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Attitude

Halflings provide the gamemaster a chance to rattle the cages of his more jaded players. They also provide players a new roleplaying challenge—a character who doesn't need three miles of attitude. Sometimes, the shadows favor the small, the quiet, and the sneaky. And remember what most cyberpunk RPGs have forgotten: The *really* dangerous ones don't need to advertise it—they *know*.

Following are optional rules on introducing Halfling characters into your campaign, along with two sample Halfling characters.

HALFLING BACKGROUND

Halflings took a long time to come to world attention after the Change, and many people still consider them mythical. Most average humans will see more dragons in their lifetimes than Halflings. Researchers theorize that the metagene for Halflings is recessive, possibly linked to rare genetic diseases in populations unexposed to magic until 2011. Therefore, only severely inbred populations are liable to produce Halflings, and the unusual regional distribution bears this out.

Halflings generally come from extremely rural areas and tend to favor the hilly regions near mountains. Most recorded examples of Halfling appearance occur in North America's Appalachian Mountains and Mississippi Bayou country, Hokkaido and northern Honshu in Japan, the Welsh Habitable and Western Habitable Zones of Britain, the steppes of northwest Asia, and central Germany. Rumors abound of sightings in Tir Nan Og. There are no recorded appearances on the South American, African or Australian continents, and no useful data from southern and eastern Asia.

An average Halfling stands 110 centimeters tall and weighs 57 kilograms. While they simply do not carry the joint leverage for great strength, their small bodies and quick minds are naturally tough, which gives them heavy resistance to injury, disease and harmful magic. They can be found with most of the facial features, skin tones and body types of humanity, though a 1.4-meter-tall Halfling would be considered a giant.

Though some old tales mention underground burrows, Halflings actually live much as humans do, which is only logical, as they grow up in human families. In the backwater areas they inhabit, Halflings are rarely exposed to any technology of post-Industrial Revolution vintage, and most of them grow to prefer it that way. All Halflings are allergic to petroleum products. This allergy to plastic only encourages their distance from technological products.

Interestingly, few Halflings have the psychological problems experienced by many victims of UGE; this may be because they are usually born into tightly knit families where the child's appearance is of little concern. As Halflings tend to live to 90 or 95 years old, surviving elderly ones are

generally looked upon as the keepers of great wisdom, some of it superstitious.

Halfling PCs will usually be different from most of their ilk, however. Most Halflings are content with a sedentary existence, but PCs will often be affected by wanderlust. Some may wish to experience Sprawl culture, or they may be looking for training in the magic that is said to have returned. Entertaining and medical careers are common, and Halflings tend to make great bartenders (though height allowances must be made so the bartender can see his customers!). If they take to the shadows, few Halflings are outright fighters such as Street Samurai or Mercenaries. Some become mages. Many take up the shaman's destiny, as most Halflings feel a kinship to nature. (It's not quite as loud a kinship as some Native American and Elven groups claim. It's generally quite matter-of-fact.) A Halfling decker is quite rare, due to the allergies involved, though Beta cyber and "bioware" from the *Shadowtechs* supplement may be options. Such cyberware would usually be kept as limited as possible, however. Halflings are powerfully sensitive to changes in their own Essence, and avoid such changes. (This relates to the kinship with nature mentioned earlier.)

Halfling characters must take Metahumanity as their highest priority (Priority A) in the archetype creation system. Those wishing magic must take it next (Priority B) as usual. Racial modifiers are as follows: -2 Strength, +1 Quickness, +1 Strength, +1 Willpower. All Halflings have two dice of Stealth over and above any bought with skill points. All Halflings also have the allergy to plastic described on page 46 of the *Shadowrun II* rules, and may choose the severity as usual. This will give the character extra creation points or nuyen, which the player may distribute as he sees fit. Players determined to have no allergy must consult their gamemaster for justification and character adjustment.

