

Usagi

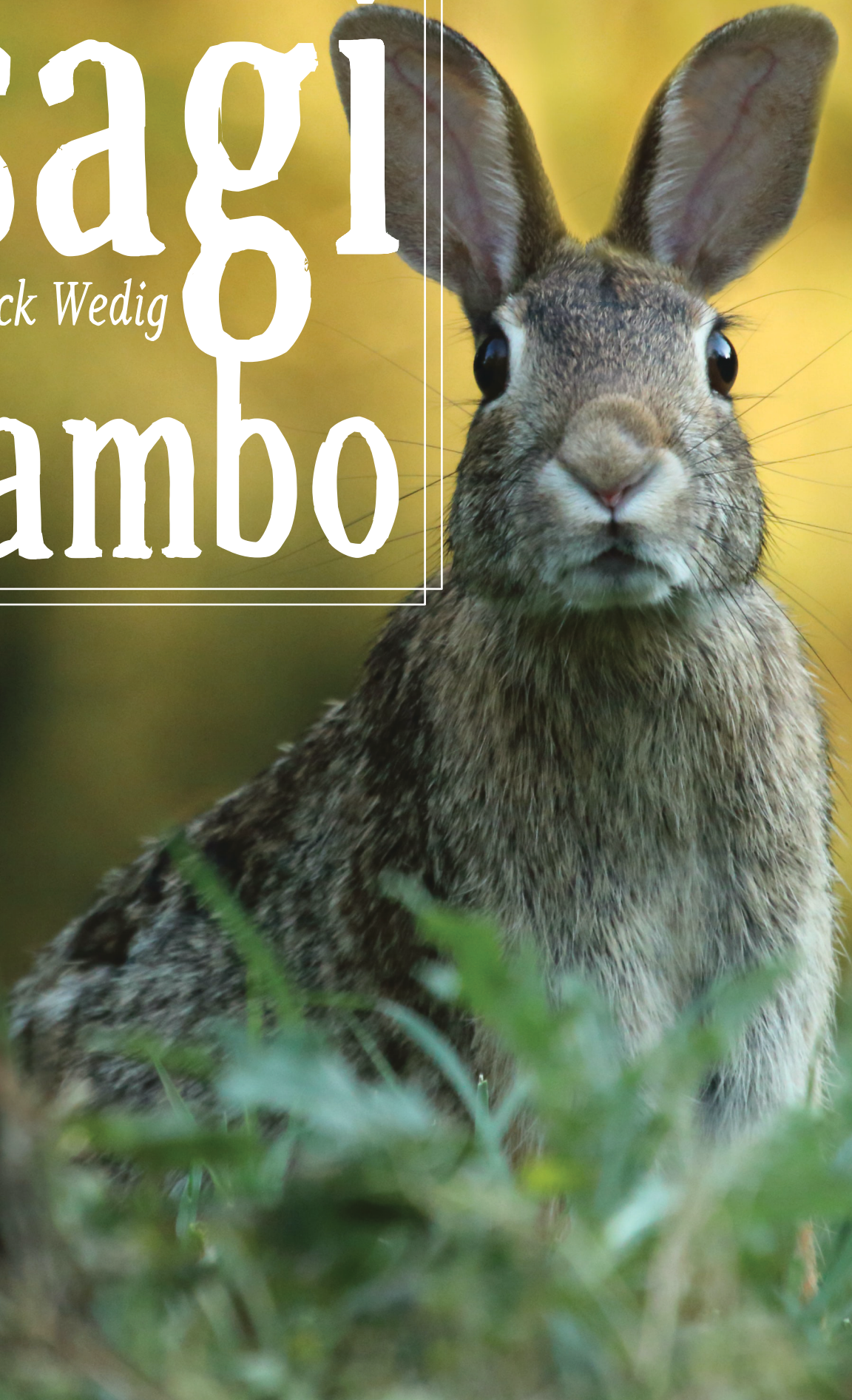
An RPG by Nick Wedig

Yojambo

Made for the



Yojambo
game jam



Introduction

A peaceful meadow sits on the outskirts of human civilization. It should be idyllic, but to the animals that live there, the meadow is simmering with conflict. Any minute the meadow will boil over into violence any minute. Two warrens of rabbits are vying for control, with all the other animals are caught in between.

Into this cold war come the player characters. They are other animals, whose habitat has been destroyed by a new suburban development. Now they are seeking a new place to make their home. This meadow would be perfect, if they can resolve the conflict between the rabbit clans. One way or another, the PCs will become entangled in the meadow as conflict erupts.

Usagi Yojambo is a game for **2–6** players and one gamemaster (**GM**). Play should take one or two sessions, maybe **5–10** hours of total play time, depending on number of players and your play style.

You'll need several six-sided dice (**d6**), the premade character sheets, and a way to keep notes. It might be helpful (but not necessary) to have some physical way to track Pluck, like poker chips or glass beads.

A note on tone: Though this is a game about talking animals, it isn't a funny animal cartoon or a cozy storybook. Treat the conflicts between characters as a serious, life-or-death struggle with complex problems, because that is what it is to the animals involved. Treat the animals as animals first and foremost, though they have a minimal amount of anthropomorphism necessary to tell the story.



Player Characters

Choose your character from one of the available woodland animals. (There can only be one of each animal.) Each animal has a central trait determined by their species that gives advantages and disadvantages. Add one new item to the list of advantages and one to the list of disadvantages.

Each animal also has two options for Drive and two options for a Trouble trait. Select one of each. Your Drive is a personal motivation, an emotional need you want to have filled. Whenever you act to follow your Drive, you gain a point of Pluck.

Your Trouble, meanwhile, isn't a flaw or handicap. It is more like a desire that might cause you make suboptimal choices, the sort that creates interesting stories. You gain a point of Pluck every time you act following your Trouble trait and it causes some complications or difficulties for the PCs.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Every animal type is different, and being that animal gives you some advantages and some disadvantages. In addition to the advantages and disadvantages specified by your species, you can name one additional advantage and one disadvantage of your choice. These can be almost anything within reason. They do not have to come directly from your animal species; they could be things your specific badger is really good at even when most badgers are bad at such things. Talk with your GM to make sure your advantages and disadvantages are not too broad or too narrow. A good advantage or disadvantage will have clear, flavorful places where it applies, and clear places where it doesn't apply.

Relationships

Each animal also has a choice of Relationships. Choose and ask another player one of the two questions. They then will answer it concerning the relationship between your character and theirs. When doing so, make sure every player gets asked a question (as well as asking a question) so that all the PCs have ties to a few other PCs.

Rolling

For most actions that a woodland animals could perform, you don't have to roll. Just declare what your animal is doing, and the GM describe the results.

When do anything risky or uncertain, the GM declares what might happen if you fail. Then you can decide to stop, change course, try something different, now that you know what the consequences might be.

If you continue, you roll **2d6**. On a **8** or higher, you succeed at your task. Roll **7** or lower, and you fail.

Twists

Twists are unexpected complications when you attempt a task. If either of your dice show a result of **4**, then you have an unexpected negative complication. If you roll a **3** on either die, then you have an unexpected positive complication. You might have two good twists on a single roll, or two bad twists or one good and one bad. The GM will tell you what these unexpected results are.

Advantage and Disadvantage

If you have an Advantage from some fictional detail (like your animal's species) then you roll one additional die and choose any two dice as your final result. If you have a Disadvantage from some fictional detail, then you roll an additional die and must take the two lowest dice. If you have both Advantage and Disadvantage, then they cancel out. You can't have double Advantage or double Disadvantage: any number Advantages is the same as a single Advantage, and can all be canceled by a single Disadvantage.

