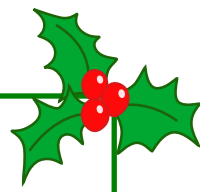


The Christmas Morning That Almost Wasn't

a Savage Kids' Tale
by Sean Tait Bircher





The Christmas Morning That Almost Wasn't

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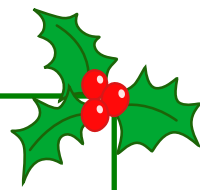
Special thanks to Andrew W. DeRier and Ronnie Bradley
for the Facebook thread that inspired the adventure

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Introduction

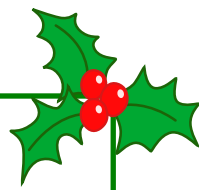
On Christmas Eve, a foolish living snowman named Harald takes the magical Hourglass of Eons and sneaks away from Santa's Castle to deliver it to Imp of Winter, Jack Frost. Now several young animals must track Harald through the snow and forests of the Land Beyond the North Wind before Harald hands over the hourglass – and Jack Frost makes it winter forever.

The Christmas Morning That Almost Wasn't is a holiday-themed scenario for younger players inspired by L. Frank Baum's *The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus*, Rankin/Bass Productions' animated specials, Rene Cardona's *Santa Claus*, J.R.R. Tolkien's *Father Christmas Letters* and (ever so slightly) Grant Morrison and Dan Mora's *Klaus*. The adventure tones down *Savage Worlds*' pulp action atmosphere to emphasize nonviolence (even on the part of the villains) and diplomacy. The pre-generated character sheets in the back are formatted in a non-standard way to improve comprehension for younger readers.

Setting Rules

The Christmas Morning That Almost Wasn't uses the Heroes Never Die and Joker's Wild setting rules. (Game Masters may choose to also use Blood & Guts, but obviously not allude to it by that name around young children.)





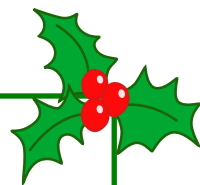
Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

From his castle in the Land Beyond the North Wind, Santa Claus watches over an unruly collection of faerie creatures, living snowmen, talking animals, and winter spirits. The most mischievous of the winter spirits is Jack Frost, the troublesome son of Old Man Winter and Mother Nature. Jack resents that – like all winter spirits – he only gets to visit the Earth for a few months every year, and frequently schemes to find some way to increase the time he can pester humanity.

Recently, Jack has been seen near Santa's Castle talking with a living snowman named Harald. Harald – like all living snowmen – came to life when his maker's love mixed with some Christmas magic. Unfortunately, like all snowmen, Harald could not stay with his maker when the warm sun of Spring began to shine, and so he was spirited away to the Land Beyond the North Pole for safety. Despite being surrounded by other friendly elves, talking animals, Santa's family, and even other magical snowmen, Harald has never really made any friends and instead sulked and pined to see his maker again.

Jack Frost told Harald the Snowman that he could live with the child who made him all the year round if only it was winter every day – and that it could be winter all the time if only Jack possessed the Hourglass of Eons. The Hourglass of Eons is the magical timepiece Santa Claus uses to freeze time so that he can deliver all the world's presents in one night (after all, no one could possibly visit a billion households in just one night, right?). Santa uses the Hourglass to stretch out Christmas Eve into twelve days and nights, but if someone froze the Hourglass, it could be Christmas Eve forever. This wouldn't be so bad for the people of the Land Beyond the North Wind – life there would go on normally – but all the children and grown-ups of Earth would never wake up.

Santa, Mrs. Claus, and the Krampus left hours ago to deliver presents. All of the grown-up reindeer are gone with them, and all of the adult elves are down in Christmas Village celebrating the end of the year's work. When you see Harald walking off into the Winter Woods with a big present, you suspect that you'd better check Santa's Castle and make sure everything is alright.