Halflings relate interestingly to the other human races. Generally, they're most comfortable around humans, who tend to find them curious but quite acceptable. They get along decently with Dwarves, but the high-spirited Halflings usually consider Dwarves dour and patronizing. On average, Orcs and Trolls think of Halflings as punier humans, and there is no love lost there; but the small race's relationship with Elves is quite interesting. Halflings look on Elves from afar as creatures of wisdom and wonder; and, in return, most Elves consider Halflings uncommonly sensible and rational. Unfortunately, a growing number of Elves see the other races as petty, unsophisticated "lower orders." Halflings tend to treat such an Elf as if he does not exist, which usually infuriates the Elf in question. All Elves, friendly or not, seem wary around Halflings, and no member of either race has offered to explain why. Theories include the idea that Elves knew of Halflings, but did not expect them to appear in the Sixth World, that the existence of Halflings came as a complete surprise to a race which believes itself to be all-knowing, and that the Halflings know secrets of the Elves which the latter would prefer to keep hidden.

Halfling Woodsman

Give me the outdoors any day. The smog, filth and crowds of the city... Well, let's just say it's an interesting place to visit, and leave it at that, okay?

I prefer the hunt where the prey and I understand each other. When I kill something, I know it's going to feed someone. Why some city boy would use one of those fancy machineguns on a deer just so he could hang its pelt on a wall, leaving the rest to rot—that's beyond me.

What's that? Yeah, I can take you into the woods. These paranormal critters can be tricky, but I've handled their tricks before. What do you want it for? Magic, huh? Okay. I've got some time this weekend. You know, my kid wants to be a magician. Maybe you'd be willing to give him a few pointers for a little discount on my fee?

The Halfling woodsman is a little rustic, but he's no fool. Deal straight with him, and he'll get you what you want. He only goes into the city once in a while, but if you convince him to join the run, he's just as good at tracking two-legged, intelligent critters as four-legged ones. And Kevlar gives little defense against hunting points.

Attributes:

Body: 5

Quickness: 6

Strength: 3

Charisma: 3

Intelligence: 4

Willpower: 4

Essence: 6

Reaction: 5

Initiative: 5+1D6

Cyberware:

None

Contacts:

Shaman

Halfling "Tribesman"

Gear:

Medium crossbow with 20 bolts

Binoculars

Survival knife

Real leathers

Ordinary clothing

Skills:

Armed Combat: 2

Biotech: 3

Etiquette (Rural): 4

Firearms: 4

Projectile Weapons: 6

Stealth: 5

Throwing: 4

Notes:

Nuisance allergy to plastic
(Bonus +2 to skills)

3 months low lifestyle prepaid

Starting Cash: 11,175¥



Halfling Shaman

Yes, the others insist that earth and sky are too complicated for ordinary man to understand. It is—to them—because they insist on seeing things that way. There are better ways to understand the living world, and one of the simplest ways is to just ask it. Sounds like nonsense to you? That's okay, it did to me, too, at first. But I guess if you could see the world as I do, you wouldn't be coming to me for assistance, huh?

I can help you with your problem; I am the friend of much that is still powerful in this world. But my help will cost you. This puzzle will not be assembled easily, and I, too, must eat and keep a roof over my head. I am not so friendly with the sky spirits that rain cannot soak me to the skin.

My price surprises you? I said the world was simpler than you think. I said nothing about it being less dangerous.

The Halfling shaman has even more of a naturalistic worldview than his plains and urban counterparts, but has less of a problem integrating modern science and technology into it. To him, all is a reflection of the eternal truths that the universe is built on. His totem can be any appropriate to his home turf. The very concept of pollution is repulsive to him, and open displays of such will disgust him thoroughly.

Attributes:

Body: 3
Quickness: 4
Strength: 1
Charisma: 5
Intelligence: 4
Willpower: 6
Essence: 6
Magic: 6
Reaction: 4

Initiative: 4+1D6

Cyberware: None

Contacts:

Metahuman Rights Activist
Talismonger

Gear:

Staff
Medicine lodge materials (2)
Survival knife
Real leathers
Ordinary clothing

Skills:

Conjuring: 6
Etiquette (Rural): 3
Magical Theory: 4
Sorcery: 6
Stealth: 3

Totem: The Halfling shaman may select a wilderness or urban totem, as his background dictates

Spells:

Sleep: 5
Heal: 4
Invisibility: 3
Mask: 2

Notes:

Moderate allergy to plastic
(Bonus +2 to Attributes, +3 to Skills)
2 months low lifestyle prepaid
Starting Cash: 14,053¥



GAMING SUGGESTIONS

Players who choose to take Halfling characters need to spend a little more time developing them before the start of play.