Pluck

Every PC starts with one point of Pluck. You gain additional Pluck by failing rolls, by pursuing your Drive and when your Trouble causes problems. You can spend Pluck to reroll any die after you see its result. (If you have disadvantage, then you still must take the lowest two dice after rerolls.)

You can also spend one point of Pluck to ask the GM a question specified by your animal species. The GM must answer your question truthfully and in a straightforward manner. If you spend two points of Pluck, you can ask the GM any question at all, and they must answer you.

If you there is a Relationship between your character and another, you can spend your Pluck to let them reroll dice.



Sapsorrow

The Songbird

Advantage

Escaping danger, drawing attention to yourself,

Disadvantage

Directly fighting something,

Drive

- Protection** – To keep myself and other smaller animals safe from harm
- Exaltation** – To become more respected, loved, or admired

Question

What is most dangerous in this situation?

Trouble

- Flighty** – You are easily scared off or distracted
- Overly Honest** – You never know when to sugarcoat the truth or withhold information

Relationships:

- What danger did I warn you about that might have killed you?
- What are you insecure about? How do I make you feel more confident about it?

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Jupiter

The Goose, Swan or Duck

Advantage

Destruction, being big and impressive, swimming,

Disadvantage

Clumsy on land, clumsy flyer too,

Drive

- ❑ **Rebel** – To tear down those in power
- ❑ **Loyal Friend** – To help my friends and those in need

Question

What can we do to impress these people?

Trouble

- ❑ **Oathbound** – I swear oaths without thinking through the consequences, and I never breaks a promise
- ❑ **Braggart** – I always have to brag about my accomplishments and those of my friends, make sure everyone knows how great we are

Relationships:

- ❑ What epic deed do I claim you accomplished? Why are you embarrassed whenever I tell the tale?
- ❑ What's the meanest thing you ever did to me, and why did we stay friends afterward?

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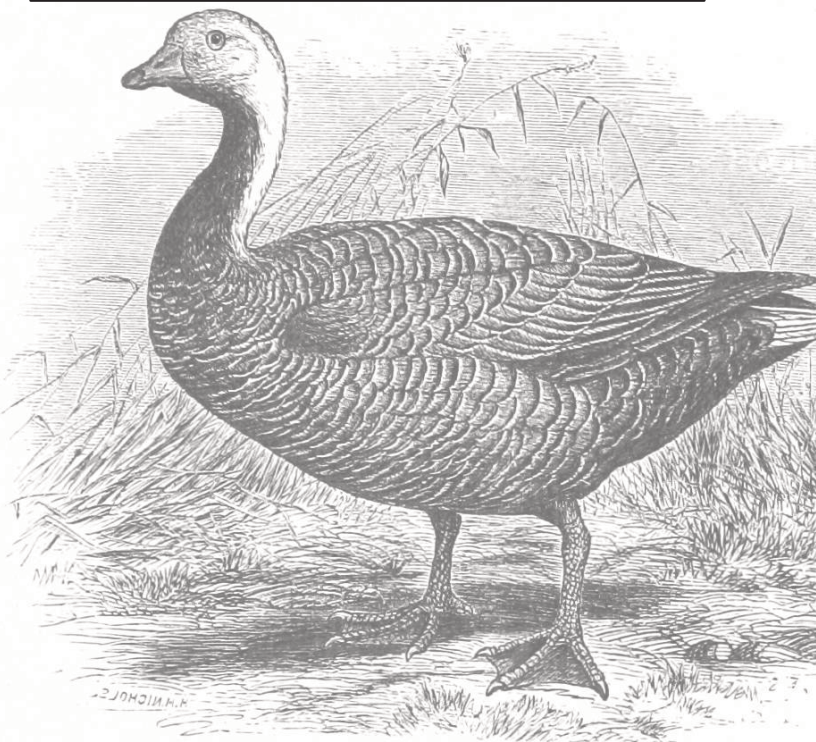
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Echo

The Raccoon

Advantage

Clever hands, sneaky,

Disadvantage

Bad reputation, no one trusts a raccoon,

Drive

- Clever** - To prove I'm trickier and smarter than anyone else
- Inquisitive** - To discover the truths to mysteries

Question

What do these animals most value?

Trouble

- Thieving Hands** - You like collecting shiny objects, trinkets and anything of interest, even when it belongs to someone else.
- Suspicious** - You think everyone (except the other PCs) is hiding something from you, planning to betray you at any moment.

Relationships:

- How did you come to my aid when I was accused of wrongdoing?
- How were you trapped or imprisoned and how did I help you escape?

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Fable

The Fox

Advantage

Trickery, deadly fangs,

Disadvantage

Terrifying to prey animals

Drive

- Sly** – To make fools of those who take themselves too seriously
- Greedy** – To get as many valuables as possible

Question

How could we persuade them to _____?

Trouble

- Showoff** – always taking risks in big flashy ways that get me attention
- Too clever for my own good** – I can never take the straightforward route to get a job done when I can make a complicated scheme

Relationships:

- What scheme did I get you involved in recently, and how did you benefit from my trickery?
- Why are you not afraid of me, when most other animals of your kind would be?

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Tibert

The Cat

Advantage

Stealth, pouncing, sharp claws, night vision,

Disadvantage

Easily distracted

Drive

- Stray** – To find or create a new home
- Conceited** – To prove I'm the best

Question

What's the best way to _____?

Trouble

- Curious** – Can't let a question go unanswered, a mystery unsolved
- Adventurous** – I am always seeking new experiences. I'll try anything once, even if it sounds like a bad idea.

Relationships:

- What did I do to earn your trust?
- What secret are you hiding from me?

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Moonshadow

The Owl, Raven, or Bat

Advantage

Silent, flying, night vision,

Disadvantage

Creepy, clumsy on land,

Drive

- Sage** – to prove that you are wiser or more knowledgeable than everyone else
- Omen of Doom** – To inspire fear in those around you

Question

What do these animals want?

Trouble

- Oblivious** – fails to notice the obvious
- Prophet** – Believes their dreams are prophetic visions

Relationships:

- What philosophical lesson am I trying to teach to, whether or not you want to learn?
- What great destiny to I believe to be prophesied to fulfill?

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Umpleby

The Badger, Muskrat or Hedgehog Advantage

Withstand punishment, burrow, endurance and hard work,

Disadvantage

Slow, breaks everything they touch,

Drive

- ❑ **Comfort** – To find a pleasant place to live and relax
- ❑ **Jovial** – To make others around you happy, cheer them up

Question

What are these animals really feeling?

Trouble

- ❑ **A Bit Dim** – Never quite understands what is going on around them
- ❑ **Undaunted** – Never backs down from a fight or a challenge, no matter how outclassed

Relationships:

- ❑ What comfort do we both enjoy partaking of?
- ❑ What promise did I make to you that I will come to regret?

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Yellowbelly The Turtle

Advantage

Protecting yourself, swimming,

Disadvantage

Slow, clumsy on land,

Drive

- Philosophical** – To understand why animals do what they do, see the things that drive them
- Protective** – To help the weakest, stand up for the little guy (not everyone has a shell like you)

Question

What are these animals afraid of?

Trouble

- Slow and Steady** – Never in a hurry, never rushing about
- Glum** – See the worst in everyone and everything

Relationships:

- What about your behavior do I find strange or unusual, such that I want to study or understand it?
- What lie do you tell yourself and how do I make you confront it?