Part 1: Search Santa's Castle

The heroes don't want to accuse someone unfairly, so the first thing to do is search Santa's Castle and make sure the Hourglass of Eons isn't there. Searching the castle can be accomplished as individual tasks if the heroes split up, or as a cooperative roll if they stick together. For every success and raise the heroes get, they discover one of the following locations:

In the **Great Hall**, all their presents are set out beneath the tree. They can open one present each if they want (it is Christmas Eve, after all).

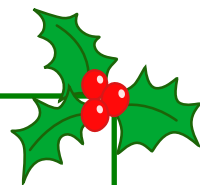
- The Arctic Fox gets a Thinking Cap. Putting on the Thinking Cap lets the wearer answer a question (as *divination*; it has 5 Power Points and Spellcasting d10).
- The Polar Bear Cub gets a six-pack of Burpy Cola bottles. Drinking a Burpy Cola allows the drinker to burp really, really loudly (as *confusion*, with each bottle having 6 Power Points and Spellcasting d10).
- The Reindeer Fawn gets a Training Harness. Someone wearing the Training Harness can pull something with an effective Strength of d12. It has panniers that allow the heroes to carry their belongings.
- The Wolf Pup gets a snowshoe hare Stuffed Animal. Cuddling the Stuffed Animal allows someone to feel better (as the *healing* power with 3 Power Points per player and Spellcasting d10).



In the **Kitchen**, they find:

- A sack of 2d4 mouthfuls of Magic Corn, which allow a reindeer that eats them to fly. Each handful has 6 Power Points and Spellcasting d10.
- A tin of Christmas Cookies that can provide breakfast, lunch, and dinner for six people for six days.

The **Workshop** is empty of toys, but they can borrow sacks and tools.



The **Sleigh Shed** has the little sleigh that Santa uses to travel around the Land Beyond the North Wind during the rest of the year. It has room for all of the heroes (though someone must pull it).

After searching the whole castle, the heroes gather in the **Observatory** – the highest room in the castle. In the Observatory, the heroes find the Magic Observascope is watching Glacier Peak, the tallest, coldest mountain in all of the Land Beyond the North Wind. Through the Observascope, the heroes can see and hear Jack Frost gloat about how he tricked Harald and plans to freeze the Hourglass of Eons and make it Christmas Eve forever!

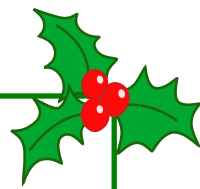
That silly snowman! Yes, winter will reign forever once I have the Hourglass of Eons, but that's because this Christmas Eve will never end! None but magical beings like the inhabitants of the Land Beyond the North Wind and fairylands far and wide will remain awake, while the rest of the world remains in cold, unchanging slumber forever!!!

If necessary, point out to the players that if Christmas Eve lasts forever, then nobody gets to open the rest of their presents.

Part 2: Over the River & Through the Woods

The heroes do not have enough magic to fly straight to Glacier Peak (and wouldn't it be better to try to catch Harald beforehand?) so they have to chase him into the Winter Woods. Following Harald through the Winter Woods requires five successful Tracking rolls, which the Game Master can run as a Chase, Dramatic Task, or between vignettes and encounters. The trek through the woods can be run as an epic quest or a brief diversion depending on the attention spans and desires of the players. It can take a few in-game hours or all twelve days of this extended Christmas Eve.

The Winter Woods are a thick conifer forest filled with strange and magical beings. Jack Frost has promised some other winter creatures that they can have fun all year if winter lasts forever, so the creatures try to interfere with the hunt for Harald. Antagonists confronting the heroes in a game suitable for very young players do not necessarily mean any lasting physical harm to the heroes; they will instead demand their food and their treasures, or otherwise seek to delay the



heroes. They hide Harald's tracks, build heaping snowbanks, pelt the heroes with snowballs, or (worst of all!) try to grab them and lock them in an ice cave until Jack Frost gets the Hourglass of Eons.

