement, have hooks for climbing, and talons for clawing and fighting. They even act as sponges for cleaning.

"And you say that thumbs are versatile. I'd like to see your thumb kill dinner and wash it in the same movement."

(Touche to you.)

A cat's paws are also part of their sensory system, capable of detecting the smallest vibrations in the Earth. A cat can feel the vibrations from a mouse moving its tiny feet across the floor from up to sixty feet away.

"Keep this in mind, kids, when your kitten is up a tree. Shaking it will scare her out of her wits. Then I'll have to come console her."



Cat



Also, cats walk on tippie-toe. The back legs are used for jumping and power pushes, the front legs for catching prey. When stalking mice, a cat catches its prey nearly 75% of the time. When stalking birds, only 10%.

"Hey, John, did you know that 90% of statistics are made up on the spot?"

(Including that one? Why would I make up a number to make you guys look bad? If I made it up, I'd say you catch birds 60% of the time. But this is the 'Facts' part, not 'Folklore'.)

"What do you expect? We don't have wings. Often."

While hunting the cat is nearly silent; the tufts of hair between its paws muffle most of its sound. Because cats are long-sighted, they rely on their whiskers rather than their eyes to sense prey close-up.

Cats are also true carnivores; one of the few species on Earth that can survive solely on meat. Unfortunately, this specialized digestive system means they can't detoxify certain chemicals, making creosote, paracetamol, and organophosphates deadly poisons in their bodies.

"What?"

(Don't eat anything in the medicine cabinet or chew on wood, and be careful what kind of flea medicine you let someone use on you.)

A cat's must have fat in his diet because he can't produce it on his own and he'll die without it. Cats can taste salt, sour and bitter, but not sweet. It is possible that certain amino acids give a cat the same pleasurable sensation we associate with sweet, but when you consider the fact that chocolate is poisonous to kitty (as well as Tylenol, English ivy, iris, mistletoe, philodendrons, and yew), it's not as sad as it initially sounds.

"Chocolate is poisonous to mistletoe?"

(... Yes.)

"Too bad. At least I can get my sweets from a lady friend."

If all this information on a cat's senses isn't enough to impress you, consider this. A cat's senses are "always on," even when he's asleep. Snoozing on your lap, with his consciousness buried deep in the Land of Dreams, he can hear the rats scampering in the walls, smell the food you're cooking in the kitchen, and sense the vibrations in the air from the dog walking by. Oh, and by the way, kittens begin dreaming before they are old enough to open their eyes.

"Hey, I've got one for you."

(Go ahead.)

"We cats have a homing ability that uses a biological clock, the angle of the sun and the Earth's magnetic field. I can almost always find somewhere I've been before. Try throwing yourself in the middle of nowhere and find your way home by instinct some day."

(Show off.)



Factual Folklores



Folklores

Let's start at the beginning. Well, what a lot of people consider the beginning. The word "cat" never appears once in the Bible. Not once. Cats are native to the region where the Bible stories take place, but there's no mention of them at all. (However, if you take a look in the Book of Kells, you'll see illustrations of cats on many of its beautiful pages.) Keep that in mind as we begin our journey into the long, tangled and dark history of cats in the folklore of man.

"To be fair, the Bible doesn't mention pets in general. But a few lions do show up."

While the cat is never mentioned in the Bible, she's a powerful symbol in nearly every other religion. Freya, the Norse goddess, owned a chariot pulled by cats (sometimes grey, sometimes black and varying in number). After serving the goddess for seven years, the cats were rewarded by being turned into witches, disguised as black cats.

"Sounds more like a curse to me, losing this fantastic form."

Cats were also sacred to Bast, the Egyptian goddess, daughter of Isis and Osiris. The cats in her temple in the city of Bubastis wore heavily jeweled collars and regarded as gods. Anyone who killed a cat in that city was put to death. ("I like that rule.") Cats were believed to control the moon's movement, protect the dead and had total authority over the royal houses at night because of their ability to see things in the dark that humans could not. Cats were so loved by the Egyptians they sometimes mummified a mouse to accompany the cat into the afterworld. During excavations in the ruins of Tell-Basta (the former Bubastis), the archaeologists discovered a graveyard with 300,000 mummified cats.

"I've met some of those cats in Dream. They're pretty boring."

Egyptians also believed in a creature called "The Great Cat..."

"Huh. And I've never even been to Egypt."

(ahem) ... who accompanied Ra on his nightly voyage around the world, protecting him in Apep – the World of the Dead – while he was weak. Every night, an evil serpent named Seth tried to devour the boat, and every night, the Great Cat sliced off the serpent's head, allowing Ra's magic boat to continue on its way around the world. Egyptians kept cats in their houses as protectors as well, keeping them safe as they slept just as the Great Cat protected Ra.

Both Buddha and Mohammed have cats associated with them. It is said at the



Buddha's funeral, the cat was one of two creatures in the entire world who did not weep at the Master's funeral (the other was the snake). A little further West, Mohammed cut the sleeve off his robe rather than disturb the cat sleeping there.

