Misbegotten

Version 1

Written by Daniel “Bosch” Saults

Timeline

This timeline is malleable. Your game may begin at any point on, or even after, the timeline. Feel free to disregard any timeline events that come after your chosen starting point. The future is not yet written.

Emergence

1985: Marine researchers worldwide begin documenting a dramatic uptick in discoveries of previously unknown oceanic species. Undocumented animals are found struggling and sickly near the surface or washed up dead on shores. That their discovery is caused by mass die-offs raises considerable environmental concerns, but it’s a banner year in marine zoology. Some discoveries even appear to be animals long thought extinct, such as what may be a fresh *Dunkleosteus* carcass. Further research over the course of the year yields disappointing and baffling results: None of these unknown creatures are new or extinct species at all. Every last one is some previously known marine animal, so bizarrely deformed as to be nearly unrecognizable. “Duncan the *Dunkleosteus*” proves to be a severely deformed basking shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*), in such defiance of logic that the misunderstanding isn’t held against his discoverers. Environmental concerns are not helped by these discoveries.

1990: The first confirmed human case of the Terato virus emerges in Brazil. The victim is not likely the first, but this is the case that leads to the identification of Terato as a new disease. The victim dies in the hospital, withering away under the extreme metabolic demands of the virus. The disease’s primary human vector seems to be fish-borne, which eventually leads to it being connected to sickening sea bird populations, from which it spreads. During this period, the mammalian, avian, piscine, cephalopod, and crustacean strains of Terato are identified.

1996: The spread of Terato among animal populations begins to pose a genuine danger to humans. Teratomorphic bird and mammal attacks on humans and pets become more frequent, and occasionally deadly. New animal control policies are instated requiring the extermination of any teratomorphic animals.

2000: The first cases of Delayed Onset Terato (DOT) emerge. The resistance of certain humans to the degenerative aspects of the retrovirus offers some hope of a cure, and many of them volunteer to participate in medical testing. Concerns about quarantine are raised, which quickly become a civil rights issue.

2001: A new millennium dawns.

2010: As Terato gradually spreads across lower socioeconomic strata worldwide, human Terato victims become increasingly difficult to treat, track, and isolate. Reptilian, amphibian, and insect strains of Terato emerge. Insect-vector Terato, thankfully, seems to be relatively uncommon. In several countries, the increasing danger of human-vector Terato leads to fresh momentum and public support for the quarantine of T+ individuals (DOT and otherwise).

Early Infestation

2015: Oceanic travel, research, and tourism begin to assume considerable additional peril, as oceanic teratomorphs begin to reach a level of saturation well exceeding that of terrestrial animals. Fishing industries, already devastated by plummeting demand and stringent new disease-prevention standards, start to shrivel up completely. Many regions and nations economically dependent on fishing suffer tremendous financial backlash. The cruise ship industry follows suit, its demise hastened by a widely publicized film of a teratomorphic tiger shark (*Galeocerdo cuvier*), clambering onto the deck of a ship with the aid of its millipede legs.

2020: Police and animal control organizations begin working hand in hand to anticipate and respond to teratomorph attacks on humans and property. As the number of non-quarantined human sufferers rises, global debate rages on precisely where their legal rights stand, the subject of lethal force, and related topics. Mandatory quarantine of T+ individuals begins to swing into action in multiple countries.

2024: The newly inaugurated U.S. president contracts Terato and is quarantined, replaced by her vice president. After several months of observation and treatment, the former president escapes into the hospital's ductwork. She is never found.

2050: Police and military forces worldwide are equipped and trained for dealing with teratomorph encounters, as the prevalence of Terato begins to move further and further inland across the globe. Arachnid Terato strains emerge. Most concerning to epidemiologists is the slowly accelerating propagation of the disease across insect populations. It's not completely clear why it's taking so long to pick up across insect species, but it seems a small mercy in a difficult time.

Late Infestation

2060: Mercy comes to an end. The exponential spread of insect-vector Terato finally reaches critical mass, giving the retrovirus the host of its squalid dreams. Terato and its harbingers begin to sweep through densely populated areas, consuming and contaminating in equal measure. Over the following years, owing to more efficient respiratory and metabolic developments, insects emerge of sizes not dreamed since the Permian era.

2080: While Terato became a global financial and health disaster, it is at this point that its apocalyptic (from an anthrocentric perspective) potential becomes apparent. Many large cities are washed from the map, evacuations leaving them crawling with once-human inhabitants, carrion birds the size of small cars, and, in coastal regions, crabs as large and thickly armored as tanks. Efforts worldwide, sometimes in direct conflict, are split between medical and military intervention. Humanity is fighting on the retreat. No weapon or medicine exists that could return an infested city to normalcy. By now, T+ individuals, DOT or otherwise, are in most countries

little more than medical anomalies to be researched or exterminated. The contagion risk they are perceived to pose and their value as specimens come before any sentimental notion of human rights – if human rights even apply to these things.

2100: Governments begin to weaken and fragment worldwide in the face of the inexorable tide of carnivorous transformation. While some nations retain more order than others, at this point, it is the countryside that begins to fare the worst. Larger settlements erect walls and domes to keep the Teratomorphs out, with complex, filtered ventilation systems, intended to prevent even the tiniest virus-bearing organisms from entering. Global ennui grows, sometimes taking the form of a certain fatalistic gallows humor, manifest in new fads such as "Farewell to Humanity" parties, in which participants eat, pay tribute to the human epoch's greatest works of art, and imbibe perilous quantities of drugs. Though humanity's tenure is now, in most minds, indisputably finite, so long as the walls and filters hold, at least some small pockets of the species may be able to pass the remaining generations in relative peace.

2101: A new century dawns. By now, Terato has killed or transformed (to most, the distinction is vague) over 35% of the world's human population, more than any epidemic or disaster in human history.

Blossoming

2150: Vegetable Terato strains emerge, and most remaining settlements begin to collapse. These new plant-based teratomorphs are not hunters in many cases, merely scavenging the carnage of careless predators. However, they are still vectors of infection to creatures that feed upon them or come in close contact, and some new botanical horrors take a much more proactive approach to obtaining sustenance. There is no longer any hiding – merely survival. As the seething cities are fled, any governments larger than tiny communities deflate into nothing.

2201: A new century dawns. Over the last 51 years, the human population has dropped by nearly half compared to when the first human case of Terato emerged in 1990. Scattered, isolated clans form, not married to any greater objective than surviving as long as possible. Some attempt deliberate reconciliation with T+ individuals, recognizing their ability to confront wild teratomorphs with minimal risk of full-blown infection. Not all find the prospect appealing, and many tribes entirely of T+ humans form. Some communities adopt a more darkly pragmatic approach, corralling teratomorphic ex-citizens together to allow them to reproduce before dispatching them. Their offspring, invariably born with DOT, may not resemble anything like the vanishing human race, but they maintain, at least, human minds. If the species cannot survive unaltered, at least its sapience might.

2250: The last possible records roughly estimate the unaltered, "homomorphic" human population at less than a billion. Beyond this point, no one can do any more than guess. As human teratomorphs increase in population, so do T+ humans, their numbers beginning to creep upward to meet the declining numbers of their predecessors.

2301: A new century dawns. Homomorphic humanity has dwindled to hundreds of thousands.

2401: A new century dawns. Vast sweeps of the globe no longer know the presence of anything resembling humanity, now numbering in the mere thousands.

2450: Only isolated families remain. Humanity can be counted by hundreds.

2475: Only one, dim remnant of the human species clings to existence, in a land for which they no longer have any name the old world would have recognized. Less than 100 homomorphic human beings live.

2491: The last, unaltered human being goes to sleep one night, and never wakes up.

2501: A new century dawns. Life goes on as it always has. The bulk of Earth's living beings, as they have since the beginning, do not notice anything in particular has changed.

Chapter 1: Introduction

A few minor caveats need to be given up front. This game book does not spend a great deal of time ruminating on the broader subject of what a tabletop RPG is, how to play them, managing a group, etc. It's written with the assumption that, while not necessarily an expert, you understand what these games are and how they basically work. Aside from its own rules and setting, its only real concerns on the "meta" level are those that apply specifically to the themes of the game. If you're completely inexperienced in the field of tabletop RPGs, the best start I can give you is to say, "It's a bit like Dungeons & Dragons," then nose you in the direction of your search engine of choice, with my best wishes. While we're doling out caveats, though this game is written with all best intentions towards treating human beings (and living things in general) with the dignity they're due, the subject matter ahead pertains to a great deal of disease, violence, and body horror. If these sound unpalatable, there are plenty of very worthy games and other engagements more worth your time.

Misbegotten as an idea has been bouncing around in my head for quite some time, but it's finally put in motion as an entry in the Bogleech.com 2014 Creepypasta Cook-Off. In keeping with the showcase's intentionally broad acceptance criteria, this is something a little different: A fully playable, simple tabletop role-playing game. This book covers both the setting and rules of the game, with some suggestions on ways to explore the intended themes and subject matter of alienation and the grotesque. Of course, this content is yours to freely reinterpret. If you think it would run better in the style of a gritty film noir, cheesy action flick, or educational children's cartoon, then damn anything that tells you otherwise. You may freely distribute this book via whatever channels you see fit, to whomever you see fit, as long as it remains unmodified.

In this game, players take on the role of ordinary human beings who have fallen victim to a bizarre transformative retrovirus called Terato (after the Greek word for "Monster"), but, through luck of the genetic lottery, are better equipped than most to keep their human psyches intact. Despite remaining (mostly) behaviorally and cognitively human, these people, known in shorthand as "T+", still suffer the most visible consequences of the disease: Violent, grotesque, and sometimes debilitating mutation. Almost no two are alike, some better equipped to pass

themselves off as normal. Exposed for what they are, however, these sufferers are every bit what the terrified layperson might rightly deem "monsters". What constitutes normal in this world, however, is undergoing a swift and profound transformation, and these freaks may well hold the key to preserving the rest of humanity – or, at least, something resembling it.

This game uses a single d20 (twenty-sided die) for the majority of its rolling. However, for some more specific cases, the traditional pantheon of d4s, d6s, d8s, d10s, d12s, and the occasional d100/percentile may be employed. It doesn't use great fistfuls of any of them, so one die of each type (and an extra d10 for making d100 rolls) should be all you need. Electronic facsimiles, subject to whatever rules your game group sets forth, are always an option.

Inspirations

For both some idea of what you're getting into, and some possible guidance and reference material if you decide to go all the way with it, here are some of the media that inspired *Misbegotten*, or which I at least thought "Yeah, like that!" about after *Misbegotten* was underway. These are not necessarily recommendations. I've tried to avoid irrelevant commentary on whether I consider these good or bad, just to avoid turning them into mini-reviews.

- *Kiseijuu*, AKA *Parasyte* (Manga, anime series): Aside from the shape-shifting body horror, this series provides some good ideas of how concealable abominations might look and function. Migi (the protagonist's parasitically overtaken left hand) is also an excellent example of one might handle intelligent symbionts.
- *Nightbane* (Tabletop RPG): The system used for randomly creating the forms of the titular Nightbane inspired the optional randomized mutations in this game. While more outlandish and less biologically-oriented (or more Cronenbergian, one might say) than the characters in this game, the Nightbane themselves cope with similar issues of hideousness and rejection, though they're usually much more capable of passing as human. More importantly, though: Rolling on the random deformity tables to see what kind of freak you get is more fun than I've had playing the game (or, in fact, many other games), which was something I wanted to recreate here. Of all existing TRPGs I know of, this one is probably closest to *Misbegotten* in overall feel, even if it's a loose fit.
- *Prototype* (Video game series): Though *Misbegotten* tends to operate at a much lower power scale by default, the desire to have a tabletop RPG in which you can play a creature like Alex Mercer (or his successor in the sequel) was a major motivator in creating *Misbegotten*. The experience of *Prototype* greatly steered the idea for this game: Playing amidst a biological catastrophe, as an equal or greater monstrosity that can, sometimes, pass among humanity. If you want to play a high-power, high-action game of *Misbegotten*, this could certainly serve as a good template.
- *Resident Evil* (Video game franchise): Look past the ordinary human zombies for this, and you have an excellent illustration of what Terato can do to life on Earth. The unfortunates in the Resident Evil series are variously warped, transformed, parasitized, and otherwise distorted in tons of creative ways. It isn't restricted to just humans, either, providing examples of infected dogs, spiders, snakes, primates and more. If you want the most basic rundown of what Terato does to living things, this is more or less it. More

frustratingly, though, this franchise is also why the Terato virus couldn't be given its most obvious possible abbreviation.

- *The Thing* (1982 film): This flick puts on some displays of body horror *par excellence*. While Terato is a disease, rather than a body-copying extraterrestrial (probably), the effects it has on its victims could easily be described in terms of some of the amorphous horrors featured in this film.
- *Galshell, Hellbound,* and other Akira Hut Original shooters (Video games): These PC shooters, produced by obscure (as far as I know) Japanese developer Akira Hut Original, are parades of grotesquerie. They're all various shooters, some side-view and some top-down, featuring gorgeous spritework of truly bizarre and imaginative enemies (and in some cases, player characters). Some of the really huge bosses and such are made up of tons of intricately detailed masses of deformity that really need to be taken apart piece by piece to appreciate. For some inspiration in terms of true, massive alienness, check them out. Warning: Some gratuitous nudity features in them.

Themes

Though *Misbegotten* is ultimately about whatever you want it to be (not that you need my permission for that anyway), it's written with a few specific central topics that serve as guideposts for the content.

