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Introduction

Familiars is a fantasy roleplaying game. Players take the role of magical spirits in the body of an animal. Familiars are sent on secret, dangerous missions by their masters and are in continuous empathic contact with them.

Familiars is set in the fantasy world of Awria, a medieval culture where magic is illegal but widespread. The characters are the pets and messengers of powerful mages belonging to secret guilds and schools. The mages are involved in lengthy, complex rituals and use the characters to perform errands and to deliver items and messages to each other.

The adventure in this book will give you a taste of what the world is like - seen from the perspective of a small animal bound to a magic user's soul.

Humorous or serious

We play RPGs to have fun. The intent of *Familiars* is no different - to provide a set of fun, simple make-believe rules allowing you to play a magical animal. The game can be played as a deathly serious spy-magic adventure, as a "just-for-laughs" diversion from other serious RPGs, or something in between. The GM should take care that the seriousness level of the campaign fits the tastes of the participants. Having said that, some humorous tone should appear even in the most serious adventure, if nothing else to alleviate the tension and to make the dramatic parts grittier by comparison.



The Nature of Familiars

A familiar is a supernatural spirit who manifests in the body of an animal. Alternatively, a familiar may also "inhabit" a constructed body, an animated rag doll or statuette called a homunculus. The relationship between the familiar's spiritual nature and his animal body is twofold - the spirit gives uncanny intelligence and magical abilities to the animal body, and the animal form instills part of the animal's instincts in the familiar. So a cat familiar will have distinctively feline attributes, wishes and instincts, and at the same time will be much more intelligent (and sometimes stronger) than a "normal" cat.

Familiars cannot manifest on Awria without the help of a medium - a magic-user (or, in some cases, a witch) who bonds his soul to the familiar, and helps the familiar find a body. Familiars are not demons in the classical sense of the word - they are not evil (well, a few of them are... more about that later). Familiars are as varied as humans in intent, personality and morality.

Familiars have no special knowledge of the afterlife, or of the dimension they come from. They know as much as humans do of the secret workings of the universe and of the ultimate purpose of life - that is, very little. They are "born" in the body of a newborn animal (or a freshly-sculpted homunculus) when the magic-user performs a ritual. They grow as the animal body grows, and generally go through the same experiences of a regular animal. When they are adults, their magical gifts start to manifest, and the magic-users begin to send them on missions.

Familiars and Death

If the animal body dies, the spirit returns to the spiritual world and all memories of his mortal existence are erased. Free of the mortal burden of his memories, the familiar is ready to reincarnate in yet another body when another magic-user calls him on earth.

The Bond

Familiars and magic-users are bonded by their souls. The familiar will not leave a magic-user's service unless dismissed. If the magic-user sends the familiar away, the familiar suffers a tremendous shock and often dies of heartbreak. Familiars who survive the experience of being cast away from their summoners become stray familiars - developing an agenda of their own and generally having bitter feelings for their former "masters". Sending away a familiar is not something that a mage worth his salt would do lightly.