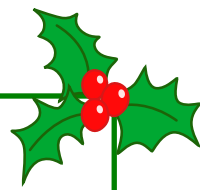
Using the *Savage Worlds* Travel and Encounters rules, potential encounters can include:

Clubs – Obstacles

- **A Blinding Blizzard:** Jack Frost whips up a tremendous storm and sends it hurtling down from Glacier Peak. The blizzard reduces visibility to 2" and forces the heroes to make a Vigor roll or fall asleep. If the heroes fall asleep, they – of course – don't freeze to death, but do wake up encased in ice, which they will have to figure out some way of breaking (one of the stronger heroes flexing some muscle). The blizzard forces the heroes to reroll Tracking in order to pick up Harald's trail. At the Game Master's choosing, the heart of the blizzard may be an Air Elemental.
- **The Great Icy Lake:** In the far distance, the heroes see Harald paddling across using a small iceberg as a raft. The heroes can circle around the lake, cross by making a raft of their own, or ride across on the Polar Bear Cub's back. Once the heroes cross the middle of the lake, they may be harassed by playful orcas (as Great White Sharks, but with Smarts d6 and no desire to eat everyone).
- **Naps and Snacks:** The Game Master may require the heroes to eat and sleep regularly as per the Hunger and Sleep rules in the Hazards section.

Hearts – NPCs

- **Ice Sprites:** The ice sprites aren't bad; they're just silly and heedless. They want everyone to dance with them and won't take no for an answer; dancing with them imposes a -2 on the next Tracking roll, but is otherwise harmless. (As a flying Swarm.)
- **Old One-Eye:** The meanest polar bear in all the land doesn't like anybody because nobody likes him. He can be placated with a present, meal, or soda. (As a Large Bear with the One Eye Hindrance and the ability to speak and reason.)



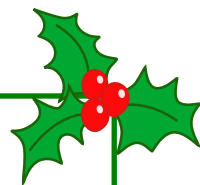
Diamonds – Fortune

- **Beloved Copyrighted Character:** The heroes encounter the players' favorite copyrighted Christmas character and receive some aid or boon from the character. A beagle with a doghouse and an overactive imagination, prospector with a mismatched dogsled team, belly-sliding snowman, or reindeer with a gleaming proboscis offers the heroes a ride past some obstacle; a reformed warlock or Merlin upgrades or recharges their magic items; an elf dentist checks their teeth for cavities and gives them sugar-free lollipops; etc.
- **Food and Board:** The heroes are offered warm beds and delicious meals by a resident of the Winter Woods. The benefactor might be a beloved copyrighted character (such as the half-elven patron of a relocated homely house, a platinum blonde ice princess and her klutzy sister, the aforementioned prospector and his peppermint mine, etc.) or someone more public domain (like some friendly squirrels or a mama polar bear). One option is Jack Frost's parents – Mother Nature and Old Man Winter – who bewail their wayward son's misbehavior, but emphasize to the heroes that Jack truly misses his spring- and summer-personification siblings (even if what he really misses is the opportunity to prank them).

Spades – Enemies

- **Mean Wolves:** Some wolves really do like pushing people around, but are afraid of fire and loud noises. They're essentially four-footed juvenile delinquents. (As Dog/Wolf but with the ability to speak and reason.)
- **The Yeti:** The Yeti is a true monster, and Jack Frost's devoted servant (as long as Jack is being mean). He attempts to grab the heroes and stuff them in his sack; ironically, he then carries them to Jack Frost. (As an Ogre.)

Encounters with non-player characters and fortunes can be used to seed reciprocal aid from those characters later on. If the heroes set aside their quest to be kind to strangers, then they should be rewarded with help when it is least expected.



Part 3: Wicked Jack Frost

The heroes eventually reach Glacier Peak, which they may ascend by Climbing or flying if they were not captured by the Yeti. Between the turret-like split peaks of the mountain sits the blue-ice glacier from which it takes its name. Carved into the glacier is the sparse yet palatial home of Jack Frost.