Body Horror

If Misbegotten has a main theme, this is it. The style of horror popularly known as "body horror" revolves around the invasion, deformation, decay, etc. of the human body, or sometimes of living beings in general. Body horror fundamentally preys upon not just human fear of injury, infection, and parasites, but more importantly, upon human empathy. When it's really used to great effect in a work of media, we cringe and shrivel. It's not because it results in scary-looking creatures, but because we imagine what it would feel like to *be* them. Scary, creative, interesting monsters are absolutely great, of course. But whether it affects hostile monsters or just helpless victims, body horror triggers that terrible thought of what it would be like to be in that other being's shoes. This doesn't have to be the main theme, of course. You could decide your character(s) get over their condition before long, or are open-minded enough not to be bothered by the deformity of the beings around them. As-written, however, Misbegotten is aimed at players who are apt to really enjoy playing out the suffering and the horror (or morbid delight) of a character's slow physical and mental perversion into a monster.

Ugliness

The love of physical beauty has driven many noble human pursuits, served as a source of hope and joy, and united people of all cultures and creeds. However, in other ways, our addiction to beauty may be one of our most profound handicaps. We are more easily deceived and manipulated by beauty, biased against all logic – and just as irrationally as we favor it, living things that do not meet these same standards are held as inferior. The mere existence of sufficiently "ugly" creatures is enough to reduce many people to paroxysms of terror or even rage. Any animal that drifts too far from a human body plan risks being reflexively stomped to death for the crime of living. Most T+ humans push the envelope not just of what it is to be

attractive, but of what it is to even be perceived as people. Even those who have the fortune of traditionally comely human traits often end up more intimidating or fetishized than simply lovable. How do they cope with exclusion from their own species, for violating the taboo of being biologically "wrong"? In the far future, what new shapes might the concept of beauty take?

Nature

Man's relationship to nature is a big component of *Misbegotten*, and not in a *Fern Gully* sense. Our hominid ancestors lived face to face and tooth to tooth with their predators, and our very instincts and physiology are still absolutely studded with protocols for avoiding being dragged off into the darkness and eaten alive. However, we've paved over our predators habitats, driven them near (or to) extinction, pushed them to the peripheries of our subdivisions and highways, and created weapons that put most any claws and teeth to shame. Thanks to Terato, however, some of those advantages are starting to lose their edge, and as the threat spreads, others are beginning to fail us entirely. Normal people have reasonable cause to live in fear of what lurks beyond the firelight again.

Transhumanism

Are T+ individuals still human? Most regular people seem eager to dismiss that notion. Each sufferer's relation to their sickness and to the rest of humanity is a personal and unique perspective. However, no small number have concluded that they are something quite apart from the species that spawned them. If one approaches them as a new kind of creature entirely, what might emerge from this blank slate? Of course, the previous marks and scratches of human cultures (and biology) still remain on the board in ways that may be impossible to overcome completely. As time goes on, however, those human cultures may one day flicker out. If the infected one day found themselves in a world where no "normal" humans remained, what sorts of beings would they become?

Subjects

The "point" of *Misbegotten* is intentionally flexible, though it is written with a few default dramatic structures in mind. By and large, the stories *Misbegotten* are best suited to tell fall into one of three broad categories (and can easily morph through them in this order): Interpersonal, escape, and survival.

Interpersonal stories revolve around the characters' relationships to each other, other human beings, and their lives. They're about dealing with friends, romance, careers, education, and all the other day to day aspects of mundane life we're all familiar with in some form or another. Of course, the default assumption is that all player characters suffer from Delayed-Onset Terato, which will invariably throw a monkey wrench in any hope for a normal life. Discrimination, hardship, abuse, and revenge are common foci for these kinds of stories, but if you feel like it, there's nothing wrong with more gentle or heartwarming approaches too. Maybe one or more of the players actually finds acceptance and steadfast friendship instead. Stories with a political angle, with players trying to shape the outcome of their government's politics or spearhead research on cure for Terato, would also fall under this umbrella.

Escape stories are a logical starting point, or next step. As time grinds on, more and more measures are taken to curtail the freedom of T+ people. Though it might be taken as dystopic, this isn't strictly unreasonable. Medical quarantine is a harsh and ugly, but possibly very necessary, precaution in such a situation. Whether the PCs' captors are decent people making hard choices or hand-wringing cackling villains, though, chances are very good that they will end up looking at the world from inside of a cage at some point. Life in medical quarantine can be an equally good launching point for interpersonal stories, but chances are not bad the players will want their characters to make a go of escaping. These scenarios will tend to involve careful planning, gathering of resources, and creative use of Abominations – if they aren't going to just devolve into a bloodbath.

Survival stories may come before, after, or instead of, escape stories. Maybe the player characters have gotten out of confinement, or evaded it in the first place, or maybe it hasn't even come up as an issue. Whatever the case, the world is a profoundly dangerous place now. Whether they're living in cozy gated communities or lurking under bridges and living in sewers, the PCs will have to contend with the growing hordes of teratomorphs in some capacity. This might involve home siege scenarios, wilderness survival, or grandiose treks from point A to a hopefully safe (or safe**r**) point B.

The choice of position on *Misbegotten's* timeline (see Chapter 4: Setting) will further influence the context of these structures. An interpersonal story told late in the Blossoming phase, for instance, is likelier to involve tiny communes of survivors, or roving camps of DOTs, rather than schoolyard dramas or political intrigue.

Glossary

Though they are explained where they arise, here are some common terms as they are used by the game, for easy reference. Terms that refer to game rules and systems only, rather than actual things in the game world, are italicized. Words are capitalized if they are always meant to be capitalized in the text (usually to differentiate game terms).

Abomination: An individual "piece" of teratomorphic mutation, such as a crustacean claw, a radula, compound eyes, etc.

ability: Attributes and skills both.

attribute: A relatively fixed, slow-to-change trait of a character, like strength.

Challenge: The minimum number to roll on an action in order to succeed.

Delayed Onset Terato/DOT: Proper noun. A slower-progressing Terato infection, one which only sporadically and gradually warps the host's mind. Though the disease progresses entirely differently, this is actually not a special form of the disease itself. Rather, certain lucky humans have crucial antibodies that protect their brains from total infection. If the infection is carefully managed, neural degeneration may actually be an "if" instead of a "when." Individuals with DOT are sometimes themselves referred to as DOTs, usually by science and government bodies behind closed doors. The game assumes by default that all player characters suffer from DOT. When T+ humans breed, their offspring always possess DOT, for reasons unknown.

dynamic: Dynamic situations are ones in which characters act in a structured order, turn by turn. This is usually when precise timing and the order in which people take actions matters. Combat is a very typical example, but not the only one. The rules for dynamic situations are in the Combat chapter.

Game Master/GM: The term for the player responsible for adjudicating the game's rules and handling narrative beyond the player characters.

Grotesquerie: A numerical abstraction of how disturbing, frightening, or disgusting humans (and many other animals) are likely to find a character.

health points (HP): An abstract representation of a character's overall proximity to death.

homomorph: Noun. A human without Terato. Rarely used, but an increasingly relevant distinction as time goes by. From Greek, it literally means "Same shape." Adjective form: **homomorphic**.

Impact: The up-front damage dealt by a weapon, reduced by armor.

Infestation: A secondary characteristic reflecting the degree to which Terato has taken over a character's mind.

Mishap: A roll of 1 on a task resolution roll, usually resulting in some unfortunate slip-up.

non-player character/NPC: A character controlled and portrayed by the GM.

player: One of the actual, real-world people playing the game, besides the GM.

player character/PC: A character controlled by a single player. In *Misbegotten*, these characters are almost always sufferers of delayed-onset Terato by default assumption.

resilience: A character's mental fortitude, derived from their Will.

result: The total of a die roll after everything is added up.

secondary characteristic: A character trait derived from existing attributes or other factors, which doesn't fall under the heading of skills and attributes.

skill: A learned talent or field of knowledge possessed by a character, such as knowledge of medicine or skill at playing basketball.

symbiont: Noun. A teratomorph, usually a former parasite, which has changed to function mutually with a host to which it is usually physically attached. Such organisms may feed directly off of the host, or simply steal a portion of its food intake. Their attachment also tends to transmit enormous viral loads, so any host that is not already infected is virtually guaranteed to become such. This is distinct from the actual, biological term, which refers to any organism that engages in symbiosis with any other.

T+/T-Positive/T-Pos: Adjective, sometimes colloquially used as noun (such as "A T+" to refer to a person who is T+). A term for organisms infected with Terato. This is the favored term for

describing human victims. One would call a neighbor T+, rather than a teratomorph (see below), if at all concerned about politeness.

Terato: Noun. Technically several closely related strains of retrovirus. Terato is spread aggressively by the saliva and other bodily fluids of its carriers. To further that end, its victims become warped, predatory "teratomorphs," who take on carnivorous diets to propagate the disease, and fuel their overtaxed metabolisms. Its name is the Greek word for "Monster."

teratomorph: Noun. An organism whose body has been altered by Terato, usually along with corresponding behavioral changes making it aggressive, predatory, and dangerous. From Greek, it literally means "Monster-shaped." In polite conversation, it's considered incredibly distasteful to use this term to refer to infected humans, for obvious reasons. Adjective form: **teratomorphic**.

Trauma: The multiplier applied to weapon Impact after armor is subtracted.

turn: A unit of time in a dynamic situation, in which a character accomplishes something. Roughly equal to six seconds of time.

Chapter 2: Setting

Around 1985, something happened. Previously unknown creatures began to wash ashore across the world's oceans. Whatever it is and precisely wherever it emerged, the Terato virus began its spread underwater. Maybe it was frozen inside a now-melting ice cap. Maybe it's part of some natural cycle, and played a role in evolutionary upheavals like the Cambrian Explosion. Maybe it's a bio-weapon that spiraled out of control. Maybe it's extraterrestrial, hitching a ride on a comet or with mysterious, intelligent foreigners to this planet. These theories all have flaws, if some greater than others. Whatever the case, Terato is here.

The Virus

Technically speaking, Terato is multiple strains of a retrovirus. Its infection vector is fluid, but it's not picky about what kind. Saliva, blood, reproductive fluids, and even tears can all serve as vectors of infection. Fortunately, the virus does not seem able to permeate sweat. Terato seems to "scan" host bodies for specific anatomical and biological traits, picking them up as it spreads. Thus, it most likely began by swapping adaptations between various species of fish, before it came ashore for a taste of other species. It takes time for the virus to adapt to new species, experimentally spinning the combination lock of genes until it can hijack their systems. Thus, not all creatures are equally susceptible right away. The timeline lays out when certain strains emerge. Other rules for Terato's spread and infection are in the Abominations chapter. There are some animals that are not covered in the timeline,

"Bats aren't bugs!"

Terato's strains are not strictly aligned to any logical (or necessarily even real – "fish" aren't a strictly distinct zoological group and fungi aren't plants) organization. Nor are the mechanisms of the disease biologically, evolutionarily, or anatomically feasible. It's there so you can fight, play as, or play with (I'm not judging here) monstrous hybrid mutants. Hard sci-fi, this ain't.

due to lack of time to write up a Terato strain for them in the rules. One can safely assume they're infected around the same time as similar classes.

Terato engineers its own spread. The dramatic changes it inflicts upon its hosts, in general, tend to make them more suitable for hunting other creatures. These extreme alterations produce an incredible metabolic demand, which forces the host to predation or parasitism to keep pace. One nigh-universal facet of Terato infection is a retooling of the host's body to make this possible. Previously herbivorous creatures become able to digest meat (and often bones and organs), and will do so with great relish to satiate their overwhelming hunger. They fully understand this. However primitive it may be, the new teratomorph's mind is compelled by the virus to seek out sustenance in this form, against any previous loyalties. In the process, many victims will escape, bearing a fresh viral load from this intimate contact with their would-be predator.

See Spot Ruin

It isn't a default assumption of the setting, but there's no reason, at the GM's discretion, that certain animals couldn't have DOT antibodies. If a player wants a friendly mutant pet, their tastes are commendable.

At least among humans, there is one saving grace. Certain people seem to possess a specific antibody that grants a form of quasi-immunity. They greatly diminish the infectiousness of the disease, protecting the brain, primarily. Such muffled cases are referred to as DOT (Delayed Onset Terato), due to the much slower rate at which they overtake the brain in full. Though they still mutate, and still experience intense hunger, they can retain control of their faculties indefinitely, if they successfully avoid any secondary infections. That may be the least of their concerns.

La Vie Monstre

Misbegotten does not devote a huge amount of time to the exact reactions of various regions and nations to the spread of Terato. There is a reason for this: Every group (and player) will have their own impression of how things would "really" go down. Plus, there is always the risk of betraying an embarrassing perceived, or actual, ignorance of worldwide geopolitics. For this reason, the fine details of what happens in the world are up to the GM. There are, however, a few safe assumptions that can be made, most of which are laid out in the timeline. In general, actual governmental suppression and quarantine of DOT individuals ramps up as time goes on. Non-infectious DOT sufferers may be able to lead semi-normal lives, while public panic is relatively low. Unless their Abominations are all concealable, however, "semi" is honestly the best that can be hoped for.

Besides the obvious social ostracism, the disease's metabolic demands must still be met. Sufferers can expect major grocery bills, if they can't somehow hunt their own meat. For a T+ person in control of their faculties, using cheaper vegetables and such to feed the beast is theoretically possible. It fundamentally comes down to just what radical new alterations their diet has to support. With a clean doctor's report of non-infectivity, DOT sufferers can probably rely on some mutual support groups, at least in fortunate areas. The combination of being socially

outcast, feared, unemployed, and possibly in considerable financial stress, is enough to contribute to a very high suicide rate among DOTs.