Character Creation

Drive and Trouble Choose one Drive and one Trouble. Your Drive is a personal motivation. Whenever you act to follow your Drive, you gain a point of Pluck. Your Trouble isn't a flaw or handicap so much as it is something that may cause you to make suboptimal choices, the sort that create interesting adventures. You gain a point of Pluck every time your Trouble trait causes difficulties for the PCs.

Advantages and Disadvantages Every animal type is different, and being that animal gives you some advantages and some disadvantages. In addition to those, you add one additional advantage and one disadvantage of your creation. They do not have to come directly from your animal species; they could be things your specific badger is uniquely good or bad at. A good advantage or disadvantage will have clear, flavorful places where it applies, and clear places where it doesn't apply.

Relationships Each animal also has a choice of Relationships. Choose one question and ask another player it. They answer it concerning the relationship between your character and theirs.

Rolling For most actions that a woodland animal can perform, you don't need to roll. Just declare your action, and the GM describe the results.

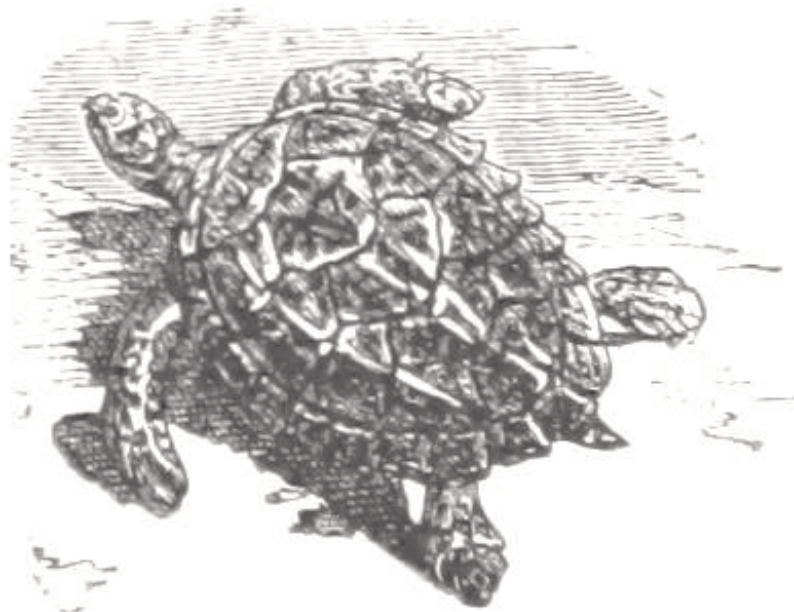
When do anything **risky** or **uncertain**, the GM declares what might happen if you fail. Then you can decide to stop, change course, or try something different, now that you know what the consequences might be.

If you continue, you roll **2d6**. On an **8 or higher**, you **succeed** at what you were attempting. On a **7 or lower**, you **fail** and gain one point of Pluck.

Twists Risky actions often have unexpected consequences. If either of your dice roll a **4**, then you have an unexpected **negative complication**. If you roll a **3** on either die, then you have an unexpected **positive complication**. You might have two good twists on a single roll, or two bad twists, or one good and one bad. The GM will tell you what the twists mean.

Advantage and Disadvantage If you have an **advantage** from some fictional detail (*like your animal's species*) then you **roll one additional die and choose any two dice** as your final result. If you have a **disadvantage** from some fictional detail, then you **roll an additional die and must take the two lowest dice**. If you have both advantage and disadvantage, then they cancel out. You can't have double advantage or double disadvantage: any number advantages is the same as a single advantage, and can all be canceled by a single disadvantage.

Pluck Every PC starts with one point of Pluck. You gain additional Pluck by failing rolls, by pursuing your Drive, and when your Trouble causes problems. You can spend Pluck to **reroll any individual die** after you see its result. (If you have disadvantage, then you still must take the lowest two dice **after** rerolls.) If you there is a Relationship between your character and another, you can spend your Pluck to let them reroll dice. You can also spend one point of Pluck to **ask the GM a question** specified by your animal species. The GM must answer your question truthfully and in a straightforward manner. If you spend two points of Pluck, you can ask the GM any question at all, and they must tell you the answer.



GM Section

This game isn't driven by plot so much as by situation. There are no preplanned scenes after the start, just NPCs to act and react in response to the PCs. The two clans of lagomorphs are in a tense cold war that can easily turn into outright conflict at any moment. How that plays out is up to the PCs. Your job as GM is to present this setting and the NPCs, and then to play out the outcomes to the PC actions. Keep playing out the situation, escalating the conflict, until a natural climax emerges.

If the players are active, then let them take the lead and guide the story. Just have the NPCs react to their actions. If the players are being more passive, have NPCs show up and stir up trouble. Every NPC wants something from the PCs. Whenever you need to spur the story along, have an NPC show up, offering something, demanding something, starting a fight or providing clues.

I've presented a lot of NPCs and information for the PCs to discover. These are intended to be hooks that the PCs can manipulate to achieve their ends. There's probably more information than you really need for a one or two session game. This is deliberate. It means that you as GM only need to use the bits that interest you. It also means the players can ignore some subplots and focus on the subplots that interest them.

Note that I didn't specify the gender of any of the PCs or other animals. Animals don't partake of our human culture, including gender.

Questions and Mysteries

Your job is not to keep secrets in this game. Your goal is to spill all the secrets as soon as possible, so the players can use that information to make informed decisions. The NPCs may want to keep their misdeeds a secret, but you should be finding ways to reveal the secrets. Then the players can decide what to do with the situation, which is where the real meat of the scenario is. This is why every player character has the ability to just directly ask you questions. That allows them to quickly discover the truth.

When someone spends some Pluck to get answers to questions, be truthful and forthright. Then work with them to figure out how and why they discover that truth in character. Find a way to make the answers known through the character's perceptiveness and clever thinking. This is a chance to collaborate with your fellow players, and a chance to shine a light on the PC being smart and cool.

Rolling

You don't need to make players roll very often. Each roll generates new information and plot twists, so you can play out those consequences for some time after the roll. Once or twice per scene is probably enough. An entire conflict should be handled in a single roll by whichever PC is most central to the action. Don't ever make a player roll if there isn't something interesting that can happen on a success and something interesting that can happen on a failure.

You as GM never roll for anything. When an NPC would act, have the players roll to avoid or resist harm inflicted upon them.

Before players roll, you as GM should describe what is at stake on the roll: what happens if they succeed and what happens if they fail. You can scale up or down the results of a roll, giving more fictional ground on some rolls and less on others depending on the situation and the character's method of action. Some methods of pursuing a goal are more effective than others. As GM, your job is to set stakes that make for the best story in this particular moment of the game. Always pursue the path that maximizes enjoyment of the players - including yourself.

Once you propose stakes of a roll, players can take their chance and roll. Or they can choose to try a different method of achieving their goals. Or they might ask questions, seek out ways to change the situation. They never should be rolling without knowing what the main consequences of a roll might be.

Advantage and Disadvantage

The most common source of advantage or disadvantage will be the traits of PC animals and the NPCs. PC animal types have their own automatic advantages and disadvantages, and players add some of their own to the sheet. Each NPC has some Strengths and Weaknesses which can create advantages or disadvantages depending on the situation. Typically, a Strength would give a PC advantage if the PC and NPC are working together, or

disadvantage if they are opposed to each other. A weakness is the opposite, making things more difficult when the PC and NPC work together and making things easier when the NPC is opposed to the PC.

You as GM can also assign advantage or disadvantage when a fictional situation seems to make things harder or easier for the PCs. Use your best judgment, be fair to the players, and make sure they know an action will have advantage or disadvantage before rolling.

