Guardians of Gazebo

The court fell silent as the bat approached the throne and knelt. No longer a fearsome warrior of the night, its wings were torn and useless. The mouse-king Acorus Calamus rose and eyed his knights, whiskers twitching in anger. "You bring us grave news, at great personal risk. While there has never been great love between our realms, I must repay such courage. I will send you some of my knights to ride to your aid, and discovered what terror has befallen...the Guardians of Gazebo."

Basic Premise

Within the confines of Franklin City Park, there are different kingdoms of animals who—for reasons unknown—are blessed with the gift of intelligence and speech. While the mice of Pavilion pride themselves on one of the largest and most developed civilizations, they are not alone.

One day, a Bat emissary from Gazebo arrives, bloody and torn, with dire news: they have been attacked by a human and a pair of dogs for reasons unknown.

The intruders were first spotted prowling around the park by flashlight, looking for something. Their path seemed to lead away from Gazebo, but then they suddenly made a beeline for the structure, ran up and jumped onto the deck before the Bats had a chance to react.

For a moment, fortune seemed to go their way, because the ancient wooden planks broke, and the trio crashed through. They disappeared for a few minutes, and a few bold Warrior-Bats lighted on the edge of the hole to see what had become of them. But just as they did so, the man sprang back up and savagely attacked them with a jagged wooden plank.

This was days ago. The intruders still haven't left, and now the Bats have abandoned Gazebo, all except for a few brave souls who volunteered to stay behind to spy on the man and his dogs.

Game Plan

Hour One:
- Pass out character sheets.
- Demo FAST system
- Setup story.
- Travel to Gazebo
- Random Travel Encounters
- Encounter empty Rabbit Kingdom?
- Encounter Benny?

Hour Two:
- Scout out the situation
- Dodge attacks from Rocko
- Find inscription on Sleeping Bear Rock

- Encounter Benny?
- Encounter empty Rabbit Kingdom?
- Find the Collector's Van?
- Go to History Museum?
- Go to Lab?
- Go to Holliday Hills?

Hour Three:
- Go to History Museum?
- Encounter Benny?
- Find the Collector's Van?
- Go to Lab?
- Go to Holliday Hills?
- More Collectors arrive?

Hour Four:
Try and steer the adventure towards a slam-bang ending at the Gazebo.

If things get dull,

- Random Encounter!
- Another Animal Collector Appears!

Cast of Characters

Heroes

John Broadleaf, Ratslayer: mouse brick
Sir Richard Whitewhisker: mouse knight
Hawkweed: mouse ranger/archer
Allyn Moonseed: mouse gadgeteer/archer
Indigo: mouse rogue
Prismatica: mouse sorcerer/martial artist
Brother Blackcherry: mouse priest
Ellyn Moonseed: mouse elementalist

Moon Shield: bat fighter

Hiro: rabbit swordsman

Royal Court

King: Acorus Calamus
Chamberlin: Goldenrod
Captain of the Guard: Alexander Heartleaf
Physician: Boneset
Court Wizard: Alatus Sword-Maker
Jester: Monkflower

NPC's

Lester Bagwell: Thorne Chemicals employee
Rocko: guard dog with delusions of grandeur
Benny: escapee hound
Misc. Angry Mutts: Rocko's new henchmen

Professor Abacus Spiderwort: history expert

Guru Gustav: mystical homeless man

The Bigtop Babboons: Holliday Hills gang of thieves

Frost Speaks-with-Beasts: Spirit Arrow shaman
Samwell Carstairs: early European settler
Molly Molloy: his dog

What's Really Going On

Gazebo was built over a boulder with magical properties: it causes men to become as dumb as animals, and to animals it gives the gift of being Civilized, sentient. (For the reasons why, see the "Backstory" on the next page.)

Lester Bagwell is *(or was)* an animal collector, working for a research lab, Thorne Chemicals. Those unfortunate critters he caught are rumored to be the subject of unspeakable experiments. Animals living on the "Gazebo" side of the park can bear witness to this rumor, and Benny the runaway dog can confirm it***. (This can be the subject of a sequel or extension to the adventure, if it runs very short.)***

The night of the attack, the collector thought he saw something hiding under the Gazebo. But, it was just a boulder that looks remarkably like a sleeping bear. When the man fell through the rotting floorboards of the Gazebo, he and his dogs made contact with the stone, activating its magical properties. The man was instantly turned into a caveman-like brute, and his dogs instantly became brand-new "Civils." (This will be obvious to anyone who encounters them.)