Eventually, many governments will deem such individuals, infectious or not, an unacceptable risk. Mass quarantine, or even extermination, is a reasonable expectation. In absolute, merciless fairness, those who've suffered secondary exposures do present an actual contagion risk. Unless it's in the tone of your game, the health officials and military agencies responsible for these quarantines are unlikely, for the most part, to be cackling, hand-wringing sadists. In countries wealthy enough for the privilege, some private quarantines may even be somewhat comfortable. This invariably can't last, though. As demand grows and resources dwindle, the comfort of detainees is one of the first expenses out the window. Also, even at the best of times, those mutated by Terato are not easy targets for sympathy. All practical health and safety risks aside, they're different from "normal" people, more than any human subgroup has ever been. The sight of them tends to evoke pity at best and revulsion, horror, or frightened rage at worst. It may not be a majority opinion, at least at first, but there is always an undercurrent of sentiment that things would be better if these creatures could just be exterminated, buried, and forgotten.

Pestilence

Terato doesn't spread equally. Though on a biological level, the disease doesn't distinguish between ethnicities, orientations, or classes, on a more practical level, there are societal factors in play that shape how it spreads. Those who are in vulnerable positions, who find the protection of law enforcement difficult to call upon, are among the most likely victims. It's far easier to avoid infection by wild Teratomorphs when you can barricade yourself in a sturdy house and place a call to your private security company. Conversely, if you're out on the street without a phone or a home, the only thing between you and being eaten alive or infected is your own survival skill. Terato is, consequently, primarily a disease of the poor. As their numbers grow, however, and time marches on, the great equalizer of mortality takes its toll. The further down the timeline one goes, the fewer private security agencies and standing, cozy houses there are. The sickness may take more time getting around to those in secure positions in society, but it hasn't forgotten them. As the U.S. president demonstrates in 2024, no one is completely safe.

Timeline

The timeline that introduces this book is meant as a tool and not a shackle. Its purpose, overall, is to allow your group to pick a period of play that best exemplifies the style of game desired. During the Emergence phase, Terato is more of a novelty and a rarity among humans, and it's much more possible for those with DOT to live in society. The Early Infestation period is where the stakes get high, where skirmishes with Teratomorphs start to become commonplace and DOT sufferers' fears of their own countries begin to crystalize. The Late Infestation is pre-apocalyptic, with the fall of humanity from its lofty perch well underway. The final period, the Blossoming, is more or less post-apocalyptic. The world as it was known has ended, and humanity, as it was, is on the way out. It's possible to even play after this period, portraying

surviving DOTs long after the death of the last uninfected humans, surviving in what has become a completely alien world compared to the days before Terato.

Some might understandably balk at humanity's doom being written in stone. This is another, partial reason for the flexible timeline. While it's all a suggestion anyway, the events after whenever your game begins are very explicitly subject to alteration. Perhaps your group will find the cure for Terato, or lead an exodus from planet Earth. Maybe they'll just blow it all up. To whatever degree you see fit, the future is yours to write.

Chapter 3: Rules

> **A quick aside on rounding**
>
> When the rules ask you to round, if they don't specify otherwise, round down.

Task resolution, the process of determining semi-randomly if an action succeeds or fails, in *Misbegotten* falls mainly on one simple type of roll:

1d20 + relevant skill + relevant attribute +/- circumstantial modifiers, vs. Challenge

The combination of skill, attribute, and circumstantial modifiers is referred to the roll's "bonus." This may end up a negative number in some cases, which is a bit contrary to what a bonus is, but it's probably easiest to have a short, consistent term for this sum. The final total outcome that's compared to the Challenge is the "result." Occasionally, no skill fits a given roll. In these cases, just roll a relevant attribute alone. For these situations, the Challenge should probably be 5-10 lower than it might normally be, since no skill exists to grant a further bonus.

"Challenge" is the target number the roll attempts to meet or exceed in order to succeed. If the roll of 1d20 plus (or minus) the bonus equals or exceeds the challenge, barring some form of GM fiat, the character completes their action successfully. Many actions with pre-defined rules will specify the Challenge that must be met. Shorthand for challenge is given as a number with a C suffix. For example, if a task's challenge is 20, it might be stated that it's a "20C task." It's up to the GM whether and when to provide Challenge up front or leave it a mystery. It's probably wise to go with the former if dealing with tasks the character in question performs somewhat routinely.

Assigning Challenge

It's pretty much a guarantee that times will arise when players need to determine success or failure on a task the book never even imagined. In these cases, the GM will need to adjudicate the Challenge ad-hoc. Generally speaking, the absolute highest bonus one can usually expect on a roll is +20 (assuming a relevant skill and attribute both at 10), possibly a little higher due to circumstantial modifiers, specialized equipment, or Abominations. This reflects someone who's at the top of their game, with a combination of both perfect inherent traits and world-class training. Since the highest possible result on a d20 is 20, this means any task beyond 40C falls within the realm of impossibility, except in the most extreme circumstances. A nice thing about d20-based rolls is how easy it is to convert them to percentile probability, with every +/- 1 reflective a 5% change in the odds. Based on this, here's a rough idea of just how hard a few

example Challenges are. Please note these do not factor in the ever-present possibility of a Mishap (see below).

0C: Virtually foolproof. The only possibility for failure would be from characters with a negative bonus, due to poor attributes and little or no skill. There's probably no need to roll at all, unless it's to build tension or generate unsurety, or the character has so many penalties that they might end up rolling a result less than 0. Examples: Making breakfast. Driving a familiar route down residential streets.

5C: Very easy. Someone with no training or particular aptitude (bonus +0) still has an 80% chance of stumbling into success, though bad luck or incompetence may still lead to problems. Examples: A typical day's work at a simple, regular job. Persuading a good friend to do a small favor.

10C: Simple enough. Someone with no relevant abilities has a 55% chance of success. Some training or aptitude is enough to make this more of a sure-fire thing, but the odds still slightly favor success even without any of that.

15C: Some training required. A character without skill or aptitude has only a 30% chance of succeeding. It's possible, but it will take some luck. At this level of challenge, things are only consistently possible with some actual aptitude and/or practice. It would take a +5 total bonus to push the odds back up to a favorable 55% majority chance.

20C: Challenging. At this point, the utterly unprepared only have a 5% shot-in-the-dark chance of pulling through. At least some inherent aptitude is necessary for reliable success. A +10 bonus, the highest one could manage on skill alone, only nets a 55% chance of success. While real hot-shots with high skills and attributes can push this into the area of dependable success, for most professionals, this is where things are dicey.

25C: Very challenging. Don't even roll if you have no bonus to go on. It won't work. Having even the narrowest majority 55% chance of success will require a +15 bonus, absolutely mandating a positive score in the relevant attribute. For those down at the more modest +10 bonus ranges, the odds are consistently against them, with only about 30% chance of success. It's not once-in-a-lifetime, by any means, but for most people, this is the domain of long-shots and urgent gambits.

30C: The solidly but mundanely skilled, at around a +10 bonus, are only going to have a slim, skin-of-the teeth 5% chance at this range, and even those pushing up to insane levels of aptitude like +20 are only going to see success a little over half the time. This is the territory of things that are possible, but usually last-ditch final hopes. Anything rated higher falls roughly into the category of things that may as well be impossible, but still hold out a faint glimmer of potential for those who really have what it takes to pull through. A character who can very consistently achieve success in this range of difficulty either has the circumstances stacked massively in their favor, or has become something far beyond a normal human being.

Task Resolution Fine Points

Unless the rules specify, the GM arbitrates when a task warrants turning to the rules to determine success or failure. As a general rule of thumb, if there's not going to be any interesting difference between success or failure for an action, it's okay for the GM to decide on the spot, or even let a PC's player decide. Sometimes a player may want to roll anyway, just to see how well they fared (or to show off a very high modifier), and it's generally fine to allow that if it won't slow things down.

As an option, a GM might use the margin by which the result varies from the Challenge as a basis to describe how well the action succeeded, or failed. A task whose result meets the Challenge exactly is completed in a basic, utilitarian way, for instance, while one exceeded by 10 ends up making it look easy.

1s and 20s

Tabletop gamers love 1s and 20s. Even in games where no such rule exists, it's common to ascribe automatic success or failure to rolls of these two extremes. *Misbegotten* only partially embraces this, in the name of simulating one factor: That no one is perfect. The following rules govern what happens when a 1 or a 20 comes up on the d20 for task resolution.

- A roll of a 1 on the die is a Mishap. Mishaps exist because there is no such thing as a foolproof course of action. If a 1 is rolled on an action, it fails automatically, regardless of the total result. No matter how skilled the character involved, there is always a chance of failure, which this rule exists to ensure. The GM is responsible for adjudicating just how a mishap occurs, but if a PC is involved, it might be a reasonable idea to ask the player for input. Mishaps often are the result of either phenomenal bad luck (the master locksmith suddenly sneezes, or the master chef's stove malfunctions), serving to explain the sudden lapse in talent of an otherwise skilled character. Alternatively, no one is perfect, and a mishap might also just be a terrible mistake on the character's part. They can be simple, unfortunate hiccups that ruin a plan, or a truly ignominious catastrophe or misjudgment, subject to the tone the GM wants to establish. Mishaps on rolls that already had very slim chances of success can probably just be described as normal failures. If a character was only going to be able to succeed on a roll of 19-20, a mishap only causes what was about to occur anyway, most likely. It's for characters who snatch defeat from the jaws of victory that the rule primarily exists.
- If the GM really wants to give one glimmer of hope on a long-shot, they might, on a case-by-case basis, allow a rolled 20 to succeed on an action, even if the result would not normally be high enough even then. This isn't meant to make the impossible possible, like giving a preschooler a shot at fixing a nuclear reactor, but to restore a glimpse of possibility to something that should at least theoretically have some wild, perhaps random, chance of working after all. Use it sparingly, unless yours is the sort of silly game where you want reality to completely break 5% of the time.

Opposed Actions

No monster is an island. Sometimes actions oppose each other. To handle opposing actions is simple: Instead of rolling against a Challenge, just roll them against each other, with

the highest result succeeding. A Mishap on an opposed action still fails, unless both sides encounter a Mishap. If this is the case, just compare the results normally. This doesn't have to just apply to actions involving two parties. Any number of characters might compete for the highest roll in a given struggle. This only really makes sense if they're all competing, though. If more than one is working together, the rules on cooperation (see below) are more applicable.

If the results are equal, the outcome is a tie if the action could reasonably have one, though the characters might just immediately compete again. If a tie isn't possible or doesn't make sense, victory instead goes to the character with the higher bonus (or to the defender, if the opposed roll is for an attack). If bonuses are equal too, just ignore the results and have everyone involved re-roll.

Cooperation

Sometimes, it's appropriate for more than one character to work on the same task. For these situations, the GM may need to assess the practical and logistical concerns of just how many people can collaborate. Cooperative lockpicking, for example, is probably as ridiculous as two or more hackers cooperating by typing on the same keyboard. Two repairmen could easily work together in a small workshop, but there would just not be enough space or tools for twenty more to help out.

Unfortunately, the game's math would snap in half if cooperation were as simple as adding the results of these rolls together, so the process is a little more involved. One character involved is the leader of the task. If the task is one that logically lends itself to being somehow led by or centered around a specific character, that's who this is. If everyone's working in a relatively equal capacity, just use the one with the highest applicable bonus (since that's who players usually nominate for this sort of thing anyway). All helpers make a roll against ½ the task's Challenge, and each one who succeeds increases the leader's bonus by +1, or +2 if they beat the Challenge by between 5 and 9, or +3 if they beat it by 10 or more.

For really major logistical tasks that involve dozens of characters, the cooperation rules (or task resolution rules in general) might be better off ignored. Consider it an unintentional simulation of real group dynamics, or just call it the "too many cooks" rule. Just have the group's most competent character make the roll, if you must. Cooperation can be combined with opposed rolls (see above), with the leaders' rolls opposing one another.

Actions & Systems

Certain activities are so commonplace, or central to the game, as to warrant a set of specific governing rules. You can tweak or ignore case-by-case these if they seem inappropriate, bog down trivial activities too much, etc.

Movement

In a dynamic situation, a character moving at a bit of a hustle or jog can move a number of feet per turn equal to their Movement secondary characteristic. At an all-out run, characters can move four times this speed. However, each minute of full-out running necessitates an Athletics roll, at a cumulative -1 penalty per roll they've previously attempted in this sprint. On a

failure, the character's worn out and must slow to a plodding pace until they can catch their breath. See the Climbing and Swimming sections for how they impact movement.

It's not at all uncommon for one character to end up pursuing another. In these cases, simply have the two make opposed Athletics rolls, with the pursuer catching their quarry if they succeed. The margin of success or failure can give a rough estimate of how long the chase takes.

Swimming

A landbound character normally swims up to ½ their Movement per turn, though they can move up to full speed for one turn by making a 15C Swimming roll. Failure simply means the character cannot move at full speed. Simply staying afloat in calm water requires a 5C Swimming roll, made every minute, which most accomplished swimmers will succeed automatically. Choppy or difficult water may make this more challenging, warranting a penalty to this roll, of perhaps up to -15 for churning, stormy seas. If a character fails a roll to stay afloat, they begin sinking, and presumably drowning (see the Asphyxiation section). Another swimmer could conceivably rescue them, with a Swimming roll equal to the Challenge of staying afloat + 5. Failing this, the sinker can try to flounder their way back to the surface with a new Swimming roll each turn.

Some Abominations (or natural traits) convey the ability to swim freely. Characters with Swimming movement can move their full speed without a roll in water and need not roll to stay afloat. These Abominations do not inherently grant the ability to breathe in water (or survive great depths or cold), though others exist that do. Creatures that are native to watery environments may have a Swimming movement speed naturally. If they do, they are assumed to be unable to move on land, unless they have a separate normal Movement trait.

Drowning/Asphyxiation

Most creatures need oxygen to live, which is a stunning observation perhaps worthy of being on the cover of this book if it had one. A character of average (0) Health with a chance to breathe in first can normally hold their breath for roughly 30 seconds, or 5 turns, adding (Health * 2) to this if their Health score is positive. Without a chance to breathe in, this only affords about fifteen seconds (or 2 turns). After this, asphyxiation sets in, and the character begins to lose 1d2 HP each turn until they can breathe again, die, or find some way to survive without oxygen. In a pinch, this can apply to aquatic creatures forced out of water as well, though they can probably last a turn longer if they're sufficiently moist.