FYI, because of the dice mechanics, disadvantage hurts more than advantage helps. Only apply disadvantage when it is really fictionally clear that someone would be hampered in what they are doing, especially if they don't have an advantage to counterbalance the situation.

Twists

Each twist should come largely based on the current situation. But if you're having trouble coming up with an appropriate twist, choose from the tables below. If you're really uncertain, roll a die for each twist and explain how the rolled result makes sense. (If it doesn't make sense, go ahead and pick another result, or reroll.) It's important to keep things moving at this time, so don't spend too much time thinking and consulting charts. Find the first complication that makes sense in the scene and describe it to the players, so they can act in response.

You can, but don't have to, describe potential twists that might occur in a roll. "Yeah, you can try to steal the action figure from the Cony warren. On a success, you get away with it. On a bad twist, though, they spot you taking it and know you did it." This sort of thing can sometimes add to the excitement of a roll, and sometimes might let the players make interesting decisions. But you don't have to do it every roll. That would waste a lot of imagination on twists that never happen. And it would kill twists as unexpected outcomes of an action. The unpredictability of a roll is part of what makes the roll interesting.

Positive:

- 1 You earn a new friend, reward or good reputation in the process
- 2 You gain insight or knowledge that will be useful in the future.
- 3 You gain possession of something valuable or useful
- 4 Your enemies are frightened or confused
- 5 You learn a secret or weakness of your opponent
- 6 Someone owes you a debt or favor

Negative:

- 1 You earn an enemy or bad reputation in the process
- 2 You owe someone a debt or favor
- 3 You, a friend or ally is harmed in the process
- 4 Something valuable is damaged, lost or stolen in the process
- 5 Your opponents learn a secret or weakness of yours
- 6 You were mistaken about key facts of the situation

Harm

If a player character does something that is dangerous, they might suffer an injury on a failed roll, on a bad twist, or on both. Let the player know the possibility of injury exists before they roll.

Once a PC is injured, that will act as a disadvantage for applicable physical actions. Don't just make a mechanical note of an injury. Describe the pain and blood of the broken leg, the bloody wound, the bruises and scratches from a fight. Besides the direct and obvious problems of an injury, pain and shock and bloodloss can make it hard for an animal to perform tasks that are rely on mental clarity, which is most tasks.

Further dangerous activity while already injured likely means death is a possibility of a bad roll. You might declare that an injured PC dies if they fail a roll... or that they die on a bad twist, whether or not the roll is successful. Always make clear when death is a possible outcome to a roll, whether it is because of failure or because of a bad twist.

NPCs can be injured as well, in which case they provide advantage to most conflict against them. NPCs can die on a single roll, or even no roll at all if it makes sense (e.g., a deadly fox versus a helpless field mouse), or they might sustain several injuries but cling to life. Your job as GM is to evaluate the situation of a game and set the stakes of a conflict such that they maximize player enjoyment. So if it makes sense and increases fun to have an enemy die easily, do that. If it makes sense to have the big boss cling to life despite great effort from the PCs, do that.

The Meadow

Somewhere on the outskirts of human civilization, there's a meadow. To humans, it appears peaceful and calm. To the animals that live there, it is full of bloodshed, paranoia, and conflict.

Decades ago, the meadow was a human farm. After the farmhouse burned down, the farm sat unoccupied for years. Eventually the barn crumbled. Wild grasses reclaimed the wheat fields. Animals moved into the area where humanity once lived.

The entire meadow is roughly rectangular, a few acres in total size. The meadow gently slopes up from a large still pond on one end to a low ridge on the other side. To one side is the edge of the forest, and on the opposite side is a gravel road that humans rarely travel along. The wire and posts of fence can be found scattered near the edges of the meadow. The foundations of a farmhouse can be found under the grasses if one looks for it. A crumbling stone wall sits along the ridge, marking the edge of Farmer Van Ort's fields, and few of the meadow animals are willing to venture there. An enormous oak tree grows atop the hill, near the stone wall. The Rabbit clan has dug their warren out in and among the roots of the oak tree. The other clan, the Conies, have been digging out their own warren inside the tumbled down ruin that used to be a barn. A few other animals make their homes in and around the meadow and along the edges of the pond.

The Rabbits

Until recently, the Rabbits were uncontested in their control of the meadow. They kept the peace through violence and intimidation. Every animal in the meadow owed the Rabbits for some favor, and every animal feared the Rabbits. Each animal has to tithe an amount of plants, seeds, and other foods to the Rabbit warren. The warren has a large treasure hoard inside, replete with enough plants for the warren to survive the winter.

Amaranthus has declared that animals in the meadow must stay as far from humans as possible, and forbids any interaction with humanity. Trading in human artifacts is also forbidden, though quite common in certain circles.

Besides the named rabbits, there are approximately 3-4 times as many Rabbits as there are PCs in your game. Taking them out individually can be done, but facing the entire warren at once would be foolhardy.

Rabbits in General

This governs the faction as a whole and individual rabbits. Use this for Rabbits acting as a group or any unnamed Rabbit gang members. See below for important individual Rabbits. If it matters, you can apply these strengths and weaknesses to the other named Rabbits as well.

Strengths Strength in Numbers (fierce in battle so long as they have you outnumbered), Everyone owes the Rabbits a debt

Weakness Terrified of Farmer Van Ort and Van Ort's dogs, easily swayed by greed or vice

Wants from the PCs To stay out of Rabbit business

Amaranthus

The leader of the Rabbits, Amaranthus has ruled the meadow for years. They are now growing old, though, and they fear losing their grasp over the animals in the area. They will do almost anything to maintain power, but they are largely unaware of Ranunculus's efforts to unseat them. Snapdragon has tried to warn Amaranthus of Ranunculus's treachery, but Amaranthus cannot believe anything bad said against their kin.

Amaranthus's child Bilberry has recently disappeared, and Amaranthus assumes the Conies have killed them. They wish to seek revenge for Bilberry's death, as well as the deaths of the other missing Rabbits (Snowdrop and Larkspur). Amaranthus would be willing to risk the entire Rabbit warren if they thought it would have a chance of getting Bilberry back.

Strengths Fierce, ruthless, familiar with strange human behavior

Weakness Old (for a rabbit), Trusts other Rabbits

Wants from the PCs Wants from the PCs: For them to drive the Conies out of the meadow, to swear fealty to Amaranthus, to find Snowdrop's killer, to get revenge for Bilberry's death

Ranunculus

Amaranthus's younger sibling and heir apparent. Ranunculus is growing impatient of waiting for Amaranthus to die or step down. Ranunculus has been spreading rumors that Amaranthus is too old and frail to lead. Ranunculus is trying to gather a loyal faction within the Rabbits. So far, Ranunculus has gained the support of about a quarter of the rabbits. Several more are on the fence. Ranunculus hopes that by crushing the Conies, Ranunculus could establish themselves as the natural leader of the warren.

Strengths Devious liar, skilled strategist

Weakness Short-sighted, Will do anything to get ahead

Wants from the PCs For them to aid in overthrowing Amaranthus, To give them glory, to find Larkspur's killer

Snapdragon

An enormous albino rabbit, Snapdragon escaped from a human home and found their way to the Meadow long ago. Since then, they have become Amaranthus's mate and the primary enforcer of the Rabbit clan. When an animal must be punished or driven off, Snapdragon does Amaranthus's dirty work. Snapdragon is suspicious of Ranunculus, but does not know the extent of Ranunculus's treachery. They have tried to warn Amaranthus of dissension in the ranks, but the elder rabbit refuses to listen.

Snapdragon also knows of Larkspur's love affair with one of the Conies, but they promised to keep it a secret.