One of the dogs is a well-treated guard rotweiller mix by the name of Rocko. A "company man" through and through, Rocko has embraced his new-found faculties, and has begun to create a new team of animal catchers, starting with other dogs that have been caught so far. Rocko had Lester drag their cages to Gazebo, where he gave them intelligence. The first words that they heard were a speech about how he—Rocko—had saved them from their cages. Of course, they were only too happy to do whatever Rocko tells them. The few that object to enslaving others are torn to bits. All except one.

The *other* dog that was transformed in the original accident is an ex-laboratory experiment animal named Benny, a beagle mix, who has run for his life. He knows only too well the evil deeds performed by his masters, and wants no part of any of it. He knows that Franklin City Park will soon fall prey to Thorne Chemical's new team of collectors. No amount of coaxing will convince him to turn against his former comrades, and he exists mainly to inform the heroes of what's going on, and to possibly point them in the lab's direction.

Minakami Toshi: The Floating City

A side-plot here is that an emissary from the Rabbit kingdom arrives, seeking news of events in the outside world. Minakami Toshi, or "The Floating City" is a pagoda set on an island in the park's Lake Fala, connected to the shore by a zig-zagging spirit bridge. News of the Bat's woes will alarm their representative, since they have a colony nearby Gazebo called Usagiu~ōren, The Rabbit Warren. If this optional side-plot is invoked by the GM, citizens from the Warren have been abducted by Rocko and his gang, placed in cages for shipment to Thornee Chemicals.

Player Objectives

Pretty obvious and straightforward: stop Rocko and his plans. This might be accomplished through an armed confrontation, OR players might try to un-do the transformation spell, returning Rocko's pack to their lives as dumb animals.

How might this be possible?

Option 1: The Museum of Natural History. If players find the inscription on Sleeping Bear Rock, and do the translation, they will probably figure out that they are dealing with some sort of powerful magic, a transformational Native American curse of some kind. They might want to find out more about the history of this rock, and so it might occur to someone that they seek out Professor Abacus Spiderwort, a local (mouse) expert in Native American Lore at the Museum of Natural History, who can relate the following backstory:

The Legend of Frost Speaks-With-Beasts and Backstory

Long ago, when this country was first being settled by the new people from Europe, there was a fair Indian maiden of the Spirit Arrow tribe called "Frost Speaks-with-Beasts" who fell in love with one of the strange, pale folk. Samwell Carstairs was a brave hunter, a tall, strong lad who was always accompanied by his faithful companion, a large, friendly dog with long curly hair the color of the setting sun named Molly Molloy. Frost was curious about the newcomers and extended her hand in friendship to the new folk, showing them the secrets of the land: what plants could be eaten, poisons and pitfalls to avoid, etc. Although Samwell, an avid hunter and a sure hand with an axe, needed no help, Frost could often be found on his homestead.

This angered the spinster Tabitha Varley, who fancied the (much younger man) for her own. Tabitha began to spread vicious rumors about Frost amongst the townspeople. But, Frost's previous good works provided no fertile ground for the rumors. So at first the townspeople ignored her talk. But then, as fate would have it, Frost herself would give Tabitha's lies credence.

For it happened that the boy's dog, Molly, lost her happy disposition, and became increasingly sad. Every day she seemed less playful, and began to refuse to eat, no matter how generous or tempting the meal. This greatly troubled the lad—and the Indian maid, too.

But, Frost was no ordinary girl—she was a shaman among the Spirit Arrows, and knew a powerful spell that would allow Molly to tell her troubles to Sam. So, one day, while the boy was out hunting ducks, Frost hid in the tall rushes, and whistled for the dog. She then called upon the Great Spirit to grant this animal the gift of speech.

Molly returned to her master, excited and joyful that she could finally communicate with her master. The dog babbled at Samwell about missing the joy of having young ones in the house. Molly worried that the master would never marry—did he know the young Indian maid loved him so?

The young man was frightened out of his wits.

And, when word got out among his people of what had happened, Tabitha easily turned the village into an angry mob that hunted Frost down, calling her a witch. (Which in truth, she was, albeit a good witch.) She fled, and her feet took her to Sleeping-Bear Rock. When the villagers fell upon her, she uttered her dying curse, twisting the spell that she had used on the dog to new affect. It still caused animals to become Civil, but now it turned Humans into beastly Ferals!