The ice chambers are as labyrinthine as any dragon-filled dungeon, offering the Game Master the opportunity to extend the adventure across another session as the heroes sneak past Jack's Frost Goblin servants (as, naturally, Goblins), Ice Sculpture Beasts (as Constrictor Snake, Dire Wolf, Drake, Giant Spider or Lion but with Toughness 4), and the Yeti. Game Masters with players uninterested in such diversions may instead opt to simply have the players complete a Notice Dramatic Task as they follow Harald and Jack's voices through the echoing, chilly chambers.

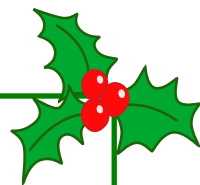
Now that he's finally face-to-face with Jack Frost, Harald is suddenly having qualms about surrendering the Hourglass of Eons. Fortunately, Jack needs the Hourglass to be given to him willingly (and preferably as a present) so he's trying to talk Harald into fulfilling his promise rather than simply snatching the Hourglass away from the hapless snowman.



Jack pleads:

I'm lonely, too, you know. I have brothers and sisters dedicated to spring and summer and autumn, and I never get to see them. I haven't seen my sister Janie Hayfever in ages and ages, and – oh! – how I loved to pull her pigtails. I know you miss your maker, so won't we both be happy if Christmas Eve goes on forever?

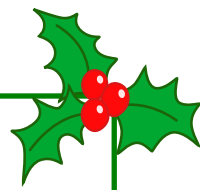
Jack is being honest, after his own fashion. What he really wants to see Mindy Flowerblossom, Janie Hayfever, Tommy Leafpile, and his other siblings for is to prank them and cause them grief, but he does genuinely miss them. The heroes can confront him in a number of ways.



- In combat, Jack tries to both imprison the heroes in a barrier of ice while he continues to talk Harald into giving him the hourglass. This imposes a multi-action penalty on his actions during the fight. The heroes can use Persuasion to talk Harald into joining them during the fight.
- A Social Conflict may also be used to resolve the heroes and Jack attempting to argue Harald into joining them. Please note that all of the heroes have Charisma +2, giving them an edge in resolving things through dialogue. They can even attempt to talk Jack into giving up his malicious plan, offering the villain a chance to redeem himself.
- If the heroes pick Harald up bodily and take him with them, or snatch the Hourglass of Eons from the snowman's hands, then a Chase may occur in which the heroes race away from Glacier Peak, with Jack chasing behind on an avalanche or blizzard.

If the heroes seem likely to be overwhelmed at any time, they receive unexpected help from one of the characters they have aided or befriended along the way (Old One-Eye tackles the Yeti, the Ice Sprites surround and befuddle Jack, a copyrighted character does something, etc.). If worse comes to worst, Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus, and/or the Krampus arrive to order Jack Frost to stand down.





Harald the Snowman (Wild Card)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d4, Throwing d8

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities

- **Construct**
- **Walking Snowball:** Harald not only glides through snow and over ice faster than most people can walk, he can also make snowballs out of his own body and pelt foes with them.

Jack Frost (Wild Card)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d8, Taunt d8

Charisma: +1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities

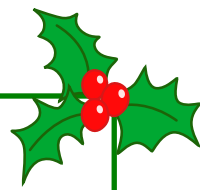
- **Power Points:** 20
- Powers: *armor* (ice shell), *barrier* (ice wall), *bolt* (snowballs), *entangle* (ice coating), *fly* (floats on cold breeze)

Part 4: The End of the Adventure

Once the heroes – one way or another – bring Jack Frost’s plan to an end, they are free to return to Santa’s Castle with the Hourglass of Eons. Assuming the return is not at the end of a Chase in which they’re fleeing from Jack Frost, then it’s as part of a triumphal march in which the residents of the Land Beyond the North Wind (including those who have acted as enemies and obstacles before) thank them for saving the day. Santa and the rest of the sleigh team have just gotten back from a round of delivering presents to the opposite side of the Earth from wherever the players live, and effusively congratulate the heroes.

The Christmas morning that almost wasn’t comes at last, and everyone gets to open their presents.