Snapdragon is ashamed of what happened to their child Bilberry, won't be forthcoming if they can avoid mentioning it. They were walking with Bilberry through the meadow, came across Goosefoot and there was a fight. Snapdragon injured Goosefoot in the battle, but Bilberry was scared and ran off. Snapdragon doesn't know that Bilberry was captured by the Conies soon after, but they fear the worst.

Strengths Large and tough, aware of danger

Weakness Loyal to a fault to Amaranthus, Terrified of humans and everything human related

Wants from the PCs Snapdragon wants to protect Amaranthus from Ranunculus, the Conies and the PCs in roughly equal measure. Snapdragon also wants to support Amaranthus and to see Bilberry safely returned to the warren.

Snowdrop

Snowdrop was one of the Rabbit enforcers. They went to collect debts from Pinch and Squeak the field mice, The Admiral the turtle, Tester the gopher and Hazel the squirrel. But they never came back. Amaranthus thinks the Conies killed Snowdrop. In actuality, Snowdrop is dead, but the Conies are not to blame.

When Snowdrop went to get payment from The Admiral, the Admiral wound up arguing with the Rabbit. Snowdrop and The Admiral got into a fight by the pond's edge and both fell in. The Admiral weighed down Snowdrop and both sank into the pond. Snowdrop drowned, and The Admiral tried to hide what happened. Only Ballow, The Admiral and some fish know what happened to Snowdrop.

Bilberry

Kidnapped by the Conies in retaliation for Heliotrope's disappearance (which the Conies think the Rabbits were responsible for. They weren't.) Bilberry is the youngest child of Amaranthus and Snapdragon. Both parents are convinced that Bilberry is dead, killed by the Conies. Snapdragon blames himself for Bilberry's disappearance. Amaranthus would be willing to risk the entire Rabbit warren if they thought it would have a chance of getting Bilberry back. (See the section on The Hostage for more on Bilberry.)

The Conies

A few months ago, a new colony of rabbits moved into the meadow. No one in the meadow knows where they came from before settling in the meadow. They call themselves the Conies. They are especially notable for having some strange, quasi-religious beliefs about humans and deer. Their presence in the meadow has increased tensions with the Rabbits, until violent conflict is likely to break out at any moment.

The leader of the Conies, Hollyhock, believes that humans are alien, godlike beings with capabilities far beyond what rabbits can understand. Which isn't exactly wrong but, you know, weird. And they have some belief that Hollyhock is humanity's chosen prophet, who brings blessings upon their followers. Which is definitely wrong. And they believe that deer in the nearby forest are mystical beings that act as intermediaries between the meadow animals and the distance alien humans, sort of like forest spirits or Biblical angels. They also believe that any item created by humans is mystically significant and capable of magical wonders. And they tend to be creepily obsessed with their beliefs, sort of cultlike, and increasingly militant and violent.

The Conies have established a new warren in the crumbling ruins of a tumbled-down barn, now little more than a pile of lumber bleached gray with time and the weather. Inside the ruins, they have collected many inexplicable human artifacts. The two most important to them are The Gun and The Idol.

Conies traffic in human items to curious critters. Not all animals want human stuff, but some are very interested in these things, especially since Hollyhock says these artifacts bring divine fortune to their owners. So some animals hoard and trade for bottle caps, used gloves, rusted gears, tattered pieces of paper with indecipherable writing, etc. They will do favors for the Conies in exchange for small bits of human trash, thinking these artifacts are human treasure.

Conies in General

This governs the faction as a whole and individual Conies. Use this for Conies acting as a group or any unnamed Conies gang members. See below for important individual Conies. If it matters, you can apply these strengths and weaknesses to the other named Conies as well.

Strengths Strength in Numbers (fierce in battle so long as they have you outnumbered), ruthless

Weakness Easily deceived by mystical talk of deer or humans

Wants from the PCs To stay out of Cony business



Hollyhock

Hollyhock leads the Conies with a religious fervor. They claim to have mystical visions, which govern the lives of the Conies and those that they deal with. These visions always conveniently push for the agenda Hollyhock wanted in the first place. Some animals, especially the Rabbits, claim that Hollyhock is a liar and a fraud. They say Hollyhock doesn't experience visions nor even believe their religious teachings.

The truth is more complicated. Hollyhock was initially a fraud, but they have begun to believe their own lies. Their visions are all false, made up when convenient. But over time they repeated the made up myths so many times they came to believe them. Sometimes, Hollyhock is fully aware that the entire myth is a lie. At others, they find themselves thinking as if the stories were true. Sometimes they have normal dreams and wonder if they are, in fact, prophetic visions sent from the humans.

Hollyhock has become increasingly desperate for confirmation of the myths. If they can find evidence that matches the stories, then it will quell the doubters in the meadow. The squirrels Hazel and Hickory claim to know how to find the King of All Deer. Hollyhock has sought the deer in the forest with no luck so far. And they have tried to get the secret from the squirrels, with similarly disappointing results.

Similarly, Hollyhock wishes to find the source of the shining discs that Ballow, the frog, has been trading to the Conies. Ultimately, they want to get the discs themselves without having to pay Ballow. Their investigations have gone nowhere, and they are hesitant to push too hard. If they anger Ballow, then the frog might stop delivering discs to the Conies. If the PCs were to investigate, Hollyhock might be able to learn the answer while maintaining plausible deniability if something goes wrong.

Strengths loyal followers, convincing storyteller

Weakness believes his own lies, dangerous beliefs about humanity

Wants from the PCs to be shown the path to the mystic grove of the King of all Deer, discover where Ballow is obtaining the shining discs, to help seize control of the meadow from the Rabbits

Goosefoot

Goosefoot is the Conies' toughest enforcer. Goosefoot is also Hollyhock's mate and a true believer in Hollyhock's religion.

Goosefoot was badly injured in a fight with Snapdragon. They are currently missing one ear and they have a broken front leg. Bloodstains coat their fur. Hollyhock placed them on guard duty until healed, but what they really want is revenge. They are tormenting their prisoner until they get a chance to go after Snapdragon. Goosefoot could easily decide to "accidentally" kill Bilberry, or to "accidentally" let Bilberry escape so that they can chase them down and force a confrontation with the Rabbits.

Strengths Largest toughest of the Conies

Weakness broken front leg, true believer in Hollyhock's teachings, bloodthirsty, cruel

Wants from the PCs For them to leave the Conies alone, for them to stay far away from the Conies' warren

Windflower

Windflower is Hollyhock's mate, who helped Hollyhock gather the other Conies and create their warren. But now they are starting to question the bizarre myths Hollyhock has invented about the humans and deer.

Windflower was attacked by a stray dog months ago and blinded, before the Rabbits drove the dog away. In the attack, Windflower was blinded. Hollyhock and the other Conies have been caring for them as they have learned to live without sight.

Strengths Skeptical, questions everything, good at making friends with other animals

Weakness blind

Wants from the PCs Mostly they want certainty, either confirmation that Hollyhock's tales are true or evidence that they are false. Could go either way.

The Gun

Somehow, the Conies have obtained a gun from the humans. It is a two-barreled shotgun, like Elmer Fudd would carry. They don't fully understand how to use this weapon, but they know that the humans can use it to magically strike down those that anger them even from great distances, like Zeus striking someone with a lightning bolt. They have constructed bizarre religious beliefs about the gun and its great and terrible power, and how it was given to Hollyhock to show that they are their chosen prophet. Hollyhock has the Conies sit and chant in a circle around the gun. The Conies will stand in front of its barrel to prove their bravery. The Conies will also place their prisoners in front of the gun to frighten them, threatening to make the gun produce its deadly thunder.