But the boy—who didn't join the mob—was spared. (The rest is in "Samwell's Journal.")

Samwell's Journal. A trip to the museum might also turn up the boy's diary, which reveals that he spent the rest of his days working on behalf of the Spirit Arrow tribesman, trying to make amends for what had happened, and expressing his heartfelt sorrow.

Perhaps bringing the journal to the rock will undo all the hate and harmful effects, without turning all the Civil animals into wild beasts. *(Just in case anyone was worried about that.)*

The book itself can as easy or difficult to obtain as needed:

- ***Easiest:*** *Professor Spiderwort hands it over*
- ***Harder:*** *It's under lock and key, players must dodge human or canine guards*
- ***Hardest:*** *Professor Spiderwort knows where it is, but demands a favor first.*

Option 2: Holliday Hills. At Franklin City's amusement park there exists an antique fortune-telling machine. Those who can answer the riddles posed by the machine are rewarded with tokens that disrupt curses.

The heroes might be clued into this option a number of ways: perhaps one of the players has one such token, or perhaps the heroes run into Guru Gustav. He is a transient who lives in the park and seemingly the only human who sees Civil creatures for what they are.

Again, getting there and obtaining a token can be as easy or perilous as the adventure and story demand. One possible obstacle could be the Big Top Babboons, an unruly gang of thieving apes that live at the Hills. They would be very curious to know what a bunch of mice are doing on their turf. *Very curious indeed…*

Travel to Gazebo

Pavilion is in the Northwest corner of Franklin City Park, while Gazebo is in the Southeast, so figure on a travel time of about one week. Heroes might shorten this time by using a feral animal as a riding beast, or coming up with a clever idea of their own.

Note that Pavilion and its immediate environs is protected by magical spells that keeps Humans and Ferals at bay—so heroes will be venturing into dangerous territory. However, any random encounters (like running into a predatory wild animal) on the trip between Pavilion and Gazebo are completely optional. On the other hand, if players are new to the game system, a few Skill or Attribute checks early on will pave the way for smoother combats later on AND some mindless violence does have a way of spicing up the game.

This might also be a good place for players to encounter Benny.

Roll one d6 per day of travel—have an encounter on a roll of 1 or 6 (adjust/fudge as needed, EX: Odd/Even roll.)

1, 2=Physical Obstacle	**3, 4=Wild/Feral Animal**	**5, 6=Humans!**
1 = Cross a sidewalk	1 = Snake	1 = Maintenance man
2 = Cross a sidewalk	2 = Cat	2 = Old lady with yappy dog
3 = Clearing	3 = Cat	3 = Family on a picnic
4 = Parking Lot	4 = Dog	4 = Kids Playing
5 = Picnic area	5 = Dog	5 = Submerged Car
6 = Construction site	6 = Bird of Prey	6 = Gang of Teenagers

Encountering Benny

As mentioned previously, Benny is a frightened beagle mix. Under close examination, it will become apparent that he has suffered injuries similar to the bat ambassador (beat up with the business end of a jagged 2x4.) He will be very reluctant to help the players out. Benny will exhibit the traits of a newly-Civil animal: a very simple, childlike mind, with a limited vocabulary. As such, he won't be able to spell everything out for players. They still have to do some investigative legwork.

Gazebo

This is an elaborate, Victorian-style building (similar to the picture, but raised four feet off the ground with a lattice-enclosed crawlspace beneath.) A copper roof has long since turned a minty shade of blue-green. Rocko and thuggish pack have made Gazebo their base of operations, using the power of Sleeping Bear Rock to add to their army.

Belfry. The tallest point on the Gazebo with eight louvered windows. A spiral staircase leads down to the Bat City.

Roof. Like Pavilion, the Bats have turned the roof space into a city, filled with creature comforts. Now, it is a ghost town. Only a skeleton crew of scouts remain behind. (Rocko had Lester smoke out the Bats.)

Decking. A large, irregularly-shaped hole is near one of the open sides of the deck. A boulder can be seen beneath.