Climbing

By default, most characters climb at ½ their Movement. Some Abominations may give them the opportunity to climb at full or increased speed. Unless specifically exempted from having to make rolls (or subject to unusual circumstances if exempted), staying up usually requires an Athletics roll, made before their actual movement. A human scaling a ladder would probably be at 0C, only apt to fall if something else goes wrong or they're working with a negative bonus. Knotted ropes and other made-for-climbing apparatuses would be 5C. Climbable but difficult surfaces, such as climbing walls or other uneven surfaces with footholds, would probably be 10C. Surfaces completely unsuited for climbing, but that might have a suitable

makeup for it, would be 15C to 20C. Beyond that lies sheer walls and its ilk. Generally, simply staying on a surface you've successfully mounted requires no roll, unless your steadiness is actively threatened. Failing a climbing roll indicates the character loses their grip and falls. If this is from any considerable height, and they remain near the climbing surface, the GM should probably allow at least one more climbing roll for them to catch themselves.

Falling

Falling is when the planet zooms up and punches you. Characters who fall from 10' or more take 1d6 damage per 10' fallen, up to a maximum of 20d6 for falling 200' or more, at which point terminal velocity decides their day is already bad enough. Controlled drops can alleviate this harm. Taking some time to prepare for the drop, anyone can shave an effective 10' off the fall by doing things like sitting down and scooting off an edge or lowering themselves carefully. Also, falling gracefully, oxymoronic though it sounds, can help. Characters can subtract 10' of falling per 10 rolled on an Acrobatics roll (so a roll of 28 would subtract 20' of distance). This can be combined with a controlled drop.

Like sacks of wet cement

These rules are inherently geared towards human (or human-sized) characters. Creatures like fleas do not routinely explode when they jump around, while horses or elephants can injure themselves from comparatively minor stumbles. This can be handled by ad-hoc adjusting the fall distance per die of damage taken based on the overall mass and makeup of the airborne critter.

Medical Attention

After all that falling and drowning, it wouldn't be surprising if someone needed medical attention. If a character is dying (at 0 HP or less), a 15C Medicine roll can stabilize them, arresting the diminishment of their condition (see the Health section of the Combat chapter). A character can also look after a number of injured characters at once equal to their Medicine skill. At the end of one full day of care, make a 10C Medicine roll for each patient. Each successfully treated regains 1d6 HP in addition to their daily healing. A character can only benefit from this once per day, though aides can assist the treating physician to help them succeed at the roll (see Cooperation, above).

Horror and Disgust

Handling the grotesque takes a certain amount of self-control, reflected in the Resilience trait. A character can generally keep their self-control around creatures with a Grotesquerie score less than said character's Resilience. This doesn't necessarily mean the character is comfortable. But they can function at least somewhat normally. It's in the presence of things with more Grotesquerie than they have Resilience that people tend to fall apart. The exact degree to which they go to pieces depends on by how much the Grotesquerie exceeds them.

0: Overwhelming discomfort or revulsion. The character can continue to behave somewhat normally, but will want to leave as soon as possible and will hurry their business to do so. Being forced to remain around the creature will make them tense, snappish, and increasingly panicky.

1-5: Minor reaction. The character will probably startle on first exposure, and will immediately try to get themselves and loved ones a safe distance away. Aggressive types who are startled or cornered might lash out instinctively. If they feel relatively safe, characters might instead try to drive the creature away, such as by throwing objects.

5-10: Major reaction. At this level, real panic results. Characters likely either flee the scene entirely, stampeding over others if need be, or attack if cornered (or especially confident). Calming such individuals down is almost impossible in the heat of the moment, let alone by the creature to which they're reacting.

11+: Heart-stopping pandemonium. Characters may abandon loved ones in their rush to get away, if they can't easily grab them and drag them along. Those who can't escape will tend to collapse, soil themselves, and/or launch themselves at the creature in hysterical, irrational, violent frenzy. Characters with heart conditions are at serious health risk.

At lower levels, common sense still applies. If a relatively low-Grotesquerie creature is an obvious threat to someone's life, they are probably justified in panicking to a much greater degree than its monstrous appearance alone would indicate. These only govern minimum baselines brought about by a teratomorph's appearance alone. Related to that, it's possible to get used to specific teratomorphs. Characters who can endure repeated exposures to a certain one, without it subjecting them to violence or hostility, can slowly acclimate. A rough rule of thumb might be a -1 to the teratomorph's (effective) Grotesquerie per peaceful encounter, but faster or slower rates might make more sense.

Yes, teratomorphs still in control of their minds are subject to their own Grotesquerie. Someone who wakes up with fetal porpoises growing off of them like skin tags is probably going to be just as scared as, if not moreso than, anyone they meet on the street. They're forced to adapt much faster, for obvious reasons, but characters with low Resilience and/or high Grotesquerie are apt to be fairly traumatized by their transformation. They're also still about as easily frightened by their fellow monsters. Teratomorphs whose minds have gone (see Infection, in the Abominations chapter) no longer distinguish meaningfully between teratomorphs and normal creatures.

Chapter 4: Characters

In Misbegotten, "characters" refers to all the various living things that walk, crawl, swim, fly, and scurry about the world, human or otherwise. Whatever they may be, characters are represented by a handful of common traits: **attributes** (relatively inflexible, broad personal qualities), **skills** (learned talents and fields of knowledge), and **secondary characteristics** (other qualities determined by attributes, and often influenced by little things like monstrous mutations). The default scale on which these characteristics are centered is baseline, ordinary human beings. By squirrel standards, for instance, we're fairly clumsy, but this game is largely not meant for squirrel simulation.

Attributes

Attributes start at 0, which is dead-set average, and for humans, range between -10 and 10, with the extremes of the scale respectively representing life-altering, medically significant disability, and world-class, astounding caliber. Creating a catalogue of adjectives to represent each level of competence tends to dissolve at the extremes into laundry-lists of subjective superlatives, so such a thing is not provided here. The attributes themselves are as follows:

Brawn: Sheer physical muscle mass, and all the things it's good for. A character with -10 Brawn is thoroughly disabled, and most likely requires support aids such as a cane, crutches, wheelchair, or walker to get around. A character with 10 Brawn could win a Mr. Universe competition. Brawn factors into skills that benefit from pure muscle power, running speed and jumping distance, and the bulk of damage inflicted using muscle-powered weapons or unarmed attacks.

Charm: Charm is, broadly speaking, natural aptitude at getting the desired reaction from other people, and understanding of others' perspectives. Physical beauty has nothing to do with it (and is quite subjective anyway), though it can certainly help. What this attribute represents is to what degree a character possesses instinctive, natural "social intelligence". A character with -10 Charm has almost no theory of mind, barely able to even recognize that other beings have thoughts. A character with 10 Charm is fit to be beloved the world over, always able to anticipate how others will think and behave and knowing just how to capitalize on it. Charm factors into the various socially oriented skills.

Grace: Balance, eye-hand coordination, timing, and overall kinesthetic sense. A character with a great deal of Grace rarely stumbles, and tends to excel (with practice) at certain fields of performance and athletics. A character with -10 Grace is barely able to move, being hardly able to grasp objects or balance upright. A character with 10 Grace has nearly perfect poise, hardly ever placing any part of their body anywhere other than precisely where they intended to. Grace factors into skills based around coordination and timing, defense, and the accuracy of hand-to-hand attacks.

> **"Just roleplay it!"**
>
> Some tabletop gamers feel that a character's success in things like social interactions should depend purely on how their player conveys their attempts, or purely on player ideas for intellectual efforts. This book adopts the standpoint that demanding high social or mental skills for players of smart or charming characters is like demanding huge muscles for players of brawny characters. That said, if you prefer, you can ignore the Charm and/or Intellect attributes, and all skills and actions based thereupon. If you want to roleplay out attributes like Brawn, Grace, and Health, use wrestling and ballet in lieu of dice to resolve conflicts.

Health: The general quality of the immune system, organs, respiratory system, etc. This tends to correlate with Brawn fairly closely, but not at a perfect 1:1. Someone who is quite scrawny or overweight and has little muscle might still be fairly healthy, while a steroid abuser or hypergymnastic will have a great deal of Brawn, but badly damaged Health. A character with -10 Health is barely alive, and probably needs constant medical attention to avoid infections or organ

failure. A character with 10 Health could strain a whole brewery through their mighty liver. Health factors into resisting infections (including Terato), health points (HP), and tolerating drugs, poisons, and intoxicants.

Intellect: Intellect reflects basic-level capabilities in logic, abstract and concrete reasoning, etc. This does not reflect education or actual knowledge, which are represented in skills keyed to intellect. Rather, it's a character's basic ability to employ reason in a broad sense. Intellect will tend to correlate with high IQ scores, but the relationship is not a perfectly tight one. Generally, humans do not possess Intellect scores lower than -6. "Animal" Intellect spans the lower range, ranging respectively from barely sentient stimulus-and-response creatures at -10 to highly clever creatures capable of planning and abstract reasoning at -7. A character with 10 Intellect has a mind like a steel trap; a world-class mind that can puzzle out anything. Intellect factors into the various intellect-based skills.

Perception: Spatial reasoning, a natural sense of physics, and attention to changes and details. Perception does not strictly necessarily reflect high specific sensory acuity, like sharp vision or super-hearing. Rather, it's a character's skill at making sense of the physical world around them, picking up on changes in their environment, distinguishing subtle differences, and predicting the outcomes of physical actions. A character with -10 Perception is barely even aware of their surroundings, noticing only the most obvious of stimuli. A character with 10 Perception is hyper-vigilant, missing almost nothing – perhaps even to a fault. Perception factors into initiative, attacks using ranged and thrown weapons, and rolls to notice things.

Will: Courage, force of personality, inner strength, perseverance, and all that jazz are rolled up into this attribute. Will is, overall, a character's ability to cope with stress, horror, and other bits of *Misbegotten*'s daily bread. A character with -10 will has hardly any motivation whatsoever, living from hand to mouth with no real ability to cope with much more than subsistence. A character with 10 will is virtually unbreakable, a juggernaut thundering forward through life. Will factors into a character's control of their own mind when compromised by disease or toxins, and their ability to confront horror without flinching (or worse).

Skills

While attributes are somewhat more solidly fixed and difficult (but not impossible) to improve or change, skills are specific, narrower areas of knowledge and proficiency that can be studied and improved upon. Skills have no negative values. 0 is the lowest possible rating, indicating a complete absence of any training or practice. Like attributes, skills range up to 10 in the positives, with 10 representing near absolute peak ability, the highest achievable limit of the character's capability – normally. Every skill is "keyed" to a specific attribute. When rolling an action using that skill, you add together your level in the skill and in the key attribute to determine your bonus. In the skill list, keyed attributes are listed in parentheses.

Occasionally, a different key attribute might make more sense for a specific situation. Rolling Grace+Unarmed to identify someone's martial arts style doesn't make a lot of sense, for instance. In these cases, the GM is within their rights to request a different, specific attribute, to be used in place of the default key attribute for that specific roll.

Skills in Misbegotten are intentionally a little bit broad. I wanted to avoid forcing players to chase down a whole bunch of individual skills just to represent the general archetype. I fully realize it's not quite realistic for a skilled gymnast, for instance, to automatically be a skilled ballet dance (united by the Acrobatics skill), but fine-grained realism is not one of this game's design goals. If a character's player feels their skill should not apply to a particular narrower application thereof, they are welcome to suggest some form of circumstantial penalty. The skills are as follows:

Acrobatics (Grace): Feats of grace and full-body precision, such as tumbling, most forms of dance, gymnastics, and the like.

Alertness (Perception): The honed skill of attention to your situation and surroundings, and changes therein, as well as readiness for them. It frequently opposes uses of Stealth. This skill is used in combat to determine initiative.

Archery (Perception): Skill with bows, both the firing there and, if used with Intellect, their creation and repair, fletching, etc. Outside of Ren Faires and sports competitions, this is a very, very little-utilized skill in modern times, though these simple ranged weapons may become more and more useful as the means to produce firearms become more scarce.

Athletics (Brawn): This is the trained technique of feats of physical strength, including running, jumping, powerlifting, and climbing. A very strong character may be good at Athletics, but actual levels in the skill represent training and practice at these things, not just raw, innate physical power.

Biology (Intellect): The study of living organisms. In more colorful applications, it could be used to try to make guesses about what a specific teratomorph might be capable of doing, or what kind of creature it may have originally been. Most boring, professional adults use it instead for retaining academic and/or laboratory careers.

Computers (Intellect): Understanding of the use, maintenance, and general fine points of computer operating systems, software, hardware, networking, etc. This can be used for traditional hacking, though history has shown that Persuasion is much more effective for this purpose than actual Computers skill.

Deception (Charm): Concealing your intentions, or projecting an emotion or conviction you aren't actually experiencing, falls under Deception. This can't inherently be used to convince someone that something is true – that's what Persuasion is for. However, with successful Deception, they will at least believe that you believe it to be true. This skill is generally opposed by Empathy.

Dodge (Grace): Getting out of the way in a hurry. This is rolled against attacks to avoid being struck. High training in this skill is common among boxers, military professionals, and very jumpy people.

Empathy (Charm): The intuitive, though practicable, art of understanding another person (or creature) and their point of view. A typical use of Empathy is detecting uses of Deception. It can also be used to figure out what someone is feeling in general, whether they're hiding it or not.

Engineering (Intellect): Understanding of mechanical and architectural principles and how physics acts upon them. This can be used to identify structural weak points, build machines (with the correct resources and tools), or to just cobble together a crude weapon from a hockey stick and an ice skate.