The End



Appendix: New Rules

New Weapon

Type	Range	Damage	RoF
Snowball	3/6/12	Str+d4 (nonlethal)	1

New Hindrance

No Hands [Minor or Major]

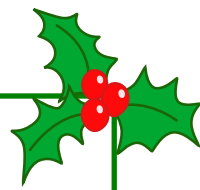
The hero is some kind of creature that lacks true hands or equivalent extremities capable of the same manual dexterity – a quadrupedal animal or wheeled robot, perhaps, but not an octopus or monkey. As a Minor Hindrance, the hero has relatively dexterous forepaws like a cat or raccoon and suffers a -2 penalty to tasks that require the use of hands. As a Major Hindrance, the character has flippers, hooves, or similarly inflexible limbs and suffers a -4 penalty to such tasks.

Appendix: Pre-Generated Characters

Rather than worry about designing new races for this adventure, these characters have been built using a human character's free Edge and equating some racial abilities to the same cost as Edges.

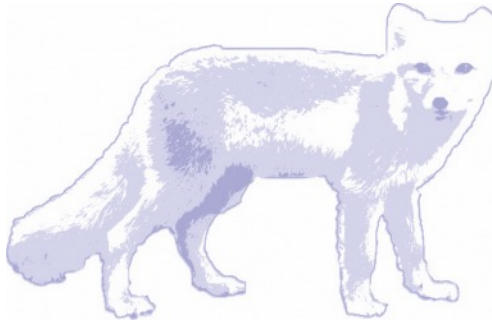
Each character fits on one page so that you can print them out and hand them to your players.





Arctic Fox Kit

The Arctic Fox Kit is very cunning and sneaky; because the Arctic Fox Kit is also small, the Fox is always alert for danger.



Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6.

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d4, Lockpicking d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d8, Taunt d6, Tracking d4, Survival d4.

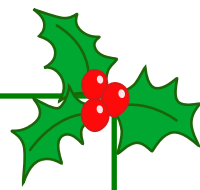
Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4

Bad Things about playing the Arctic Fox Kit (Hindrances):

- **Small [Major]:** The Arctic Fox Kit has a -1 to Toughness
- **No Hands [Minor]:** The Arctic Fox Kit has paws instead of hands and suffers -2 to any rolls requiring the use of hands
- **Your Choice [Minor]:** Choose one of the following: 1) Foxes know they're smarter than other animals, and the Arctic Fox Kit acts like it; 2) No one takes the Arctic Fox Kit seriously because the Fox is so small; 3) The Arctic Fox Kit is afraid of bigger animals (but not people and fairies).

Good Things about playing the Arctic Fox (Edges and Special Abilities):

- **Bite:** The Arctic Fox can bite for Str+d4
- **Cute:** +2 to Charisma
- **Danger Sense:** Anytime somebody tries to surprise the Arctic Fox, the Fox can roll Notice at -2 to not be surprised.
- **Sneaky:** The Arctic Fox gets +2 to Climbing, Lockpicking, and Stealth rolls when inside a castle, cave, or house or when trying to get into one.



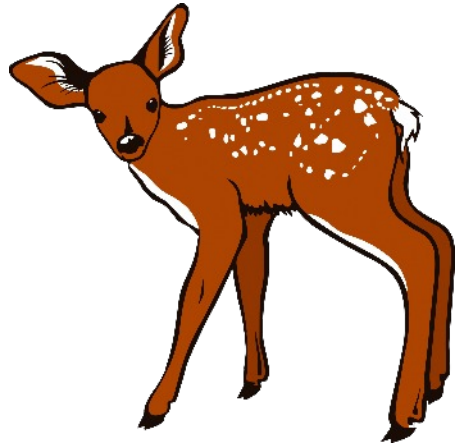
Reindeer Fawn

The Reindeer Fawn is very strong and fast; because reindeer are so important to Santa, the Reindeer Fawn has been taught lots of Santa's secrets.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6.

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d4, Knowledge (Santa's Secrets) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Sled-Pulling d8, Stealth d4, Survival d6, Swimming d4.