Crawlspace. If asked, the Bats will say that the Crawlspace is an evil spot, and they don't go there, and that they perceive it to be their job to ward off others. Assuming players ignore their advice, they will find it creepy and filled with spiders, and even non-spellcasters can feel powerful dark magic radiating off this stone that Gazebo was built over (and, now that it can be observed from the inside, the base of the Gazebo seems more and more like a cage, meant to keep something in. This is…

Sleeping-Bear Rock. Perhaps five feet in length, it is a dark, slate-like stone that resembles a sleeping bear. Laboriously etched into its surface are designs like war paint. Especially sharp eyes may make out characters within the designs, although it is impossible to read from the outside or while hiding in the shadows. (It is a message, designed to ward off others, written in a Native American language. ***See handout***.)

The message is a warning by the Native Americans who built the basic framework of the gazebo, intending it as a cage to ward off others. Players may translate with some effort. If some clues are needed, have them make a language or intelligence roll, giving out "X" number of letters per success point. Make the value of "X" enough to be helpful, but not so much as to give away the challenge of solving the inscription.

Inscription on Sleeping Bear Rock (translation):

BEWARE

WE BUILT THIS CAGE

TO PROTECT THE WHITE MAN

FROM THE DEATH-CURSE

OF SHE WHO TALKS WITH BEASTS

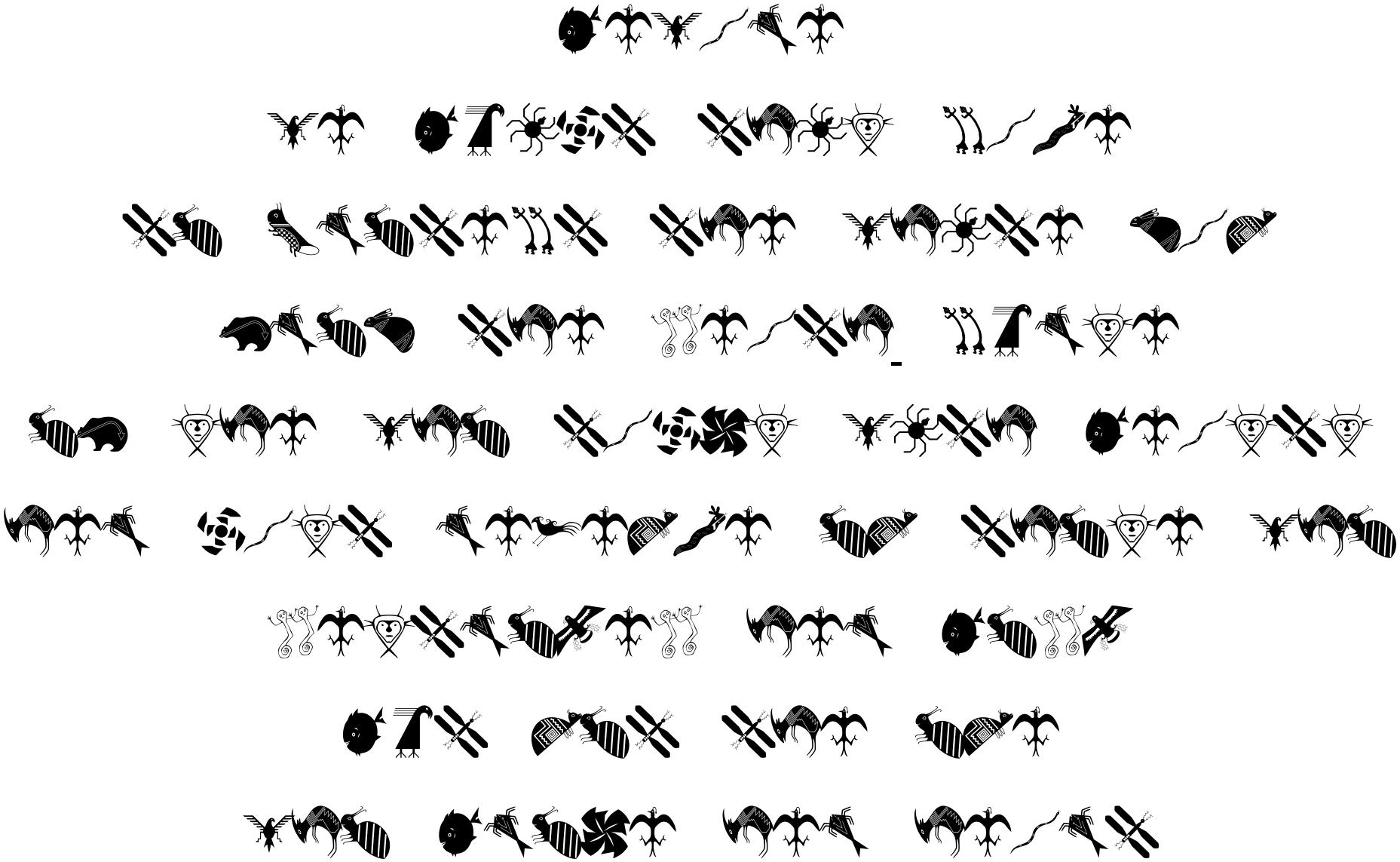
HER LAST REVENGE ON THOSE WHO

DESTROYED HER BODY

BUT NOT THE ONE

WHO BROKE HER HEART

Note that these characters: , are each a single letter.
(Untranslated glyphs on next page.)



Name Generator for Bats.

The aerial warriors follow distant traditions for naming, most often made up of a couple of adjectives and nouns. To come up with a random name, roll a d6 to determine the number thusly: 1 = none, 2-5=one, 6= two, then mix and match the results to suit. If the rolls indicate no Adjectives or Nouns, give the character a unique name (like the real-world artist Jaune Quick-to-See Smith or the author William Least Heat-Moon.)

Adjectives

One
1. Bad/Wild
2. Big/Fat
3. Black/Night
4. Blue/Sea/Sky
5. Bold/Brave
6. Broken/Crooked/Cut