Explosives (Intellect): The creation, disarmament, physics, and general sundry details of things that blow up. This can be used to jury-rig simple explosives, for good or ill reasons, to disarm bombs, to estimate the safe radius around an imminent blast, or to work in Hollywood special effects. This skill is used in combat for personnel-scale artillery.

Firearms (Perception): Skill with guns of pretty much all stripes, from handguns to machineguns. This encompasses not just marksmanship, but knowledge of firearms themselves, including maintenance, repair, etc.

Medicine (Intellect): This skill is used to stabilize dying characters, treat injuries, and make basic diagnoses of illness and injury.

Melee (Grace): Attacking and blocking using manufactured or improvised weapons/objects. This encompasses everything from a soldier's bayonet drills to a professional wrestler's aptitude with folding chairs.

Persuasion (Charm): Talking people into things, or bringing them around to your point of view. This is often easier said than done, but some people are much more skilled at it than others. This is a skill treasured by salesmen, con artists, lobbyists, and anyone who's ever been pulled over and known full well they were speeding. Intimidation is also a form of persuasion, though while persuasion may utilize evidence and logic, intimidation is instead backed up by the threat of force or other unpleasantness.

Politics (Intellect): This skill broadly encompasses knowledge of law, global economics, political history, and the who's-who of various levels of government administration. It's only a very small part (perhaps too small) of the actual skills required to run for a major office, but probably one of the most important ones for actually doing well in it.

Stealth (Grace): Effectively concealing oneself, staying out of sight, moving quietly, and generally applying the lessons learned from Monty Python's "How Not to be Seen" sketch. This can apply to hunkering down in a stationary hiding spot, or to moving carefully from one hiding spot to another. It's frequently opposed by Alertness.

Swimming (Brawn): Practice in the current, staying afloat, or just moving quickly around in the water. This could be broadly thought of as the aquatic version of the Athletics skill, and functions similarly for underwater creatures.

Throwing (Perception): Darts into a dart board, b-balls into hoops, or throwing knives into very unlucky circus clowns. This skill covers the general ability to estimate the trajectory of a throw

and follow through on its execution, for recreational or combative purposes. In some unusual cases, certain Abominations may also rely on it for use as ranged weapons. This skill is used primarily in combat.

Unarmed (Grace): Attacking and blocking using parts of your own body, or things very similar to them (such as weighted gloves). It broadly encompasses trained martial arts, simple street-fighting instinct, animals' skill with their own natural weapons, or a teratomorph's understanding of its own Abominations. This skill is used primarily in combat.

Secondary Characteristics

There are a few important character traits that are derived from your existing abilities, and are routinely utilized enough to warrant eating up space on a character sheet. They are:

Health Points (HP): Call them hit points too, if you like. We all know and love these guys. When you run out of them, you die. See the Injury section of the Combat chapter for details. Characters begin with 10 maximum HP. This increases by +1 per point of Brawn, or -1 per negative Brawn, to a minimum of 3. Unless the opening scene dictates otherwise, characters begin at full HP.

> **Alternative HP**
>
> For a more action-packed, combat-oriented game, if you don't want too many characters dropping like flies, consider doubling base HP from 10 to 20.

Movement: This is how many feet a character can move in six seconds (or 1 turn), at a bit of a hustled pace or a jog, short of an all-out run. It defaults to 30, and increases/decreases by 3 per point of Brawn above/below 0, respectively. At -10 Brawn, a character is effectively immobile, though depending on the reason, they might be able to get around in a wheelchair or similar device.

Resilience: The world is full of monsters, dangerous animals, and people who look different. Resilience is the ability to handle such terrors. Resilience starts at 10, and increases/decreases by 1 per point of Will above/below 0, respectively. See the Terror section of the rules chapter for how Resilience fails.

Grotesquerie: The world is full of monsters (see above). You are probably one of them. This measures the capacity of a character's overall physical appearance to shock, frighten, or evoke other intense emotional reactions. It begins at 0, and is increased by the acquisition of Abominations.

Infestation: This represents the degree to which Terato has overtaken a character's mind. It begins at 0, and for the infected, rises rapidly. See the section on Infection in the rules chapter for details.

Creating Player Characters

New player characters are assigned a budget of 20 CP (character points). All attributes and skills start at 0. To buy up an attribute costs 2 CP, and skills cost 1. You can also gain CP by

buying attributes down below 0 (to a minimum of -10) for 2 CP per negative point. Player characters are assumed normally to be Terato-infectees with DOT antibodies. For information on determining starting Abominations, see the Abominations chapter.

Misbegotten isn't really fussed with issues like wealth or character background in rules terms. It's up to the GM, and general consensus at the table, what character backgrounds are reasonable. If someone wants to be the president of the United States and nobody objects, go for it. In a setting like this, that might not be a meaningful job forever.

Advancing Player Characters

There's no hard-and-fast right way to handle character growth. The best approach depends on how you want to run your game and what limits you want to set. Generally, though, as the story progresses, player characters should gain new CP to spend on improving attributes and skills, and/or pay for mutations, if using the Purchased Mutation detailed in the Abominations chapter. Since 1 CP per session would allow a player to advance one skill point (possibly going from 0 to 10 over ten sessions), that might be a LITTLE fast. You might award CP after the resolution of small story arcs instead, or based on accomplishments. Overall, 1 CP per two or three sessions might be a reasonable base rate.

Optionally, one could also allow players to buy CP by buying down attributes during the game. Permanent leg injury might justify a drop in Grace, or damage to the eyes a drop in Perception, and so on. This can be a way to handle the consequences of characters' possibly rough lifestyles, while giving them a little something in return. It's probably best not to force these decisions on players, though. Let them feel cool for taking such a drawback, not screwed.

Chapter 5: Abominations

Strains

Terato is not precisely a single disease. It comes in a wealth of flavors and styles, of which sufferers can have as many as they like. A given T+ creature transmits, generally, at least two strains of Terato at once. All Teratomorphs pass on both any strains they have been exposed to, plus whatever strain is native to their species, even if they have not been exposed to it. Thus, a teratomorphic camel with reptilian scales and a beak will transmit mammalian, avian, and reptilian Terato, even if it has not been exposed to mammalian Terato. It will not develop mammalian Abominations just for being a mammal, though. It needs to be exposed to that particular strain. Certain kinds of creatures, however, seem to take longer for the virus to adapt to. By default, each strain has a period of emergence, corresponding to one of the four outlined in the timeline. Until that period, creatures of that animal type are immune. You are free to rearrange these, you really want access to a certain strain earlier than it "canonically" appears.

Infection

Now we begin to move on to what this game is really about. Comparatively minor ailments, like colds and flus, will be left to GM ad-hoc or future revisions of this guide. For Misbegotten's purposes, what we really care about is Terato. For these rules, an "exposure" is counted as any period of body fluid contact with an infected being, such as exposure to saliva,

blood, ichor, waste products, etc. At the end of any scene in which a character has been exposed to Terato, have them make a 15C Health roll. On a failure, the character is infected. Characters who intentionally wish to maximize their odds of infection, for their own personal reasons, can probably skip this roll, if they have plenty of material available to expose themselves to, and become infected automatically.

The character is now infected. They will transmit Terato to others who are exposed to them in similar fashion. They can transmit whatever strain is native to their species (Mammalian for humans, for example), plus any strains to which they were exposed when infected. The resulting mutations painfully develop over the course of the next week. The exact rules-based mechanism for this varies based on what rules your group is using (see "The Newly Abominable"). In addition, when the infected are presented with a reasonable chance to gorge themselves on meat, even infected flesh, they must roll Resilience at a Challenge equal to their current Infestation, or give in to the urge to consume. Even if they can fight this urge, they will be very unhappy without copious amounts of high-protein food. Once a character's Abominations manifest, their Infestation score begins to rise by 1 point per day. After this daily increase, roll the character's Health at a Challenge equal to their current Infestation. Failure indicates the character's mind is lost. They live now to eat and hunt and spread the disease. If you prefer a less random method, you might instead allow until their Infestation exceeds their Health + 10. Characters who have lost their minds to Terato no longer react to Grotesquerie.

Characters with the DOT antibodies (like the players, by default) are in luck. Their Infestation score does not increase at all. Only secondary exposures (see below) run any risk of increasing their Infestation. If they can remain at 0 Infestation, they are not even contagious.

Forms of Deformity

There are three principle methods for fleshing out a teratomorph, which can be used exclusively, or in combination (for example, one method during character creation, and another in play). These are the guided, purchased, and random methods.

- Guided: This method can be subdivided into GM-guided and player-guided. With guided creation, the responsible party simply picks whatever Abominations they want the character to have, ignoring random probabilities and point values. This method presents the most freedom overall, with no surprises or limitations. Player-guided generation means that, for PCs, their player selects the options. The GM, as the player of all NPCs, handles them. GM-guided generation puts all of this in the hands of the GM instead. This option may work best for groups where players have very specific ideas that may strain the point-buy system, that aren't too concerned about balance of power, and/or whose members have a lot of trust in each other (and themselves).
- Purchased: This method allows for full choice, but with some restrictions on just how far things can be taken. Under this method, PCs receive a starting budget of mutation points (MP) with which to purchase their Abominations. Optionally, the GM might fuse this with the starting CP budget, so players might skimp on abilities to favor Abominations or vice-versa. Used after character creation, the player can spend CP on Abominations

instead of abilities, purchasing those from any strain of Terato to which they have been exposed. This is a middle-of-the-road "standard" method that somewhat regulates the potential of excessive numbers of Abominations to boost a character's personal power excessively and induces tactical choices, which may make it suited for a "gameist" or otherwise balance-oriented group. Please consult the section below on purchasing abominations for details.

- Random: This method throws all of the above out the window and puts the course of a teratomorph's mutations completely in fate's hands. While a character must still be exposed to a strain of Terato to gain its Abominations, everything after that is up to luck. The exact rules follow.

Mixing and matching is fine. For example, one might start out using guided mutation for character creation, then switch to random mutation in play, or randomize the startup and guide it from there, or whatever else is appropriate. One could even do partial randomization, such as by allowing players one choice on one of the tables or similar.

The Newly Abominable

If a character becomes infected during play, they won't immediately start out as a monstrosity beyond all recognition. If using the Purchased Mutation system, start them out with 5 MP. If using random mutation, roll using the "Almost Human" template. You can ignore this if you prefer a more explosive start to a character's new life as a diseased horror. These must use only the strain(s) to which the victim was exposed. If an inappropriate strain comes up on a randomized mutation roll, ignore it.

Secondary Exposure

An infected character who is exposed to a new source of Terato is subject to a "secondary exposure". The infection roll is made normally. On a failure, a sufferer is exposed again, picking up any strains borne by the exposure source. If using purchased mutation, this presents a new opportunity to buy Abominations for the character, including their newly available strains (if any). If using random mutation, simply roll a single new Abomination on a randomly chosen strain of the character's infection (existing or new). If using guided mutation, just pick accordingly. A secondary exposure jumps a character's Infestation score by 1d4. Characters with DOT luck out again – partially. Their infestation goes up by 1d2-1, which means it may not increase at all.

Purchased Mutation

When using purchased mutation during character creation, the group must determine a mutation point (MP) budget. This can be merged with the CP budget, to let the player pick abilities vs. abominations, or handled separately. This is really only recommended for lower tiers, though. The following example budgets are suggested (based on a ballpark of 3 MP per abomination offered at that tier from randomization):

Almost Human: 5 MP

Strange: 9 MP

Freak: 18 MP. Begin with 1 Infestation point.

Monster: 30 MP. Begin with 2 Infestation points.

Horror: 42 MP. Begin with 3 Infestation points.

Eldritch Abomination: 54 MP. Begin with 4 Infestation points.

After character creation, new Abominations must be bought using CP earned from play. The player can spend CP to purchase any Abomination from Terato strains they've been exposed to, any time the rules dictate to check for a new mutation (or, optionally, at will).

Random Mutation

During character creation, to design a random teratomorph, first make a percentile roll on the table below. This determines the overall extent of the character's deformity. If you're told to roll multiple strains and roll the same one, just go with that rather than re-rolling. If an Abomination cannot be possessed more than once, re-roll it. All rolls given are percentile rolls. Roll separately for if each Abomination is Concealable (25% chance), and for whether it has a given modifier (odds specified on the table).

1-10%: Almost Human. Roll a single Terato strain, and a single Abomination from it.

11-25%: Strange. Roll a single Terato strain, and a single Abomination from it. Roll two more, rolling 1d2 to determine if each one comes from the first strain (1) or a randomized strain (2).

26-50%: Freak. Roll two Terato strains, and two Abominations from each. Roll two more, rolling 1d4 to determine if each one comes from the first strain (1), the second strain (2), or a randomized strain (3-4). Begin with 1 Infestation point.

51-75%: Monster. Roll three Terato strains, and two Abominations from each. Roll four more, rolling 1d6 to determine if each one comes from the first strain (1), the second strain (2), the third strain (3), or a randomized strain (4-6). Begin with 2 Infestation points.

76-90%: Horror. Roll four Terato strains, and two Abominations from each. Roll six more, rolling 1d8 to determine if each one comes from the first strain (1), the second strain (2), the third strain (3), the fourth strain (4), or a randomized strain (5-8). Begin with 3 Infestation points.

91-100%: Eldritch Abomination. Roll five Terato strains, and two Abominations from each. Roll eight more, rolling 1d10 to determine if each one comes from the first strain (1), the second strain (2), the third strain (3), the fourth strain (4), the fifth strain (5), or a randomized strain (6-10). Begin with 4 Infestation points.

Abomination Tables

The following tables index the strains of Terato and the odds of particular Abominations, and their purchase prices in MP. After each Abomination, the odds/price of having each possible Modifier for it are given and can be rolled or bought. When using randomized mutation after character creation and during play, every time a character grows a new Abomination, simply roll from the tables below as normal.