"My grandfather told me that story. He said that the cat took the piece of cloth to her nest and kept it there. She lived to be one hundred."

(Really?)

"That's what he said."



Cat



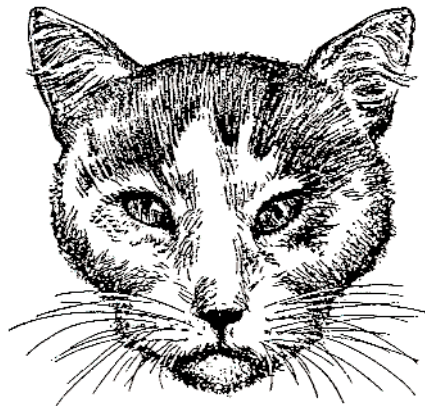
In the West, cats have almost always been associated with magic, witches, and natural phenomenon. "When kitty washes behind her ears, we'll soon be tasting Heaven's tears" is a common English schoolyard rhyme.

"Puffah! The saying would be meaningful if it came out of Egypt. Cats wash like it rains in England. All the time!"

According to British folklore, if a cat sat with her back to the fireplace, you should expect a cold night. In France, dropping a cat at a crossroads and following her would lead you to treasure, while in Germany, tortoiseshell cats were believed to see into the future and give the gift to a lucky child in the household through a scratch or a kiss. Also, if a cat washes your face and turns to the East, you can expect company from that direction by the end of the week. Also, if you carry a cat bone in your right pocket, you'll have good luck all day long.

"That 'turn and face East' one was especially popular in northern Europe where the coastline faced East. Wives and mothers blessed the cats with large gifts of meat and milk when they believed their husbands and fathers would be home soon."

And, despite his lack of mention in the Bible, Christian folklore tells us the cat is the only creature who remembered the passage from



Eden when Adam and Eve got themselves kicked out. Therefore, a cat is the only creature who knows how to get back.

"Yes, another secret we're not telling. Yet."

Cats and dogs have often been called "guardians of the hearth," chiefly because ancient peoples believed pritis – both good and evil – came into the house through the fireplace (remember old St. Nick?). Thus, if you bring a cat into the house, you must place it by the hearth. If you do, she'll never leave, and ensure only good spirits enter the house.

"If you no longer have a hearth, try placing the cat near an open can of tuna."

A cat's "household magic" was very important to medieval Europe. But before you can keep a cat in your house, you have to make sure he doesn't leave. In order to do that, carry him in through a window, not the front door. This ensures the cat will never leave the house (at least, he'll always come back). If you place a cat in the crib of a newborn child, she'll protect that child 'till the day she dies (a common belief among the Pennsylvania Dutch tells placing a cat in the baby's crib will make his dreams come true). Masons (guys who worked with mortar and built houses; not the conspiracy theory guys) put living cats in the foundation of a building to ensure good luck to the inhabitants. Driving away a cat who comes into your house voluntarily is bad luck, and finally, a visitor to the household should always kiss the cat to ensure good luck on his journey home.

Sailors also put a lot of faith in the magical power of cats. Cats were often kept on board to bring good fortune. If a sailor was approached by the ship's cat, it meant good luck, but if the cat only came halfway, it meant he would never see home again. A loudly meowing cat means a difficult voyage while a playful cat foretells a voyage with gusty winds. If a cat runs to the pier ahead of



Factual Folklores



a sailor on his way to the voyage, it brings him good luck. But if the cat crosses his path, it means bad luck.

"Sometimes they guess fortunes by a cat wandering aimlessly about the deck. The more wrong the sailors were, the more confused the cat was, and stranger their 'fortunetelling' became."

In America, school girls have been known to use cat hairs to determine whether or not to accept a marriage proposal. Take three hairs from a cat's tail and fold them in a paper. Place the paper under your doorstep (pillow, windowsill, etc.). Next morning, carefully unfold the paper to see if the three hairs formed themselves into a Y or N and reply to the suitor accordingly.

"I did a couple of these. They always involve nasty Boggins fights. It's a sad day when a girl wise enough to invoke the practice is not wise enough to follow the advice of her protectors."

While sneezing has always been a sign of witchcraft (if you sneeze three times, it's because you're trying to "sneeze the witch out"), a cat's sneeze is also indicative of good or bad luck. Also, if a cat sneezes three times in a row, it means you'll catch a cold.

Some Greek alchemists believed cats held the secret to the Philosopher's Stone. The cat's whiskers make an "X," the first letter in the Greek words for "crucible," "gold" and "time." These words are also known as The Three Secrets. A cat has nine lives (3 x 3) and these Three Secrets multiplied create the Grand Design, also known as the Philosopher's Stone (the material that changes base metals into gold).

"A few recent humans have been deemed worthy of the secret, but the King of Cats decided that lumps of gold appearing would create more problems for those men than it could solve."