Two
1. Brown/Earth
2. East/West
3. Fast/Quick
4. Fire/Ice
5. Flying/Gliding/Soaring
6. Golden

Three
1. Good/Wise/Strong
2. Green/Spring
3. Grey/Old
4. High/Tall/Sky
5. Indigo
6. Jumping/Springing

Four
1. Laughing
2. Little/Small/Young
3. Low
4. Moon/Night
5. Mourning
6. North/South

Five
1. Number (Lone, 2 or 3)
2. Old/Wise
3. Red/Bloody/Angry
4. Running/Walking/Shambling
5. Sharp/Flint
6. Shining

Six
1. Slow
2. Storm
3. Straight
4. Sun/Hot/Bright
5. War
6. White/Snowy/Cold

Nouns

One
1. Axe
2. Bear
3. Bird
4. Bull
5. Claw
6. Cloud

Two
1. Crow
2. Dagger/Arrow
3. Drum
4. Feather
5. Fox
6. Ghost

Three
1. Hare/Rabbit
2. Hawk
3. Horse
4. Insect (Wasp, Dragonfly)
5. Knife
6. Lighting

Four
1. Medicine
2. Man
3. River
4. Shirt/Cloak/Cape
5. Shield
6. Singer

Five
1. Song/Note/Chant
2. Spirit
3. Star
4. Stone
5. Storm
6. Thunder

Six
1. Toad/Turtle/Lizard
2. Tooth
3. Warrior
4. Wing
5. Wolf
6. Zephyr/Wind

Random Sample Names

One
1. Wild Black Claw
2. Black Shirt
3. Lone Man
4. Jumping Claw
5. Golden Ray
6. Storm

Two
1. Indigo Scale
2. High Claw
3. Moon Storm
4. Black Shell
5. Big Cape
6. Brown Drum Crow

Three
1. Mourning Wolf Howl
2. Bronze Shield
3. Winterstorm
4. Dragonfly
5. Soaring Thunder-Wasp
6. Western Wolf

Four
1. Laughing Song Man
2. Gathers the Fire
3. Laughing Claw
4. Ashen Chant
5. Sun Fox
6. Two Good Knives

Five
1. Good Lizard
2. Wolf
3. Shining Bear
4. Running Wind-Wolf
5. Medicine
6. Spring Thunder

Six
1. Grey Locust
2. Rabbit
3. Jumping Star-Feather
4. Blackflood
5. John Mocks the Sky
6. Bear

The Collector's Van.

This is a simple delivery truck, fitted with two side compartments for gear and a large bed, filled with cages. (If needed, they can be filled with rabbits in need of rescue.) The truck will have the Thorne Chemicals logo on it. It is parked on a gravel service road, not far from Pavillion.

If needed, Thornee can send out additional collectors to complicate things.

Thornee Chemicals

Not a planned part of the adventure, but if the GM is looking for a sequel or extension, the animals are being taken back to a lab for experiments and testing.

Grand Finale

This largely depends on what path the players have chosen to pursue. Try to steer events towards a "Big Finish" wherever it occurs, whether it's a...

