

# THE SECRET LIVES OF GINGERBREAD MEN

... *LITTLE COOKIES...* *BIG SECRETS...*

A ROLE PLAYING GAME BY ANNIE RUSH

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It was just another silent kitchen in another silent house in the suburbs until Max cart wheeled across the counter. As he spun, heels over head, he shouted, "Empty house! Woohoo!"

The rest of them were a bit more cautious, preferring to simply run to the far end of the tiles, stopping at the edge.

Sarah, self-selected as the responsible cookie in the jar, detoured to the row of candy bowls grabbing some pieces of licorice. All the other cookies would need the sugary rope to safely leave the countertop. Although some cookies may boast that they would jump to the kitchen floor, Sarah knew no Gingerbread Man was truly that reckless.

Shaking the red candy into a long rope, Sarah secured the licorice, and they all slid down from the counter, dispersing to the far corners of the house. Their voices rang out in the vacant rooms...

"I want to watch TV! Who's with me?"

"My sister was thrown in the trash earlier, and I think she's still there. I'll meet you at the piano later."

"Bob, can you give me a hand up to the Cookiesmith's?"

"I'm gonna peek at the presents!"

"The parade's about to start in the Village, I'd better run."

By the time Sarah had the last ladder secured for the cookies who wanted to return to the kitchen counter, only one other cookie was still in sight. He was sometimes clumsy and often bashful, the results of slight overbaking. Allan kicked through the dust on the floor, and lowered his eyes when he spoke to Sarah.

"I-I-I was w-wondering if you

could do m-me a favor, Miss Sarah," Allan stammered.

"Anything for a bakemate," Sarah said, nudging Allan's scorched shoulder. "Especially one as sweet as you."

Allan's head jerked forward. He would have fallen to the floor if Sarah hadn't steadied him. Lifting his eyes to meet hers at last, Allan smiled broadly.

"C-can we w-walk while I t-tell you about it?"

Sarah nodded in agreement. She had no plans for the afternoon.

"G-good. W-we'll need to g-go to the t-t-tree anyhow."

The pair waked towards the family room in silence, Allan casting darting glances in every direction. They reached the carpet-line, trudging through the plush for several moments before the scorched cookie began his story.

"Y-y'see, it has t-to do with M-Me-linda... my twin s-s-sister..."

"She..." Allan looks around once more, and his voice drops to a whisper. "Melinda's l-locked up on the f-fridge."

Sarah clapped her hand over Allan's mouth, stopping both of them at the bottom of the stairs. "Why are you telling me this? Do you want the Oracle to get us both in trouble?"

Clearly afraid of the Oracle's henchcookies, Sarah suddenly wondered if it would have been wiser to refuse Allan's request.

"D-d-don't worry. You s-see the Oracle's already involved. She s-sent me to d-do this, and she said h-he-henchies would help."

Slowly, Sarah pulled back a step and let Allan continue.

"I g-guess this all started the d-day

we were all Ovened.

"Melinda was r-right next to me on the sheet before w-we went in the oven. S-she got her own sp-spice from M-mother Baker. H-hers was Social. Lot of good it does now." Allan led the way towards the family room again. They were a dozen paces farther before he spoke again.

"W-we were put into the oven b-but M-Melinda and I were too c-close together. Both of us g-grew a little b-bit, and when the t-t-time was up, w-we were glued t-together, h-hand and f-foot.

"When Mother B-baker saw us s-stuck like that, well, it was like a t-turkey wish b-bone. One s-side had to come away with l-less, and Melinda's h-hand and f-foot were t-trimmed short."

"Allan!" Sarah broke in. "I'm so sorry. I had no idea anyone from our Ovening was... um..." She could not bring herself to say.

"B-b-broken," Allan said for her. "Melinda was d-dropped into a house in the Village. S-she didn't get around t-too well. Even worse n-now."

Sarah bit her lip (quite a feat, considering cookies have neither lips nor teeth), at a loss for what to tell her friend.

"It's not s-so bad. She's really good at watching for intruders. Had l-lots of practice."

"Just like that? Out of the Oven—snip-slice—and into an abandoned house?"

"N-not quite," Allan explained. "M-mother did spend a m-moment to give M-Melinda eyes like the r-rest of us."

"Just eyes? No mouth even?"

"I g-guess the phone rang or s-something."

"No mouth." Sarah's voice caught in her throat, and her eyes grew wide. "That means... that means Melinda doesn't have any frosting!"

"S-sad as i-it is, you're r-r-right." Allan and Sarah stopped walking, standing at the top of the two stairs that led down into the family room.