Of course, in addition to storms and witchcraft, cats have also been associated with death. As mentioned above, in ancient Egypt, cats were considered the guardians of the dead, but that reputation was not isolated to Egypt. Early Christians believed if a cat sat on a grave, the buried person's soul was in the devil's power. In sixteenth century Italy, the same incident caused the corpse to rise again as a vampire. In America, Scottish immigrants brought with them the notion that if a cat entered a room where a dead body was lying in state, the next person to touch the cat would be blinded.

Meanwhile, over in Japan, cats are believed to be some of the most advanced souls in Creation. The Buddhists believe cats turn into super souls when they die, for the body of a cat is only a resting place of a highly spiritual soul.

"Children in Buddhist families have been known to say, 'When I grow up, I want to be a cat!'"

Of course, as long as people have been looking to cats for wisdom, they've been treating them with abject cruelty. In Europe it was believed a cat's tail contains a worm, and if you don't cut off the tail, the cat will die in fits. Also, if you tie paper around all four paws, the cat will dance herself to death, and it has been said you don't speak secrets in front of a cat because she'll carry them down to the devil.





Cat



It was Pope Gregory XI (born around 1145 and died August 22, 1241) who first declared cats in league with the Devil in the Vox in Rama Papal Bull, causing a vast massacre of feline life in Europe.

"Obviously, he was a dog person. And some bad cat sipped some of his breath while he was a baby. Spoiled things for the rest of us."

Ambrose Paré was a sixteenth century physician often regarded as "the father of modern surgery." He made the revolutionary observation that the physician's role was: "to cure, to relieve, to comfort, and always to prevent." He also said the cat was "a venomous animal which infects through its hair, its breath and its brains" and encouraged mass killings of the creature. All of which shows even the most enlightened men in history could still be superstitious twits.

On the other hand, Charles I, king of England, owned a lucky black cat he was terrified of losing. He even assigned guards to watch over it. As it happened, the day after the cat died, he was arrested and ended his reign six inches shorter than when he began it.

"Did he bleed to death when they chopped off his legs?"

(No, the six inches were from the top. He was beheaded.)

"How rude."

And, one last thought on historical figures and their associations with cats. Abraham Lincoln owned four cats. Napoleon had a near pathological fear of them and never let one near his person or in his sight. Take from that what you will.

"Paranoia ain't the only the inner demon humans need to be protected from."

(Well, little guy, I'm all done.)

"About time."

(Sorry it took so long.)

"'Sorry' don't clean the box, pal."

I started this game two years ago. I was married then. I was living with two cats and a dog. I was working for a company that had nothing to do with what I loved to do: write and play games.

Well, much has changed.

I'm no longer married, I have no pets, and I'm working at a job I love: writing and designing games. In the meantime, I'm also writing and designing games as a hobby -- and that's where The Brewery comes in.

When Jared first suggested getting together for a mutual admiration club, he said, "You know, so you can finally release *Cat*." Over the years, this has been the game everyone's asked me about. Well, *Cat* and *Elfworld*. But for some reason, this game has really captured people's imagination. Or, at least, their curiosity. And we all know about curiosity, now don't we?

I'd like to thank Jared for helping me remember why I love games. And Annie for the same reason (and for putting up with my overly defensive reaction to her very justified edits). Also a big thanks goes out to all of you who put your faith in The Brewery with our first round of brews. *Enemy Gods*, *Lacuna*, and *Run Robot Red* were smashing successes. We hope to continue impressing you.

Finally, a little tip of the hat to the fellow who made this game possible. He died of feline leukemia when he was just a year and a half old. Hours after he was gone, the ideas started rushing into my head. It was like I was haunted by his ghost, telling me secrets. These are the secrets he told me. I share them now with you.

Good night, little Roland. I'll see you after sunset.

"Heh. Not if I see you first."

Cat

A Little Game about Little Heroes

Name _____

Reputations _____

Name _____

Lives _____

Name _____

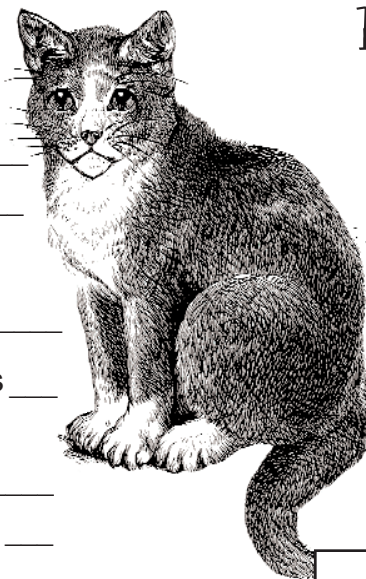
Coat Rank _____
Bonus _____

Legs Rank _____
Bonus _____

Claws Rank _____
Bonus _____

Scars _____

Style _____



Face Rank _____
Bonus _____

Fangs Rank _____
Bonus _____

Tail Rank _____
Bonus _____

Risks

EASY 1
MODERATE 2
HARD 3
LEGENDARY 4

“It’s about damn time!”

-- *Yog Sothoth*

“Didn’t he announce this ten million years ago?”

-- *Shub Niggurath*

“I thought he was dead!”

-- *Herbert West, Re-Animator*



Halloween
2004