… Battle at the Gazebo
… "Prison Breakout" at the Lab
… Race to obtain the talisman at Holliday Hills
… Trying to avoid new Collectors from the lab

Average Citizen s of the Kingdom of Pavillion					
NAME	**STATS**	**STUFF**	**ARMOR & DEFENSE**	**HIT POINTS**	**NOTES**
Guard	DEX = 3 BOD = 3 INT = 3 WIL = 3	Scrappin = 2 Weapon + 2	Armor = 2	9 /	
Thief	DEX = 5 BOD = 2 INT = 3 WIL = 2	Scrappin = 2 Thief = 3		6 /	
Average Citizen (Butcher, Baker, Candlestick Maker)	DEX = 2 BOD = 2 INT = 2 WIL = 2			6 /	

Guidelines for characters:

Heroes are built on 20 Character Construction Points, plus one 5-point Plot Hook (disadvantage) and 5 Traits (quirks/characteristics.)

Stats (Attributes.) Players may spend up to 13 Character Construction Points on DEX, BOD, INT and WIL. Generally, 1's and 5's are NOT recommended. Some factors to keep in Mind: low/average npcs will have scores in the 2's, while high/average npcs will have 3's. Player-character heroes AND starring npc's/villains will have a mix of 3's and 4's. Remember, the average human has an average Attribute score of 5. (If a BOD of 4 seems high for a mouse, remember that "Civil" mice are larger than normal (rat-sized, while Civil Rats are cat-sized, Civil Cats are kid-sized, and so on.) While these INT scores would be—in a human—quite low, only Mice of INT 1 or 2 seem noticeably behind the curve. This is "Mouse Scale."

Stuff (Skills, Benefits, Equipment, Natural Abilities.) Bought on a 1-for-1 basis (1 CCP gives 1 point worth of whatever.) Generally, Skills taken are groups of related ability, not single-use. (EX: Thief is used to hide, climb ropes, pick locks, and lie to authorities.)The general all-purpose fighting skilled called "Scrappin" replaces the specialized ones from FAST (also used: Soldier, Hunter.)

Non-Mouse Templates					
NAME	**STATS**	**STUFF**	**ARMOR & DEFENSE**	**HIT POINTS**	**NOTES**
Bird, hunter	DEX = 3 BOD = 4 INT = 3 WIL = 3	Hunter = 2 Claws/Beak = 2 Super vision = 2 Fly = 2	Feathers + Tough = 4	12 /	Flys
Bird, scavenger	DEX = 4 BOD = 3 INT = 3 WIL = 3	Scrappin' = 1 Claws/Beak = 2 Super vision = 2 Scavenger = 2 Fly = 2	Feathers = 2	9 /	Flys
Bird, song	DEX = 3 BOD = 2 INT = 3 WIL = 3	Fly = 3 Claws/Beak = 1	Feathers = 1	6 /	Flys
Cat	DEX = 4 BOD = 3 INT = 3 WIL = 3	Hunter = 2 Claws = 2 Cat's Eyes = 2 Acrobat =2	Fur + Tough = 3	9 /	9 Lives
Chipmunk	DEX = 5 BOD = 2 INT = 3 WIL = 3	Climb = 2 Scavenger = 2	Fur = 1	6 /	Superspeed – may act twice in a combat round.

Dog	DEX = 3 BOD = 4 INT = 3 WIL = 3	Scrappin = 2 Claws = 2 Super Sniffer = 2	Fur + Tough = 4	12 /	
Frog/Toad	DEX = 3 BOD = 3 INT = 3 WIL = 3	Hop = 3 Swim = 3 Stick Tongue = 2	Skin = 2	9 /	Super Jump or Super Tongue
Rabbit	DEX = 3 BOD = 3 INT = 3 WIL = 3	Hop = 3 Claws = 1 Digger = 1 Bunny Ears = 3 Cuteness = 2	Fur = 2	9 /	Super Jump
Snake	DEX = 3 BOD = 3 INT = 3 WIL = 3	Grab = 3 Hunter = 2 Scary = 2 Venom = 2	Scales + Tough = 3	9 /	-2 on rolls where hands would come in…handy
Squirrel	DEX = 3 BOD = 3 INT = 3 WIL = 3	Climb = 3 Bite = 2	Fur = 2	9 /	
Turtle	DEX = 2 BOD = 3 INT = 3 WIL = 3	Climb = 2	Shell = 3/6	9 /	Super Slow = Goes last in each round.