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

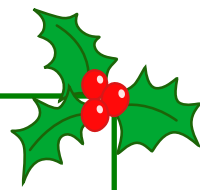


Bad Things about playing the Reindeer Fawn (Hindrances):

- **No Hands [Major]:** The Reindeer Fawn has hooves instead of hands and suffers -4 to any rolls requiring the use of hands
- **Plant-Eater [Minor]:** The Reindeer Fawn can't eat food that the Arctic Fox, Polar Bear Cub, or Wolf Pup forage on Survival checks.
- **Your Choice [Minor]:** Choose one of the following: 1) Everybody knows Santa likes reindeer best, as the Reindeer Fawn is quick to remind everyone; 2) The other animals don't take the Reindeer Fawn seriously because the Fawn doesn't have sharp teeth like them; 3) The Reindeer Fawn is afraid of the meat-eating animals and monsters in the Winter Woods (but not people and fairies).

Good Things about playing the Reindeer Fawn (Edges and Special Abilities):

- **Cute:** +2 to Charisma
- **Fleet-Footed:** The Reindeer Fawn rolls a d10 when running.
- **Headbutt or Kick:** The Reindeer Fawn may not have antlers yet, but the Fawn can headbutt or kick for Str+d4.



Polar Bear Cub

The Polar Bear Cub doesn't feel the cold of the Land Beyond the North Wind; because the Polar Bear Cub is almost grown up, the Cub is bigger and stronger than the other heroes.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8.

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d4, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Swimming d8.

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

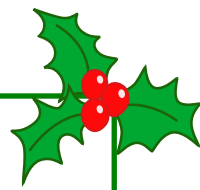
Bad Things about playing the Polar Bear Cub (Hindrances):

- **I'm a Big Kid Now [Major]:** The Polar Bear Cub is older and bigger than the other animals; because of this, the Cub often overestimates how tough the Cub really is and gets in fights with bigger bullies.
- **No Hands [Minor]:** The Polar Bear Cub has paws instead of hands and suffers -2 to any rolls requiring the use of hands
- **Your Choice [Minor]:** Choose one of the following: 1) The Polar Bear Cub thinks polar bears are just as important to Christmas as reindeer, even though nobody else agrees; 2) Everyone's a little afraid of bears, since they get to be so big; 3) The Polar Bear Cub doesn't like the Winter Woods and would rather be playing in the Polar Sea.

Good Things about playing the Polar Bear Cub (Edges and Special Abilities):

- **Bite and Paws:** The Polar Bear Cub can bite or smack somebody with a paw for Str+d6
- **Brawny:** The Polar Bear Cub is extra tough and can pull a sleigh or let any three heroes (including the Reindeer Fawn) ride on the Cub's back
- **Cute:** +2 to Charisma





Wolf Pup

The Wolf Pup is the best at surviving in the Winter Woods; the Wolf Pup can hear and smell better than anybody else and is as fast as the Reindeer Fawn.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6.

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d4, Survival d8, Tracking d8.

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Bad Things about playing the Wolf Pup (Hindrances):

- **Prove Yourself [Major]:** Even people who should know better fear wolves for no reason; because of this, the Wolf Pup will always help somebody in trouble, just to prove wolves are nice.
- **No Hands [Minor]:** The Wolf Pup has paws instead of hands and suffers -2 to any rolls requiring the use of hands
- **Your Choice [Minor]:** Choose one of the following: 1) Santa isn't the boss of the wolves of the Land Beyond the North Wind, as the Wolf Pup likes to point out; 2) Everyone's a little afraid of wolves, even though the Wolf Pup tries to be nice; 3) The Wolf Pup is afraid of people and the fairies of the Winter Wood, because they're mean to wolves.

Good Things about playing the Wolf Pup (Edges and Special Abilities):

- **Alertness:** The Wolf Pup adds +2 to all Notice rolls
- **Bite:** The Wolf Pup can bite for Str+d6
- **Cute:** +2 to Charisma
- **Fleet-Footed:** The Wolf Pup rolls a d10 when running.
- **Woodsy:** The Wolf Pup adds +2 to all Survival and Tracking rolls.