FASAgives us mountains of information in gaming supplements and novels on the attitudes, goals and character of a generic member of the other races; players will be playing catch-up for a while, until the other players get used to this new race.

Use the tendency to wander, mentioned earlier, to justify a new entry into your campaign. Your players can have some fun with the "awed but pretending otherwise" schtick as the Halfling adjusts to Seattle.

Alternatively, a Halfling with a corporate history may have been transferred to Seattle recently by the corp before abandoning it for the shadows.

Perhaps there's even a small colony of Halflings living quietly in the Barrrens somewhere, and your player has decided to run the shadows as a way of getting out, getting rich or getting revenge on someone. As always, imagination is your prime tool.

Halflings are almost always more laid back than their larger cousins, tending to think a matter through before acting, and saying only what they mean.

A Halfling character who doesn't prove to have a calming influence on his shadowrunning friends is either an unusual specimen or hangs around with dedicated "scream-and-leap" types.

They are quick to forgive and slow to forget. In a fight, they usually attack your flanks or back, preferably sneaking past you completely (after all, few Trolls are impressed with the punches of a Halfling). Ω

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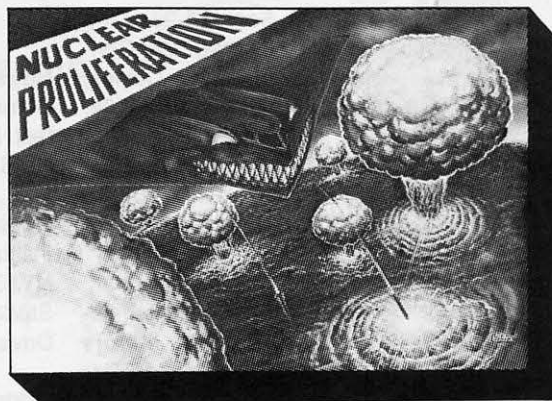
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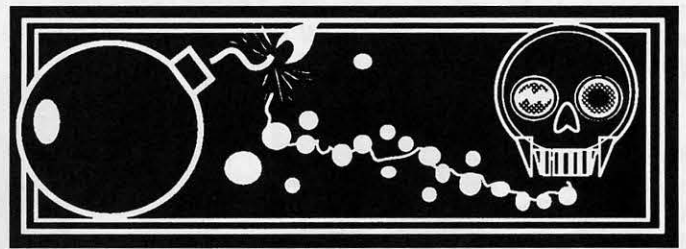
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Thief Archetype

"So you want me in on your job, huh? Can't say I'm surprised. Seems to me you could use someone who can do something more than kill people.

"I'm making a living. Not a great living, I grant you. So if you want me in, better make it a good offer.

"Good enough. I'm in."

The thief derides the more obvious and unsubtle methods of the more violent archetypes, preferring stealth and cunning to force. His motto is, "Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent."

Attributes

Body: 3 (4)
Quickness: 5
Strength: 2
Charisma: 2
Intelligence: 5
Willpower: 5
Essence: 2.5
Magic: 0
Reaction: 5 (7)

Skills

Car: 3
Etiquette (Street): 4
Negotiation: 5
Firearms: 5
Unarmed Combat: 5
Stealth: 6
Electronics: 6
Athletics: 3
Computer: 3

Cyberware: Datajack, low-light eyes, dermal plating (level 1), wired reflexes (1), air filtration (6).

Gear: Voice mask, doc wagon contract (basic), armored clothing, knife, narcojet pistol, maglock passkey, neuro-stun grenade.

Contacts: Fixer, Decker, Undercover Cop.

Description: Deliberately nondescript clothes, immediately forgettable face. Practically impossible to accurately describe to the police. Ω

By David Perry

Shadowrun