The gun sits in a place of honor in the center of the Conies' warren. Any animal that has visited the dilapidated barn knows of its existence and where to find it. Any animal trying to move the gun is probably operating at a disadvantage due to how large and heavy it is. Any animal trying to sabotage the gun has a disadvantage due to the alienness of human technology.

They do not understand much about how the gun actually works as a machine. Even if they did, their rabbit paws would make it nearly impossible to aim, reload or do much with the gun. The Conies do not know or understand that a gun needs to be loaded, and have no idea how many shots are still in the gun. They do understand enough to know that you pull the trigger to make the gun strike down your enemies.

The gun cannot be aimed in a combat situation. You need to get someone to stand in front of its barrel. When the trigger is pulled, the GM should roll a single die to see if the gun is even loaded. On a **1-3**, that barrel is empty. On a **4-6**, there is a great loud noise heard throughout the meadow and any animal standing in front of the barrel is killed instantly.

The gun has two barrels, so it can be used up to twice. But none of the animals know that, so the Conies may try to use the gun a third time and be disappointed in its failure. Once the gun is empty and ineffectual, that might be used to hurt Hollyhock's claims of holy power. Or perhaps two shots will be enough for Hollyhock to keep the animals in fear of their deadly, divinely granted power.

The Hostage

Bilberry is the child of Amaranthus and Snapdragon, who has been taken captive by the Conies in retaliation for the kidnapping of Heliotrope. (Heliotrope wasn't kidnapped, they just eloped with their Rabbit lover Larkspur.) Bilberry is now kept trapped in the Conies' burrow, watched over by the wounded but terrifying Goosefoot.

Yesterday, Snapdragon and Bilberry encountered Goosefoot in the meadow and there was a fight. Snapdragon injured Goosefoot in the battle, but Bilberry was scared and ran off. Bilberry was captured by Conies soon after.

Bilberry is frightened, but also a careful observer. They are learning everything they can about their captors, seeking for a weakness they can use to escape. Bilberry has figured out that the Idol has been stolen. If they can speak to Windflower without Goosefoot around, Bilberry will try to convince Windflower to doubt Hollyhock's authority.

Strengths observant, easily underestimated

Weakness injured, trapped in the Conies' warren, terrified of Goosefoot

Wants from the PCs to be freed from the Conies, to get a message to Snapdragon

The Idol

A fascinating figure, the Idol was the most prized possession of the Conies. It was a figure of a human being, about the size of a squirrel, brightly colored and made of an unknown material that didn't taste good to eat. When the chest of the human was pressed, a long low moan would emanate from the being and its eyes would flash with smokeless fire.

Humans would recognize the Idol as an action figure of some superhero. At one time, it would say the hero's catchphrase when the button was pressed. But as the batteries have been slowly dying, the hero's voice has become slowed and distorted. The eyes flash dimly, but still can be seen in shadows or at night. The Conies, of course, don't understand this and worship the Idol as a symbol of their gods. Before it was stolen, the Idol was one of their most holy relics (second only to The Gun).

Hollyhock would regularly show it to the other Conies and pray to the humans through the Idol. Those sessions suddenly stopped when the Idol disappeared a few days ago. Goosefoot blames the Rabbits, of course, and wishes to storm the Rabbits' warren to take back their holy treasure. Hollyhock is hesitant to launch such an assault. Hollyhock thinks that perhaps the Idol was taken by some other group... or perhaps taken by the humans as a sign of their disfavor.

Since the Idol was a sign of the human's favor, Hollyhock has hidden the fact that the Idol is missing. Only Hollyhock and Goosefoot know the Idol is missing. Hollyhock claims to have the Idol hidden away in a special chamber of their warren, only to be seen by the most worthy.

Goosefoot can imitate the sound of the Idol. If someone wishes to see the Idol, Hollyhock refuses but has Goosefoot go to a hidden part of the warren and imitate the sound so that others can hear. This "proves" they have the Idol still, and buys them a little time to recover the item. If Windflower or the others were to discover the trick, though, it would be very damaging for Hollyhock's ability to control the warren.

None of the Conies know that the Idol was taken by Tester, the gopher. Tester initially thought they could trade it to some other animal in the meadow. Tester is eager to get rid of the Idol, but no one is willing to take it. The Conies will likely kill anyone they think stole their Idol, so no other animal is willing to touch it. If Tester thinks the PCs might be interested, they will try to trade the Idol for anything they can get. If the Conies seem onto they, they might just hide the Idol or throw it in the pond or something to keep themselves safe.

The Innocents

Pinch

A field mouse, parent to young children, the PCs will first encounter Pinch while they are being interrogated by Snapdragon about the disappearance of Bilberry, Snowdrop and Larkspur.

Pinch is the parent to a litter of small baby mice, and they owe a substantial amount of grain to the Rabbits. Pinch is terrified of both the Rabbits and the Conies, and will beg the PCs for help. They know that the meadow will never see peace as long as the Rabbits and Conies both occupy it. Soon, their rivalry will turn into all-out warfare between the warrens. Pinch can't do anything to stop this, but perhaps the player characters can do so.

Pinch doesn't actually know much about either clan, though. If the PCs want more information on either of the warrens, Pinch will direct them to another animal in the meadow. They know that the squirrels Hazel and Hickory know more about the Conies, and that Squeak owes a big debt to the Rabbits. They also know that Ballow always knows the latest gossip.

Strengths small and good at hiding, loves their children

Weakness Terrified of the Rabbits, terrified of the Conies, terrified of the Gun, small, weak,

Wants from the PCs : For the PCs to get rid of both the Rabbits and the Conies

Squeak

About a month ago, a stray dog came to the meadow and caused great havoc. The Rabbits were able to protect Squeak from the dog and drive it away. Ever since, Squeak has been deep in debt to them. Normally a carefree and lazy mouse, Squeak has been working hard in hopes of eventually paying off the debt.

Squeak has been inside the Rabbit warren and seen the treasure chamber full of food for the winter. They can name and describe the important Rabbits, but they don't know what happened to Snowdrop or Bilberry. Squeak does know that Larkspur was seen several times with Heliotrope (one of the Conies) just before disappearing, though.

Strengths small and good at hiding,

Weakness Terrified of the Rabbits, small, weak, lazy,

Wants from the PCs to have their debt erased, to have the Rabbits driven from the meadow.

Tester

Tester is a gopher and a troublemaker. Most recently, he stole the Idol from the Conies's warren. None of the Conies know that the Idol was taken by Tester, the gopher. Tester initially thought he could trade it to some other animal in the meadow. Tester is eager to get rid of the Idol, but no one is willing to take it. The other animals of the meadow realize that having the Idol in their possession is extremely dangerous. The Conies will likely kill anyone they think stole their Idol. If he thinks the PCs might be interested, Tester will try to trade the Idol to them for any benefit he can get at all. If the Conies seem onto him, he might just hide the Idol or throw it in the pond or something to keep himself safe.

The Gopher robbed the Hares of some valuable human artifacts, is trying to pawn it off quickly before their robbery is discovered. Gopher tried to sell the items to Larkspur, but Larkspur wasn't interested in buying artifacts, just in finding somewhere to hide, some place to escape the other rabbits.

Strengths thievery, burrowing, making trouble

Weakness never plans ahead, thinks he is smarter than he really is, terrified of the Conies and The Gun

Wants from the PCs For them to take the Idol and give him something valuable in return, for them to protect him from the Conies' wrath

Ballow

Ballow is a frog that lives on the edge of the pond. They have had a longstanding rivalry with the Admiral, the turtle that also lives near the pond.