Sarah put her hands over the colorful candies covering her belly, as if her own frosting would dissolve. "I—I—I don't understand how she can survive. I would feel so helpless."

As if cued by her words, there was a noise behind them, jingling dog tags. Simultaneously turning around and pulling a bright orange candy from her frosting, Sarah crouched low to the ground, one arm ready to throw.

Allan didn't move. "T-that makes you f-feel helpless? T-think about b-b-being a mute c-cripple when Oracle's h-henchies knock on y-your door."

Sarah, seeing nothing, paused a moment to think. "I suppose you're right. What is this business about the Oracle anyhow?" She replaced the candy on her frosting.

"S-since M-Melinda has no way t-to give away her s-secret, the Oracle thinks she may not h-have one."

"You're just full of trouble and surprises today, aren't you, Allan?"

He grinned sheepishly. "I g-guess so."

"The Oracle w-wants me to v-visit the angel on the C-Christmas t-tree. She says the an-angel can speak f-for anyone. I'm s-supposed to f-find out if Melinda h-has a secret for s-sure. And maybe I can wish for M-Melinda to be f-fixed."

"Nobody's ever proved the Angel has the power to grant wishes."

"Only o-one way to f-find out."

Allan took a running jump, clearing

both stairs down to the family room in one bound.

"Let's go, then," she called down to him.

Sarah gave Allan one last determined smile then followed him down the steps.

The only disturbance in the minutes that followed was a snowball of glitter that burst at their feet. Some cookies were playing in the porcelain city atop the piano. Sarah could hear them laughing, caught up in the snowball fight.

With no more to fear in this seldom-traveled room, they crossed the distance to the Christmas tree quickly.

As Allan and Sarah reached the first package stacked under the tree, a small voice called, "Oy! Want to know what the boy's getting for Christmas?" The voice echoed in the canyons formed by boxes.

Both cookies looked around, checking behind every corner. When they only found two large, sleeping Gingerbread Men, Sarah called out, "Hello?"

The voice laughed. "Up here, sillies!" It was then that Allan spotted Thomas, who was peeking over the edge of the tallest box, and showed Sarah where he was.

Watching him climb down to the floor, Sarah told Thomas, "I hope you're not ripping the paper or anything. The people might get suspicious."

"Chill, Sar," the newcomer said. "They'll just think it was the cat, or poor handling, maybe. Never in a million years would any of them suspect that the cookies are sneaking around!"

Sarah began to form a rebuttal, but Allan interrupted. "P-please, S-Sarah.

Can we g-get moving?"

"True, it's a ways up, and we don't want to get caught. You wake those henchies and we'll get on our way."

When Allan left, Thomas moved closer to Sarah and lowered his voice. "What's this crazy mission he's got you on? The grapevine says he's a little con-cookie trying to take over the house."

Sarah pulled back, shocked. "That's crazy!"

"The boy is a little cracked," Thomas said. He turned to keep an eye on the direction Allan would return from, still talking. "But you're right. The same people say I'm from the moon, and you only moonlight as a cookie. By day you're a produce prosecutor."

A strained "We're w-waiting!" drifted over the boxes.

"Right. Anyway, I'll come keep an eye on things." Thomas followed Sarah, who followed the sound of Allan's voice.

"Maybe all my Bakemates are cracked," Sarah whispered to herself. Glancing to see Thomas following, Sarah hoped he didn't hear.

Soon the five of them, Allan, Sarah, Thomas, and two sleepy henchmen, stood on a box and looked at the tree towering above them.

"How do we get up there?" one of the henchies asked. His frosting was covered with bright red candies. In her mind, Sarah pictured him falling from the tree, hitting the marble coffee table and bursting into flames.

"I've never been up the tree before, my firey-man." Sarah said. "So I have no idea."

"We could follow the ribbon up. It goes all the way to the top, you see," the other henchie said. His sweets

were mainly the peanut and pretzel variety.

"Not exactly the best idea." Thomas was thoughtful in his reply. "The ribbon is rather thin. The lights will hold our weight better."

Sarah opened her mouth to reply before noticing that Allan was already climbing straight up the tree, branch to branch.

"Hm, well that works, but I think we should go to the center of the tree, where the branches aren't so flimsy needle-covered," she said.

"Sounds like a plan, m'dear," Thomas said, draping an arm across Sarah's shoulders. "Although doesn't he seem spry for a cookie that needs so much help? From you?"

"Allan! Wait up!" Sarah called. Turning to Thomas, she lowered her voice. "Spry's got nothing to do with it. Besides, I told him I'd help."