(1-10%) Amphibian (Availability: Emergence)

Random	Purchased	Abomination	Modifiers
1-7%	4 MP	Blubber	Not Concealable
8-14%	4 MP	Claw	-
15-21%	3 MP	Extra Eye(s)	-
22-28%	2 MP	Extra Head	-
29-35%	2 MP	Extra Legs	-
36-42%	2 MP	Extra Mouth(s)	-
43-50%	1 MP	Fins/Flippers	-
51-57%	3 MP	Gills	-
58-65%	3 MP	Jaws	*Venom* (1-30% / 3 MP)
66-72%	3 MP	Leaping	-
73-79%	1 MP	Long Tongue	-
80-86%	3 MP	Lungs	-
87-93%	4 MP	Microhooks	-
94-100%	2 MP	Quadruped	Not Concealable

(11-20%) Arachnid (Availability: Early Infestation)

Random	Purchased	Abomination	Modifiers
1-8%	4 MP	Claw	-
8-17%	2 MP	Extra Eye(s)	-
18-25%	2 MP	Extra Head	-
26-33%	1 MP	Extra Legs	-
34-42%	1 MP	Extra Mouth(s)	-
43-51%	1 MP	Fur/Hair	*Urticating Hairs* (1-30%, 3 MP)
52-59%	3 MP	Jaws	*Venom* (1-30% / 3 MP)
60-67%	2 MP	Leaping	-
68-76%	4 MP	Microhooks	*Gravity-Defying* (1-50% / 1 MP)
77-84%	2 MP	Quadruped	Not Concealable
85-93%	4 MP	Spinneret	-
94-100%	4 MP	Stinger	*Venom* (1-30% / 3 MP)

(21-30%) Avian (Availability: Emergence)

Random	Purchased	Abomination	Modifiers
1-11%	2 MP	Biped	Not Concealable
12-22%	4 MP	Claw	-
23-33%	2 MP	Extra Eye(s)	-
34-44%	2 MP	Extra Head	-
45-55%	1 MP	Extra Legs	-
56-66%	1 MP	Extra Mouth(s)	-
67-77%	3 MP	Jaws	*Venom* (1-30% / 3 MP)
78-88%	1 MP	Lungs	-
88-100%	2 MP	Wings	*Impossible Flight* (10% / 5 MP)

(31-40%) Cephalopod (Availability: Emergence)

Random	Purchased	Abomination	Modifiers
1-6%	1 MP	Bioluminescence	-
7-12%	3 MP	Bombardier Glands	-
13-18%	4 MP	Camouflage	-
19-24%	2 MP	Extra Eye(s)	-
25-29%	2 MP	Extra Head	-
30-35%	1 MP	Extra Mouth(s)	-
36-41%	1 MP	Fins/Flippers	
42-47%	3 MP	Gills	-
48-53%	5 MP	Immense Size	Not Concealable.
54-59%	3 MP	Jaws	*Venom* (1-30% / 3 MP)
60-65%	2 MP	Night Vision	*Darkvision* (20% / 4 MP)
66-71%	2 MP	Organ Disgorgement	-
72-77%	5 MP	Regeneration	-
78-83%	3 MP	Sessile Body	-
84-88%	5 MP	Shell	Not Concealable, *Superheavy Shell* (20% / 4 MP)
89-94%	2 MP	Slithering	-
95-100%	3 MP	Tentacle(s)	-

(41-50%) Crustacean (Availability: Emergence)

Random	Purchased	Abomination	Modifiers
01-10%	4 MP	Claw	-
11-20%	2 MP	Extra Eye(s)	-
21-30%	2 MP	Extra Head	-
31-40%	1 MP	Extra Legs	-
41-50%	1 MP	Extra Mouth(s)	-
51-60%	1 MP	Fins/Flippers	-
61-70%	3 MP	Gills	-
71-80%	2 MP	Quadruped	Not Concealable
81-90%	2 MP	Night Vision	*Darkvision* (20% / 4 MP)
91-100%	5 MP	Shell	Not Concealable, *Superheavy Shell* (20% / 4 MP)

(51-60%) Insectoid (Availability: Late Infestation)

Random	Purchased	Abomination	Modifiers
1-5%	2 MP	Acute Smell	-
6-11%	1 MP	Bioluminescence	-
12-17%	3 MP	Bombardier Glands	-
18-23%	5 MP	Efficient Physiology	-
24-29%	2 MP	Extra Eye(s)	-
30-35%	2 MP	Extra Head	-
36-40%	2 MP	Extra Legs	-
41-46%	1 MP	Extra Mouth(s)	-
47-52%	2 MP	Infrared Vision	-
53-58%	3 MP	Jaws	*Venom* (1-30% / 3 MP)
59-64%	3 MP	Leaping	-
65-70%	4 MP	Microhooks	-
71-76%	3 MP	Pheromones	*Intoxicating* (1-20% / 4 MP)
77-82%	2 MP	Quadruped	Not Concealable
83-88%	5 MP	Shell	Not Concealable, *Superheavy Shell* (20% / 4 MP)
89-94%	4 MP	Stinger	*Venom* (1-30% / 3 MP)
95-100%	2 MP	Wings	*Impossible Flight* (10% / 5 MP)

(61-70%) Mammalian (Availability: Emergence)

Random	Purchased	Abomination	Modifiers
1-5%	2 MP	Acute Smell	-
6-10%	2 MP	Biped	Not Concealable
11-14%	4 MP	Blubber	Not Concealable
15-19%	4 MP	Claw	-
20-23%	2 MP	Extra Eye(s)	-
24-28%	2 MP	Extra Head	-
29-34%	1 MP	Extra Legs	-
35-39%	1 MP	Extra Mouth(s)	-
40-43%	4 MP	Echolocation	-
44-47%	1 MP	Fur/Hair	*Urticating Hairs* (1-30%, 3 MP)
48-52%	1 MP	Hands	-
53-55%	5 MP	Immense Size	Not Concealable.
61-65%	2 MP	Infrared Vision	-
66-70%	3 MP	Jaws	*Venom* (1-30% / 3 MP)
56-60%	3 MP	Leaping	-
71-75%	1 MP	Lungs	-
76-80%	2 MP	Night Vision	*Darkvision* (20% / 4 MP)
81-85%	3 MP	Pheromones	*Intoxicating* (1-20% / 4 MP)
86-90%	2 MP	Quadruped	Not Concealable
91-94%	5 MP	Quills	-
95-100%	2 MP	Wings	*Impossible Flight* (10% / 5 MP)

(71-80%) Piscine (Availability: Emergence)

Random	Purchased	Abomination	Modifiers
1-9%	1 MP	Bioluminescence	-
10-18%	2 MP	Extra Eye(s)	-
19-27%	2 MP	Extra Head	-
28-36%	1 MP	Extra Mouth(s)	-
37-45%	1 MP	Fins/Flippers	-
46-56%	3 MP	Gills	-
57-65%	5 MP	Immense Size	Not Concealable.
66-74%	3 MP	Jaws	*Venom* (1-30% / 3 MP)
75-83%	2 MP	Night Vision	*Darkvision* (20% / 4 MP)
84-92%	2 MP	Organ Disgorgement	-
92-100%	2 MP	Scales	-

(81-90%) Reptilian (Availability: Emergence)

Random	Purchased	Abomination	Modifiers
1-7%	2 MP	Acute Smell	-
8-13%	3 MP	Bombardier Glands	-
14-20%	4 MP	Claw	-
21-26%	2 MP	Extra Eye(s)	-
27-33%	2 MP	Extra Head	-
34-39%	1 MP	Extra Legs	-
40-46%	1 MP	Extra Mouth(s)	-
47-53%	2 MP	Infrared Vision	-
54-60%	3 MP	Jaws	*Venom* (1-30% / 3 MP)
61-66%	3 MP	Lungs	-
67-72%	4 MP	Microhooks	-
73-79%	2 MP	Quadruped	Not Concealable
80-86%	2 MP	Scales	-
87-93%	5 MP	Shell	Not Concealable, *Superheavy Shell* (20% / 4 MP)
94-100%	2 MP	Slithering	-

(91-100%) Vegetable (Availability: Blossoming)

Random	Purchased	Abomination	Modifiers
1-10%	5 MP	Efficient Physiology	-
11-20%	1 MP	Fruit	-
21-30%	5 MP	Immense Size	Not Concealable.
31-40%	4 MP	Microhooks	-
41-50%	3 MP	Pheromones	*Intoxicating* (1-20% / 4 MP)
51-60%	5 MP	Quills	-
61-70%	5 MP	Regeneration	-
71-80%	5 MP	Spores	-
81-90%	3 MP	Tentacle(s)	-
91-100%	3 MP	Trap	*Man-Eater* (1-30% / 3 MP)

Abominations

Now we get to the good stuff: The Abominations. These are the deformities that make a monster a monster. Some of these are redundant across strains. Each strain of Terato has its own Abominations. The aesthetics of these are based on what strain it comes from. For example, an Extra Head granted by hominid Terato will be a human or primate head, whereas one from arachnid Terato would provide a spider or scorpion head. If there are any meaningful rule differences between strains of an Abomination, they are listed after the main description.

Many Abominations have modifiers, which can be rolled randomly, picked, or bought as appropriate (see above). A few of these are universal, applicable to any Abomination. Descriptions of modifiers specific to a given Abomination are provided after its description.

A few Abominations can be possessed more than once. Rules for how multiple versions "stack" are provided in these cases. In all others, a creature can only have a given Abomination once, whether by mutation or its own natural traits.

Universal Modifier

Concealable: The Abomination is not immediately obvious and can be hidden with more ease than just stuffing it under thick clothing. Claws might be retractable, for example. A second head might be able to retreat into the body cavity like a turtle's head into its shell. The exact means are left as an exercise of player creativity. Generally speaking, however, they can be concealed reliably enough that it would take an invasive strip-search to find them, usually just in the form of an out-of-place orifice, strange discoloration, or unnerving bulge. While concealed, an Abomination does not confer its usual benefits (or penalties), but also does not contribute Grotesquerie. If an Abomination is already difficult to notice, being Concealable still provides it with something like an on/off switch. The few non-concealable Abominations specify such in

their descriptions and the tables above. Other than those, any Abomination is concealable, on a roll of 1-25% for random mutation, or for 2 MP for purchased mutation.

List of Abominations

Acute Smell: The teratomorph has a highly developed sense of smell. It can form a rough "picture" of its environment, track, and identify other beings present, all by odor alone.

Bioluminescence: Certain parts of the teratomorph's body glow in the dark. This can be useful for navigating in dim environments, but unless covered (or concealable), it can't be switched off. +1 to Grotesquerie.

Biped: Some formerly crawling teratomorphs can find themselves able to walk upright, courtesy of agonizing, full-body mutations of muscle and bone. This can free them to use their forelimbs, as they can balance indefinitely on only two legs. Unfortunately, this less efficient locomotion reduces Movement by 5. This Abomination cannot be concealable. +1 to Grotesquerie.

Blubber: Thick pads of fat cover the teratomorph, offering protection from the elements and to its internal organs. Its natural armor increases by +4, and it can survive with relatively little trouble in cold environments. However, its Grace decreases by -1. This Abomination cannot be concealable. +2 to Grotesquerie.

Bombardier Glands: The teratomorph can violently eject a burst of hot gas, stream of blood, or cloud of ink, disorienting attackers (or prey), as an action. Anyone surrounding it must make a 15C Will roll or spend their next turn sputtering, rubbing their eyes, or otherwise regaining their composure.

Camouflage: The teratomorph can alter the color and texture of its skin to blend in with its environment, like a mimic octopus or cuttlefish. This grants a +4 bonus on Stealth rolls so long as the teratomorph holds still.

Claw: The teratomorph possesses claws appropriate to the Abomination's strain. If anatomically feasible, these might simply augment its existing extremities (such as feline claws in a chimpanzee's fingers). Otherwise, if need be, they replace them (such as a lobster's pincer on the same unlucky chimpanzee), or occupy a new limb. Used as a weapon, this claw does 1d10 impact, and has *1.5 trauma. Since additional claws provide no mechanical benefit, they can be cosmetic Abominations (see below). +1 to Grotesquerie.

Echolocation: The teratomorph can "map" its surroundings by judging how a noise it emits reflects off its environment. As long as it can hear and make noise, it can estimate its surroundings, including other creatures' positions, even when it can't see.

Efficient Physiology: The teratomorph's internal biology is a confusing – but highly efficient – mess. Redundant organs and convoluted anatomical structures provide failsafes in the case of injury. If reduced to dying status, but not actually killed, the teratomorph doesn't die, but instead becomes dormant until it recovers to positive HP.

Extra Eye(s): The teratomorph has an additional eye, or set of eyes, appropriate to an animal of the abomination's strain. These might be randomly placed, or might clump together to form

compound eyes. This grants a +2 bonus on Alertness rolls to which visual acuity or field of vision are important. Each additional incidence of this Abomination grants another eye, or set, and increases this bonus by +2, to a maximum of +8, after which more eyes are purely decorative. +2 to Grotesquerie.

Extra Head: Regardless of base species, the teratomorph has a functional extra head, of a representative animal of the strain's type. Hominid terato would grant an extra human or primate head, for example. This might be next to their own, or anywhere else on the body – perhaps growing out of a chest or cheek, for instance. This head has a functioning mouth that can chew and swallow, as well as working eyes and ears, granting a +2 bonus on Alertness rolls to notice or hear things. Each additional incidence of this Abomination grants another head and increases the bonus by +1, to a maximum of +5, after which more heads are purely decorative. +3 to Grotesquerie.

Extra Legs: The teratomorph has additional legs (in some cases, added from zero). These legs are appropriate to the strain from which this Abomination is inherited, from insectoid to reptilian to whatever else. The character gains +2 to their Movement on land (which **can** increase it from 0, if they could not previously move around on foot). Each additional incidence of this Abomination grants another leg or two and another +2, to a maximum of +10. +1 to Grotesquerie.