Ballow also has the ability to speak to the fish in the pond, and sometimes gets news from them. Mostly, though, the fish aren't interested in the surface world. In general, and animals aren't interested in what is under the pond either. Except that Ballow learned there is a human skeleton at the bottom of the pond, clutching a case full of strange shining discs. Ballow tried to recover the discs, but they were too heavy for them to recover.

Then a few days ago, The Admiral accidentally killed Snowdrop, one of the main enforcers of the Rabbit warren. Ballow soon heard about this from the fish, and they hatched a scheme. The admiral is terrified that the Rabbits will discover who killed snowdrop. So Ballow has been extorting The Admiral, threatening to reveal the truth to the Rabbits. In exchange for silence, The Admiral has been recovering shining discs from the bottom of the pond to give to Ballow. Ballow is then trading the discs to the Conies.

The Conies have then been helping keep the Rabbits away from Ballow (so Ballow doesn't have to pay back their debt to the Rabbits). The Conies are very curious where these human-made discs come from, but they don't want to lose the source of the treasure by disrupting things.

Strengths amphibious, speaks to fish

Weakness small, cowardly

Wants from the PCs for them to drive away the Rabbits, leave the Conies alone so Ballow can keep profiting off them,

The Admiral

An aging turtle always wanting to wage imaginary battles. Addled by old age, The Admiral has a tenuous grasp on what is happening around them. They have had a longstanding rivalry with Ballow, the frog that also lives near the edge of the pond.

Recently, The Admiral accidentally killed one of the Rabbits' main enforcers, Snowdrop. The Admiral owed some debts to the Rabbits, as many animals of the meadow do. When Snowdrop went to get payment from The Admiral, the Admiral wound up arguing with the Rabbit. Snowdrop and The Admiral got into a fight by the pond's edge and both fell in. The Admiral weighed down Snowdrop and both sank into the pond. Snowdrop drowned, and The Admiral tried to hide what happened.

Only The Admiral and Ballow the frog know what happened to Snowdrop. Ballow has been extorting The Admiral, threatening to reveal the truth to the Rabbits. In exchange for silence, The Admiral has been recovering shining discs from the bottom of the pond to give to Ballow. Ballow is then trading the discs to the Conies.

The Admiral thinks the Conies' religion is all hogwash, including thinking the Gun is a fake. They are terrified of the Rabbit warren, though, so they want to keep their misdeed a secret.

Strengths tough shell, amphibious, accidentally deadly

Weakness old, senile, fading in glory, easily distracted telling stories of battles long ago

Wants from the PCs : For the PCs to keep their deed a secret, to stop Ballow's blackmail, to settle the conflict between Conies and Rabbits.

Hazel and Hickory

These two squirrels have been feeding the Conies lies about the deer in the forest. They have been giving hollyhock progressively bigger, weirder tall tales about the deer. But now their lies have gotten too big for them to handle. Hickory told Hollyhock that they knew of a magical grove in the forest where the King of All Deer lives and holds court. They claimed that the Deer King will grant magical powers to those he likes. Hollyhock demands to be taken to this mystical land. But there is no such place, and the Squirrels are stalling. They can't keep up the lie for long before hollyhock does something.

Strengths climbing, scurrying away from harm, burying nuts, telling lies

Weakness always exaggerate the truth, forgetful

Wants from the PCs They want the PCs to deal with Hollyhock so that their lies don't get them into trouble.

Larkspur and Heliotrope

Larkspur is one of the Rabbits, the sibling of Ranunculus. Heliotrope is one of the Conies. The pair fell in love, despite their feuding warrens. The two decided to run off together to hide in the forest nearby. The squirrels Hazel and Hickory are helping them hide in the forest with the deer. Snapdragon knows of the illicit love affair, and was the one to guide Larkspur to the pair of squirrels. They initially asked the Gopher for help, but the Gopher just wanted to sell off his stolen human artifacts to them, and was no help at all for escaping into the forest.

The deer watch over Larkspur and Heliotrope, protecting them for their own mysterious reasons.

Strengths True love, hiding in the forest

Weakness Believe the best in everyone and everything

Wants from the PCs To protect them from the Rabbits and the Conies, to bring peace to the Meadow so they can live together in peace.

The Deer

Heliotrope and Larkspur, star-crossed lovers. Hiding in the forest, perhaps watched by deer (mysterious and dangerous creatures, something like angels. Wise and swift and terrible in their fury, they don't speak to lowly creature like the PCs or rabbits. Maybe rabbits have odd superstitions about deer? (Special rule: you cannot ask the GM questions about the deer. You cannot understand deer or their motives. Maybe you get mysterious, dreamlike, nonsense answers, maybe no answer at all.)

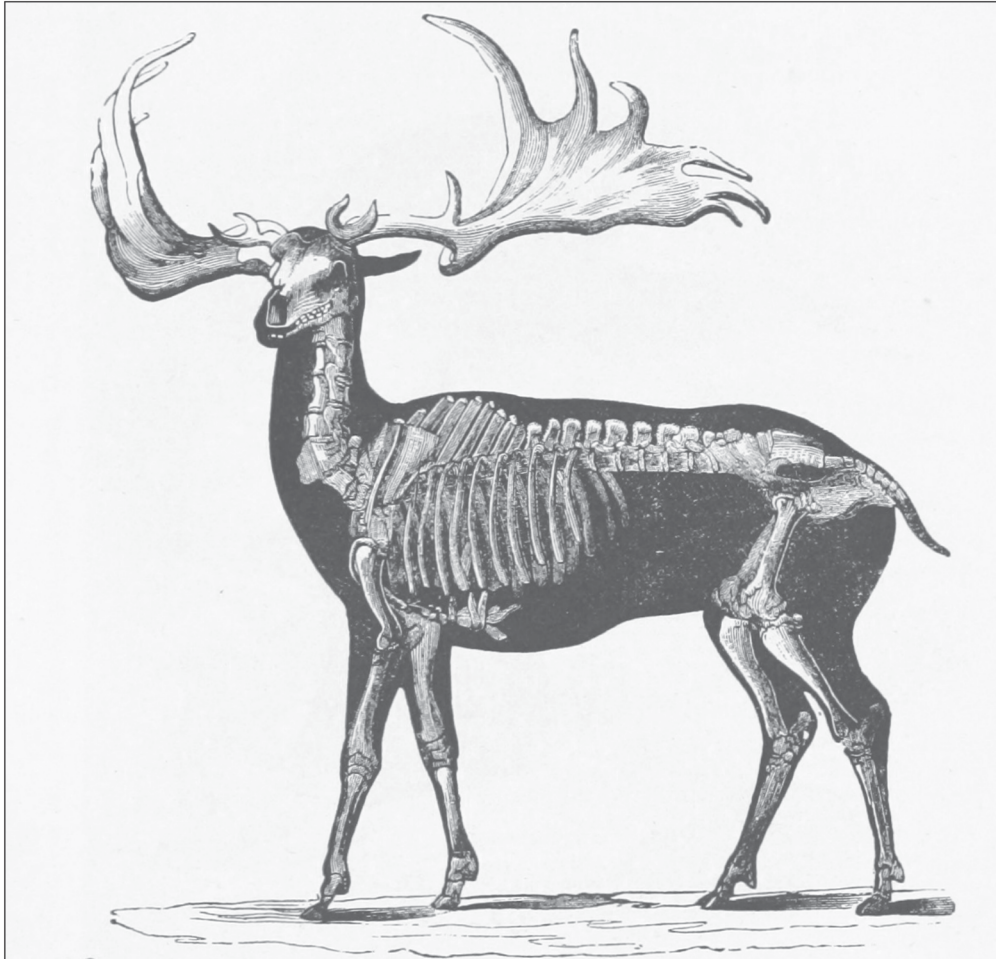
The Conies believe the deer are angelic being, messengers from humanity, or maybe guardians of the forest, or something. They're more wrong than they are right about what the deer will do and why, but they keep espousing stuff about the deer. Hollyhock wants to know where to find the deer in the forest, because whenever they go to seek the deer the deer cannot be found. Hazel and Hickory know how to find the deer, but refuse to tell Hollyhock.