Extra Mouth(s): The teratomorph has one or more additional mouths, appropriate to the strain from which the Abomination originates. These can grow anywhere, or in some unlucky cases even replace existing non-mouth orifices (which does not interfere with their usual functions). They can produce vocalizations, though these may be limited based on the Abomination's strain . For example, a dog mouth could yip, but a spider mouth could not likely produce much noise. Since the mechanical benefits of additional mouths are minimal (besides being able to eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner simultaneously), the character can have a more or less arbitrary number of them. +3 to Grotesquerie.

Fins/Flippers: The teratomorph gains webbed fingers, fins, and/or flippers, suitable for maneuvering underwater. It gains swimming Movement 10. Each additional incidence of this Abomination increases this Movement by another 10, to a maximum of 30. +1 to Grotesquerie.

Fruit: The teratomorph bears some form of edible fruiting body. These can look however its player deems appropriate, and might be composed of vegetable or animal matter. Though their taste is subjective, they can nourish other creatures normally. The teratomorph is not harmed by the fruit's removal. Of course, its juices are a Terato transmission vector. +1 to Grotesquerie.

Fur/Hair: The teratomorph's entire body is covered in thick hair or fur. This is helpful for staying warm when it's chilly, staying decent when no clothing options are available, or pretending to be Chewbacca. +1 to Grotesquerie.

Urticating Hairs: The teratomorph's hairs are short, sharp, and brittle, and can irritate skin, even when broken off. When it is touched or agitated, the hairs break free, causing those in the immediate area to take a -2 penalty on all rolls due to skin irritation, unless they are covered

in full-body protection. Those directly touching the teratomorph increase this penalty to -3. It lasts for the current scene.

Gills: The teratomorph possesses a fully functional set of gills, and can breathe underwater. This does not confer any additional ability to maneuver or survive in a marine environment. These gills might be subtle slits, or dramatic, fanning protrusions. +1 to Grotesquerie.

Hands: The teratomorph has one or more extremities replaced or augmented with fully prehensile human or primate hands. If they already possess hands, these replace the feet instead. Alternatively, especially on creatures with no extremities to replace, these hands might just emerge from random, not necessarily symmetrical points of the body. When these extra hands can be leveraged, they grant a +2 bonus on rolls utilizing grip and articulation, such as climbing, handling small objects, etc. Each additional incidence of this Abomination gives another hand or two and increases the bonus by +1, to a maximum of +5. +1 to Grotesquerie.

Immense Size: The teratomorph is swollen to enormous proportions, easily up to twice the regular scale of their native species. It gains +2 to Brawn, and all the pros and cons of having difficulty fitting into the spaces it's used to. This Abomination cannot be concealable. +2 to Grotesquerie.

Infrared Vision: The teratomorph's visible spectrum expands, allowing them to perceive the infrared region of the color spectrum. This enables them to gauge temperature visually, due to the infrared light given off by heated objects.

Jaws: The teratomorph has some kind of powerful, biting mandible or other mouth-appendage. This could be a set of fangs, a powerful beak, a hooked radula, or anything else suited for biting. These might be accompanied by handy pedipalps. In addition to being a useful dinnertime utensil (who needs nutcrackers?), when used as a weapon, a bite with these jaws does 1d12 impact with *1 trauma. +2 to Grotesquerie.

Venom: Jaws with this modifier are accompanied by a venom gland. Any living creature dealt damage by their bite must also make a 15C Health roll, or fall over paralyzed several minutes later, wracked by violent spasms. In this state, the victim loses 1 health point per ten minutes, and recovers in 2d6 minutes. With the GM's approval, other forms of venom could be substituted.

Leaping: The teratomorph's legs, or other appropriate parts of its anatomy, are bent double and tightly packed, like those of a frog or grasshopper, enabling astounding leaps many times its height. Teratomorphs who lack legs can still leap around. It just takes a little more anatomical creativity.

Long Tongue: The teratomorph has an incredibly long, sticky tongue, which can shoot out several times the length of its body. By sticking to or wrapping around targets, it can be used as a grabbing appendage with remarkable reach, though it cannot deal damage. A successful opposed roll (the kind used for most actions taken during a grab), as an action, can reel the target in, bringing them into range for biting, or whatever else. +2 to Grotesquerie.

Lungs: The teratomorph possesses a fully functional set of lungs, and can breathe out of water. This does not confer any additional ability to maneuver or survive in a terrestrial environment (the Legs or Slithering abominations might be needed for that).

Microhooks: Microscopic gripping hooks line the teratomorph's body and/or extremities, allowing it to climb and anchor itself to almost any surface. It can climb at its full land speed, and does not normally need to roll in order to do so.

Gravity-Defying: Microhooks with this modifier have a phenomenal ability to support the teratomorph's weight. It can stand straight out from a surface it's clinging to, supported only by a hand or foot (or other appendage), or freely dangle upside-down. This enables things like bipeds walking across walls or ceilings.

Night Vision: The teratomorph can see in the dark with twice the usual acuity. This does not grant the ability to see with literally no light at all, but much less is needed than normal for it to get around.

Darkvision: By some exotic means, the teratomorph can see even in total darkness.

Organ Disgorgement: Sometimes even a teratomorph meets a bigger fish, figuratively (or literally). To distract, disgust, or just confuse them, the teratomorph can, as an action, disgorge some of its internal organs on the spot, effectively raising its Grotesquerie by +8 for the moment and engendering appropriate reactions. The organs grow back over the course of the next few hours, and their absence does not threaten its life. Some teratomorphs might do this involuntarily when startled.

Pheromones: The teratomorph can emit a cloud of chemical signals that are highly attractive to one or more species of the Abomination's strain. Beings that catch a whiff of the pheromone cloud will be subtly compelled to follow it to its source. Hopefully said source only wants friends. This does not obviate common sense. While unaware beings will tend to wander closer, if someone is specifically aware of a pheromone-emitting teratomorph in the area, they won't instantly abandon common sense.

Intoxicating: Those who pick up on the pheromones and fail a 15C Will roll **do** abandon common sense. They will go out of their way to follow the signal to its source, though whatever horrors await them may still snap them out of it.

Quadruped: A normally bipedal teratomorph's skeleton is violently restructured, forcing it to crawl on all fours (or more, if it has more than four limbs). This relatively efficient means of locomotion increases Movement by 5. Unfortunately, if the teratomorph has hands, it can't use them to hold/manipulate objects and get around at the same time. This Abomination cannot be concealable. +1 to Grotesquerie.

Quills: The teratomorph is covered in spikes or quills, like a hedgehog, porcupine, or sea urchin. Alternatively, they might be thorns, or spikes, like a cactus. Its natural armor increases by +1. Anyone grabbing it, or grabbed by it, loses 1d3 HP immediately (which can be reduced by armor) and on every subsequent round they refuse to relinquish/fail to escape the grab. This

Abomination tends to rule out wearing conventional armor (and a lot of clothing). +1 to Grotesquerie.

Regeneration: Like a starfish, the teratomorph can fully regrow lost parts of its anatomy. Severed limbs and the like gradually grow back, though not necessarily in their exact, original condition. In some cases, this may be accompanied by out-of-control growth of intact body parts, necessitating periodic pruning. This also makes detaching appendages to distract predators a viable strategy.

Scales: The teratomorph's skin is partially or wholly covered in scales appropriate to a representative animal of the Abomination's strain, such as a snake or lizard. The teratomorph's natural armor increases by +1. Each additional instance of this Abomination increases the bonus by +1 further, to a maximum of +3. +1 to Grotesquerie.

Sessile Body: When this teratomorph lies around, it really lies around. Its bones (if any) become soft and squishy, or dissolve entirely, leaving its body with a loose, baggy consistency like a jellyfish, octopus, slug, or similar invertebrate. The teratomorph can slide into extremely narrow gaps without a problem, and curl itself into tiny spaces. +4 to Grotesquerie.

Shell: The teratomorph's body is encased in a shell, such as that of a turtle, a crustacean or insect exoskeleton, or the bands of an armadillo, possibly with flexible scutes along the torso. The teratomorph's natural armor increases by +4. Such teratomorphs can't generally wear manufactured armor. This Abomination cannot be concealable. +1 to Grotesquerie.

Superheavy Shell: A shell with this modifier is unusually inflexible and dense. It provides a whopping +8 to natural armor instead of +4, but also diminishes the possessor's Grace by -2.

Slithering: The teratomorph can move on its underbelly, in the manner of a slug or snake, by undulating its body. This can be a great way to keep a low profile, and could justify a +2 bonus to Stealth rolls in cases where the opposition's viewing angle doesn't make it moot, as well as make it easier to get behind low cover. If the teratomorph doesn't already have the ability to move on land, it gains Movement 15. +2 to Grotesquerie.

Spinneret: The teratomorph has a bulbous silk gland, which can excrete strands of silk, suitable for weaving into webs. These strands are strong enough to support the teratomorph's own weight, and it can climb on them without sticking. Other creatures who get stuck in the web are completely immobilized, and can break free only by making a 20C Brawn roll as an action. +3 to Grotesquerie.

Spores: The teratomorph's body is covered in fungal blossoms, which can erupt into a cloud of spores. Spore eruptions occur any time the teratomorph takes damage, or it can trigger them voluntarily. Those who inhale the spores must make a 15C Health roll, or succumb to intense hallucinations of the GM's choosing. These typically include spatial distortions, which might impose penalties as high as -6 to appropriate rolls. This might also take the form of pollen clouds. +3 to Grotesquerie.

Stinger: The teratomorph has a strong, sharp stinger or telson, like a scorpion, a wasp, or a stingray. Used as a weapon, this stinger does 1d10 impact and has *2 trauma. +1 Grotesquerie.

Venom: A stinger with this modifier is accompanied by a venom gland. Any living creature dealt damage by the stinger must also make a 15C Health roll, or fall over paralyzed several minutes later, wracked by violent spasms. In this state, the victim loses 1 health point per ten minutes, and recovers in 2d6 minutes. With the GM's approval, other forms of venom could be substituted.

Tentacle(s): The teratomorph has one or more tentacles or pseudopods, like those of a cephalopod, or possibly vegetative vines. If this Abomination is Concealable, it might even be able to extrude them from its own body instead, like an immense paramecium. These can be used to grasp, hold, manipulate, or just bludgeon, though they're no more powerful than ordinary unarmed attacks. They can also slither into narrow openings and manipulate in tight spaces, being boneless and flexible. +2 to Grotesquerie.

Trap: The teratomorph has a bristle-lined, automatically closing mouth, or a pitcher-shaped orifice, filled with sweet-smelling nectar. This routinely catches insects, and sometimes small(er) animals, which makes staying fed a great deal easier. The nectar is quite delicious and high in sugar. +1 to Grotesquerie.

Man-Eater: The trap is large enough to catch animals up to as large as the teratomorph's own size. They can attempt an opposed Brawn roll as an action to break free, but lose 1 HP at the start of each turn to digestive juices.

Wings: The teratomorph has wings appropriate to the Abomination's strain, be they avian, insect, batlike, or something else entirely. Though functional, most teratomorphs will be too heavy to actually make use of such wings for flight. However, they can be employed to slow descent or glide short distances, making it possible to fall safely from more or less any distance as long as they can be deployed. +1 to Grotesquerie.

Impossible Flight: In defiance of laws of physics and biology, the Teratomorph can use these wings to fly (not necessarily gracefully), despite its body mass, traveling 30' by air in a turn.

Cosmetic Abominations

The existence of a table of Abominations shouldn't be a roadblock to creativity. Feel free to take liberal interpretations of Abominations, or fill in the blanks. If you're not using guided mutation, for instance, and you really want a certain character to have a certain Abomination, it might be just fine to give them a vestigial version. It doesn't do anything, in game rule terms, but it becomes part of their overall look. Likewise, feel free to come up with all manner of other distortions, deformities, and cosmetic flourishes to make your teratomorph look the way you want it to. Tumors? Knock yourself out. Want your weird extra eyes to be part of an entire fly's head that replaces yours? Go ahead! Would you prefer your tentacles to be prehensile hair? Nothing wrong with that! The GM can assign an ad-hoc Grotesquerie bonus for cosmetic

Abominations like these, though players should probably be informed in advance of what kind of additional Grotesquerie they'll be taking on with their choices. The written-in Abominations are meant to cover how the actual game rules interact with characters. Purely aesthetic decisions beyond that are left as an exercise of the imagination.

Redundant Abominations

If a creature already possesses an Abomination naturally, and an inappropriate Abomination is rolled for them randomly, re-roll it. It's perfectly fine for a human teratomorph to have an extra pair of lungs, but that's probably just a cosmetic Abomination. If a given Abomination can be possessed more than once, however, it's probably fine to use even if it's redundant. You can never have too many legs!

Chapter 6: Combat

Normally, *Misbegotten* presents a world with quite a bit of violence to it. People and animals routinely attempts to eat or kill one another. It's not glamorous or cool, but it's life. Here are the rules for hurting living creatures.

Dynamic Mode

Most combat scenes, like any other scene where exact timing and order of action matters, should take place as dynamic situations. When a dynamic situation begins, all characters involved should roll Alertness. The result of this roll is their "initiative". Once everyone has rolled for initiative, play proceeds, with characters acting from the highest to lowest initiative. If two characters have the same initiative, the one with the highest total bonus for their Alertness roll goes first. If this is a tie, re-roll just between them to determine who acts first. A character's chance to act in a dynamic situation is called their "turn". After each character involved has their turn, a new cycle begins from the first one. Newly involved characters should make their own initiative roll and enter the cycle at the appropriate number. It's highly recommended to write everyone's initiative rolls down. If you want to mix things up, you can have everyone re-roll their initiative for a fresh round of turns, but this can be kind of troublesome without the aid of a computer program or the like.

On their turn, a character can generally move up to their Movement speed in feet per round, and take one action. This movement can be combined with other forms of motion, like climbing. Each foot of half-speed movement, like climbing, counts as two feet. An action is broadly defined as one dramatically interesting individual activity. Attacks are a typical example, but this could include fumbling with a locked door to get it open, snatching up an object, or similar activities that can be done within six seconds, but take more than a fleeting gesture. Within reason, much simpler activities (pushing a button, yelling something, etc.) can be done without taking up an action. You might find it's common to try to squeeze more than six seconds' worth of conversation into a turn, or characters talking on turns besides their own. Go with what feels right. If a mid-fight conversation between turns is dramatically interesting and doesn't warp your suspension of disbelief too badly, let it happen.

Turn Order Tweaks

Sometimes, people don't want to act right when it's their turn. There are two basic situations for that.

Delaying: If someone wants to wait and act at a later point, that's fine. They can announce on their turn that they're delaying. They can stop at any time. Their initiative moves to right after the character whose turn it is when they finish delaying, and they act next.

Readying: A character anticipating a certain action can try to disrupt it. Their player should announce what they're readying for, on their turn, and what they're preparing to do. A few examples: "Shoot anyone who pulls a gun," or "Chase him down and attack him if he runs," or "Slam the door just as she gets close." If the situation doesn't come to pass by the character's next turn, they can continue readying, or do something else. If it does, the readied action goes off immediately before the triggering action. This does require something visible. You can't ready an action like, "Remove its face if it thinks about cups too hard," unless you can read minds. If something comes up and a character no longer wants to ready, they can abort it, and act as though they'd been delaying instead. A character who knows someone's readying something on them might be able to pull one over on them with the Deception skill, opposed by the readying character's Empathy, but only for very tiny, fast actions.

Multi-Turn Actions

Rome wasn't built in a turn. Sometimes, a character needs to get something done in a dynamic situation that would take longer than six seconds. If the action has an associated skill, the character needs to accumulate a certain number on their rolls in order to succeed. Multiply the task's usual Challenge by about how many turns it should take to complete (roughly), and have the character invest an action on each roll against it. Instead of failing when they fall short of the Challenge, their roll is banked and added together with any previous rolls. When the rolled total meets or exceeds the Challenge, they succeed. If there is no suitable roll, just requiring a certain number of actions is sufficient. This all assumes a task the character theoretically could succeed at, given enough time. If it would be impossible for them to make it even on a roll of 20, they can waste a turn finding out they're in over their head.

Attacks

On their turn, a character can decide they want to attack someone within the reach of their chosen weapon. Though only one roll is made, this doesn't necessarily represent only one physical attack. It can be described as a burst of fire from an automatic firearm, or a flurry of punches, or a vicious slap-fight with all seven tentacles. The attacker makes a roll using the appropriate skill: Archery for bows and similar weapons, Firearms for guns, Melee for hand-to-hand weapons, Throwing for thrown weapons, or Unarmed for (one's own) body parts.

The defender can either parry, or dodge. To parry, they roll the appropriate weapon skill (Melee or Unarmed) to block the incoming attack. Dodging uses the Dodge skill instead. Arrows, bullets, and other ranged attacks generally *can't* be parried. Dodge is an extra investment, but it does provide a wider base of defense. Ties on these two rolls go to the defender. If the attacker wins, the attack hits and may do damage.

Damage

Weapons have two primary stats for attacks: Impact, and trauma. Impact is the initial damage that's rolled against a target. Muscle-powered weapons, which include melee weapons, unarmed attacks, and bows, add the user's Brawn to Impact (or subtract from it if negative). After damage is rolled, as appropriate to the weapon, the target's armor is subtracted from the result. If it's reduced to 0 or less, the attack has no effect. It bounces off of the target's carapace, wedges in their thick hide, or whatever else. If any damage is left over, however, it's multiplied by the weapon's trauma. If this gives a fractional amount, round it down. Thus, some weapons do a lot of up-front damage, making them suitable for piercing thick armor. Others do less, but may have a high trauma rating that causes them to deal a great deal of damage to lightly armored or unarmored targets. For those who like formulas, it breaks down like this:

(impact – target's armor) * trauma = damage

The target loses a number of HP equal to the final damage dealt.

Health

If a character is reduced to 0 HP or less, they are dying. They collapse and cannot take actions, though at the GM's discretion, they might still be conscious and able to speak. Such a character loses 1 HP per turn unless stabilized, such as with the Medicine skill (see Actions & Systems in the Rules chapter). If a character is reduced to or below the negative value of their maximum HP, be it all at once, via gradual loss, or from subsequent injuries, they die. Thus, a character with 20 HP dies at -20 HP or less, for example.

Characters with reasonable access to rest and safety recover 1 HP per day while recuperating. Attention by another character with the Medicine skill can speed recovery (see Medical Attention in the Rules chapter). This is **not** meant to be a strictly realistic recovery rate, but one that can allow characters to be "back in action" after a not-overly-punitive recuperation period. It may be appropriate for specific, lasting injuries, such as broken limbs, to linger even after all HP is recovered.

Maneuvers

Sometimes in combat, you need to do something a little more precise than just hitting someone with something. These maneuvers should be declared prior to making the rolls involved; no hitting and then announcing you were going for a grab.

Bypass Armor: Most protection has points that are weaker than others, or at least that hurt more to get hit in. An attack that attempts to bypass armor is made with a -4 penalty. If it hits, the target's total armor bonus is halved, as the character targets joints, gaps, soft spots, or just plain goes for the eyes.

Disarm: Maybe it's to gloat, maybe it's to resolve things peacefully, or maybe you just really want what someone else is holding, but getting what someone is holding out of their hands is sometimes desirable. Make an attack as normal. The defender gets their usual defense, but cannot parry with the weapon/hand being targeted. If it hits, make another attack roll. The defender, if holding a weapon, opposes with the skill they would use to attack with it. If the

defender is holding something besides a weapon, they defend using the Unarmed skill. Ties go to the defender, as usual. If the attacker wins, the defender's weapon is knocked from their grasp – or, if the attacker is unarmed, wrestled away from them.

Grab: Systems for grappling are notoriously awful in tabletop RPGs. Wish me luck. To make a grab attack, pick a target limb, and an unoccupied limb of your own, and make an unarmed attack. If it's large enough, a set of jaws **can** be used as a grabbing appendage, and possibly be grabbed in turn. If the attack lands, rather than doing damage, the target limb is grabbed. The now grabbed limb can't be used to make attacks, nor can the one doing the grabbing, and neither character can move (with one exception, see below). A character who's been grabbed *can* grab their attacker's free limbs too, establishing a mutual lockdown if both have the same number of limbs. You can grab more than one person. A grabbing limb DOES need to be able to actually grasp, unless you're engaged in leg-wrestling or something similar.

A grabbed character gets a free attempt at the start of their turn to slip free (without sacrificing their own grabs, if any), making an opposed Unarmed roll against the grabber. For this roll, using Brawn as the key attribute for Unarmed in lieu of Grace is acceptable. Ties go to the grabbed character.

A character who's grabbing another has a few options. They can willingly relinquish some (or all) grabs they've established. Alternatively, they can make an opposed Unarmed roll, just like the one above. If the grabber succeeds, they can just inflict serious pain without doing damage (like bending back a finger), or deal damage, as though they'd landed a hit with whatever appendage is doing the grabbing, crushing with their fist, pincer, tentacle, or whatever else. Or, if the grabbed character isn't grabbing anyone else, the grabber can fling them – possibly over a ledge, through a window, or whatever else – and end the grab that way.

Either character can try to yank the other around on their turn, by making an opposed Unarmed roll (again, as above) as their action. If they succeed, they can move at half speed, dragging the other character with them.

Gear

Misbegotten is not especially concerned with bean-counting dollar amounts, simulating precise models of firearms, or producing exhaustive lists of exotic weaponry. Thus, the lists here concern relatively broadly defined pieces of somewhat generic gear. If the minute distinctions between different models of shotguns matter greatly to you, I apologize for the disappointment.

Melee Weapons

These are implements for bashing, stabbing, and otherwise maiming in hand-to-hand combat. With the exception of Unarmed attacks, they use the Melee skill if used in hand to hand combat, or Thrown if, unsurprisingly, thrown. The wielder's Brawn is added to the rolled Impact of any of these weapons, whether held or hurled.

Name	Impact	Trauma
Sword/Bayonet	1d8	*1.5
Sledge/Huge Club	2d6	*1

Spear/Polearm/Bayonet	1d6	*2
Knife	1d4	*1.5
Small Club	1d6	*1
Unarmed/Tiny Object	1d3	*1

Improvised Weapons

Not everyone's a Ren-Faire regular. It's probably more common to find yourself bludgeoning a snail-owl-monster with a phone than with a mace. For most purposes, human beings have never really *needed* much to enable them to hurt other living things. The main aims of weapons are to be easy to use, and to stand up to such use. If someone is using an improvised weapon, the GM should decide what melee weapon it most closely resembles. A shovel would definitely be close to "Huge Club" for these purposes, for instance, while a huge piece of shattered glass might qualify as sword-like, or a snapped-off pool cue as an improvised spear. Use the equivalent weapon's impact and trauma stats. The GM must also decide if the weapon is unwieldy, fragile, or both. If it's neither, it can probably just be treated as an actual, ordinary weapon. Unwieldy weapons are badly weighted, hard to grip, or otherwise just not built for killing. They impose a -4 penalty on attack rolls made with them. Fragile weapons won't stand up to hitting bone, tend to shatter against walls, or might just snap in half from being swung around. The GM should assign an appropriate percentage chance of the weapon breaking after each attack with it, and roll after each attack is made. If the weapon breaks, the attack still goes through (if it hit), but it's now useless – unless the pieces end up sufficiently resembling a *different* weapon, in which case improvisation can begin anew.

Firearms

Guns introduce one little additional wrinkle: Ammunition. This is tracked with the Shots property. This is not a hard-and-fast actual count of the number of bullets in the gun. Rather, it's a general count of how many attacks can be made with it, before its user has to spend an action reloading. For automatic weapons, this assumes relatively controlled, short bursts. Guns do not add Brawn to their damage. Bows, which are included here for lack of anywhere better to categorize them, **do**. Nocking an arrow to fire with a bow is considered an action of negligible effort, as long as said arrows are reasonably within reach. For purposes of being used as melee weapons, most firearms can be treated as small clubs (see above).

Name	Impact	Trauma	Shots
Light Pistol	1d8	*1	6
Heavy Pistol	1d12	*1.5	8
Shotgun	1d6	*3	4
Assault Rifle/SMG	1d8	*1	10
Rifle	1d10	*2	4
Bow	1d8	*1.5	N/A

Armor

Manufactured armor reduces Impact damage from attacks. Generally speaking, only one "suit" of armor can be worn at a time. It may be technically possible to wear a chainmail shirt

under a ballistic vest, but allow that at the risk of characters in your game becoming waddling balls of layered armor. Armor granted by Abominations **can** be combined with manufactured armor, unless the Abomination specifies otherwise.

Name	Armor Value
Leather/Protective Clothes	1
Replica Medieval Armor	4
Ballistic Vest	6
Riot Gear	8

Appendix A: Creature Creation

Creating your own, non-human teratomorphs is an important part of the game. Fortunately, the process is fairly easy. Attributes and skills can simply be assigned ad-hoc. The trick to a critter's more "exotic" traits (and some of its more mundane ones) is to assign them first as "natural" Abominations. These aren't actually mutations, or anything of the sort, but simply use the existing rules to reflect how these innate qualities work. They do not contribute to Grotesquerie (unless you want to simulate what wimps some people are about animals). From there, you can use any of the teratomorph design strategies from the Abominations chapter to customize it. Let's use a wild dog for an example:

Wild Dog

Attributes: Brawn 2, Charm -2, Grace 3, Health 0, Intellect -8, Perception 4, Will 1

Skills: Alertness 4 (+8 total), Dodge 2 (+5 total), Stealth 3 (+6 total), Unarmed 4 (+7 total)

Secondary Characteristics: HP: 12, Movement 41, Resilience 11

Natural Abominations: Fur/Hair, Jaws, Quadruped

Attacks: Jaws +7 (Impact 1d12, Trauma *1)

The Movement score reflects the bonus from the Quadruped Abomination. Then you just pick or randomize actual Abominations, and you're good to go. For NPCs, you probably don't need to worry about Infestation scores.

Appendix B: Alternatives

Misbegotten is a fairly poker-faced game for the most part, or at least, it's written to be. The design, overall, is done with the expectation of playing the horror and the dilemmas straight. But that's certainly not the only way you can play. In fact, there's even room to change things beyond a mere tonal shift. Here are some ideas:

Everyday Monsters: What if every human (or maybe even every animal) had DOT antibodies, and transformed creatures continued to behave much as they normally do? It would be a lot less likely to drive humanity to extinction and a lot easier to control, for starters. Consequently, things relating to it would probably be a great deal more laid-back. Without the threat of apocalyptic contagion and the planet's carnivorous transformation, problems and themes would

logically center around the day-to-day existences of “monsters” living among us. This could be taken as a more introspective, socially aware approach – or be played for comedy. Just imagine the “school life” type scenarios. You’re probably already picturing it.

Fantasy: What if you plopped contagious monstrosity into the middle of a Dungeons & Dragons game? Just shear out modern Skills, and you’re good to go. Imagine courageous (or villainous), weapon-wielding monsters, riding into battle atop other monsters. Wouldn’t pretty much any fantasy novel be improved by that?

Regular Joes: There’s nothing that requires the player characters to be Terato sufferers in the first place. Playing regular people can be a good way to emphasize more of a survival horror element, and play up the danger of the world around them.