Special Rule Deer are inherently alien and strange to the animals of the meadow. Whenever a player spends Pluck to ask questions about the deer, just give a stream of nonsense images. "A tree burning on a cliffside, a storm under the earth. The past is calling your name, and the memories ripple like water in a still pond." That sort of thing. Images that might almost make metaphorical sense. Don't worry about making actual sense, just imply that the images you give are deeply symbolic. Let the players construct a meaning out of them. (A nice GM would also give the point of Pluck back to the player and admit it was all nonsense.)

Strengths enormous, powerful, graceful, mysterious, difficult to find, impossible to understand

Weakness large, skittish, stays away from humans

Wants from the PCs Unknowable, mysterious. Will act in a way that confounds expectations.



The Ugly

Farmer Van Ort

Farmer Van Ort is actually a young woman of mixed race descent trying to convert her family farm to be organic and ecologically friendly. But the animals of the meadow don't understand any of that. To them, she is a terrifying boogeyman, a monstrous, mythic figure, a giant dragon you dare not approach or anger. The Rabbits fear her like the Devil, the Conies see her as a distant and incomprehensible god.

There are several farmhands, friends and other humans that visit the farm at various times. These humans are just as worrying as Farmer Van Ort, but don't carry the same mythic weight in the minds of the Conies.

Strengths Humans are big, and they know mysterious human things, and they have strange tools they can use to do impossible human things like create light in the night or harm animals from far away.

Weakness Humans are dumb, though. Their senses are dull, and they are easy to fool, and easier still to run and hide from.

Wants from the PCs For the animals to stay off their farm, and especially to stay away from all the delicious plants growing in their fields and the strange animals imprisoned in their pens.

Goliath and Ogre

The dogs that live on the Van Ort farm. Enormous beasts, with sharp fangs and brutal desire to destroy. They are trained to never go beyond the farm's borders, but any animal that sneaks over the border might catch their attention.

Strengths Monstrous strength, brutality, excellent hearing and smell

Weakness Nearly blind (*Ogre*), bad leg makes them slow to move (*Goliath*)

Wants from the PCs Goliath and Ogre want the PC (and all the animals of the meadow) destroyed. They also want to protect their humans from any and all threats, and to be recognized by the humans as good dogs for doing so. Maybe if they catch a fox or goose and bring its dead body back to the farm, the farmer will give them extra love?

The Sprawl

On the far side of the forest was another piece of grassland, where the PCs once made their home. Then humans moved in and began digging up the ground and building houses and roads. The construction site is pretty far for an animal to travel, but the PCs might be able to go there and interact with the construction crew, if they had reason to do so. Maybe the mysterious tools used by the crew could be used to bribe the Conies. Maybe a large pit dug out as a foundation could be used as a trap for some antagonist. Maybe the PCs sabotage the area or convince the Conies to move there. The humans who work there are very active during daylight, but the area is basically deserted at night, and an animal can easily slip past barricades made to keep humans out.

The Skeleton

At the bottom of the pond is a human skeleton, still clad in the tatters of a suit, clutching a suitcase full of gold coins. Most animals think these shiny discs are interesting but fundamentally worthless, but the Conies are very interested in them. Ballow the frog was told about the skeleton and the shining discs by the fish that live in the pond. The discs are too large and heavy for Ballow to carry them up from the pond bottom, so Ballow has been blackmailing The Admiral to fish them out.

The Dead Deer

About halfway between the Sprawl and the Meadow, a deer carcass lies by the side of the road. It was hit by a car and died there. Now its body lies rotting by the roadside.

If the Conies learn of the dead deer, it will raise a lot of difficult theological questions for their constructed religion. Why was the deer killed? Did the humans kill it? Was it a sacrifice? Did this deer act against the will of the humans? If a deer can be killed, can a human?

If Hollyhock and a few others are the only ones that know of the deer, they may try to hide the carcass. If the carcass is public knowledge, then they may have to concoct a mystical explanation for the deer's death. This might undermine their authority in the meadow and among the Conies if it plays poorly. The PCs could work to spread stories supporting or undermining the Conies, with different interpretations of what the carcass means.



Beginning the Story

The PCs have all been driven away from their homes by the construction of the Sprawl. Now they are seeking a new home. They have come to the meadow to see if they can make a home here.

On the way to the meadow, they passed the dead deer on the road.

As the PCs first approach the meadow, they see Snapdragon interrogating Mrs. Pinch the field mouse about the three missing Rabbits, Larkspur, Bilberry and Snowdrop.

Snowdrop had been going around the meadow, collecting fruits and seeds that various animals owed the Rabbits, three days ago. No one admits to seeing them since, but they were supposed to collect from Turtle, frog, field mice .

Larkspur was spotted talking to Gopher shortly before disappearing.

Snapdragon is ashamed of what happened to Bilberry, won't be forthcoming if they can avoid mentioning it. They were walking with Bilberry through the meadow, came across Goosefoot and there was a fight. Snapdragon injured Goosefoot in the battle, but Bilberry was scared and ran off. Snapdragon doesn't know where they went and hasn't seen them since

Wrapping up the Story

As written, there is no clear ending to this story. The situation in the meadow could easily play out in a number of different ways. The key thing is for you as GM to keep heightening the stakes, pushing the story toward a big climax. Eventually, the PCs should have a confrontation with the Rabbits or the Conies or both. If successful, they could kill or drive off the rabbit clans. Or it's possible they can negotiate some sort of peaceful compromise, or find some other clever solution. If you're near the end of a session, then that is probably a good time to end the story.

If one clan of rabbits is taken care of early or in a satisfying way, have the other clan push to take over the meadow and become even more despotic. Or create a new issue as climax: perhaps Goliath or Ogre escape from Farmer Van Ort and terrorize the meadow, or humans come to reclaim the land, or a sudden storm floods the area.

More likely, though, the story will wrap up once one or both clans of rabbits are dealt with somehow. At that point, you should just have each player declare an epilogue for their PC. Do they settle in the meadow? Do they continue to travel onward? Do they become the new despots of the meadow? Are they killed sneaking into Van Ort's farm? Does the King of All Deer appear to them in a dream to declare them the new prophet now that Hollyhock is gone? Let the player decide an ending that makes sense for their character.

And, after you're done playing, contact me at nickwedig@yahoo.com or on Twitter [@nickwedig1](https://twitter.com/nickwedig1), to let me know how the game went. I'd love to know how your game went.



Credits and Endnotes

Made for the **Yojambo** game jam See this game and several others inspired by Kurosawa's classic movie Yojimbo at <https://itch.io/jam/yojumbo>

This is unplaytested version of the game, **version 0.1**. I may revise after playtesting. Or maybe not, who can say. If you do play the game, or have any thoughts about it, reach out to me as nickwedig@yahoo.com.

System inspired by **Lady Blackbird** by John Harper, **Puppetland** by Jonathan Tynes, **Over the Edge** 3rd edition by Jonathan Tweet and **Archipelago** by Matthijs Holter.

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