The Cookie on the tree slowed down to let the others catch up. At Sarah's suggestion, they all moved inside the needles, closer to the trunk. Allan remained in the lead, with his Bakemates close behind. The henchies trailed, carefully testing each branch to be sure they could hold the oversized Cookies.

Larger branches were difficult to grasp with their Gingerbread limbs, but the branches gradually grew smaller as the Cookies climbed higher. When the five were nearly halfway to the top, Allan suddenly broke away from the group.

He had still been in the lead when, with no warning, Allan stood up on the branch he had mounted and ran towards the outside of the tree. Sarah was still gasping a full level below. She could only squeak out a shout of alarm.

Thomas hoisted himself up beside

her. "Here, I'll give you a boost. Grab him!"

With a nod, Sarah climbed up the Thomas-ladder, onto Allan's branch. She ran as carefully as she could along the narrow branch, catching up to Allan just as he grabbed a handful of pine needles.

Allan clawed his way up the needles, trying desperately to pull himself higher, out of her grasp. "I... need... the... bell." His voice was strained, and did not stutter.

Looking over his shoulder, Sarah spotted what he meant. A silver bell ornament hung on the tree, just inches above Allan's outstretched arm.

"But *why?*" she tugged on his leg. Hard. Allan kicked at her, trying to break free. "Need... it... so... the Angel..." His voice broke off, and his eyes went wide, looking over Sarah's shoulder to the floor. Allan's body went slack for a split second and almost lost his grip.

"What is it?" Sarah was frantic, pulling harder, but Allan would not answer or let go.

Thomas arrived then, clinging to the branch. "What's going on?"

He said nothing more, but followed Allan's terrified gaze.

"Sarah..." Thomas began.

"*What?*"

"It's the cat."

Sarah, too, almost fell in shock. Gradually, she turned herself, never letting go of Allan's leg.

There, just outside the ring of wrapped presents sat Circe, the visiting cat. She watched the cookies on the tree, tail waving wildly.

"Now we're in trouble."

Circe crouched and her eyes narrowed. Any moment, she would jump.

\* \* \* \* \*

## The Joy of Cookies

Gingerbread Men lead secret lives. When we're not at home, when we're sleeping, when we turn our backs, they speak and move. Yes, it's magic. The magic of Christmas. (Jewish Gingerbread Men can speak and move, too, but the magic is a little bit different.)

Those little cookies escape from their plates and jars to brave the dangers of the world... but why? Why go out into the house where every person could find and eat you, every pet could drag you outside and chew off your leg? Every sharp drop onto a hard floor, every glass of water, every army of ants, every mouse in the wall – all harmless hazards to humans – are potential disasters for gingerbread fellows and ladies.

All a Gingerbread Man has to combat these perils are his friends, his experience, and his candy decorations.

So why do they do it?

Because Gingerbread Men have secrets.

All of them. Every single Gingerbread Man is hiding something from his fellow cookies, and from you, too. Gingerbread Women also have secrets. As do Gingerbread Children.

Some of these secrets are big and scary, such as intending to betray your friends to the cat. Some are fat and juicy, such as knowing why the Mayor wasn't home last night, and why there is dust tracked through

town. Some are small and simple, such as a very special plan for where to take your lady friend on Christmas Eve. A secret might save the Village, or spell your doom.

But all Gingerbread Men have secrets.

## Pre-Heat the Oven

Before you begin playing *The Secret Lives of Gingerbread Men*, or even making characters, there are a couple things to do before hand. The obvious task is having dice, pencils, and character sheets on hand.

The optional, but highly advised, bit of setup is providing miniatures for all players, and maybe some NPCs, too. In this game, however, character representations are less "miniature" than they are full size, on a 1:1 scale with their surroundings. Also, these representations are edible.

Provided here for your nutritional enjoyment and enhanced gaming experience is my mother's recipe for Gingerbread Cookies. These are the cookies I grew up on.

### Mother Baker's Gingerbread Cookies

1 teaspoon baking soda

7 cups flour

½ teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon ginger

2 teaspoons cloves

1 tablespoon cinnamon

1 cup margarine

1 ½ cups brown sugar

2 eggs

1 ½ cups molasses

Cream together margarine and sugar. Add eggs and molasses. Beat until smooth.

Add 3 cups flour with all the other dry ingredients. Beat until smooth.

Continue adding the rest of the flour one cup at a time. (The last cup can be counted in the flour used to roll out the dough.)

Refrigerate until chilled through.

Roll out on a floured board about a quarter of the dough at a time, keeping the rest in the fridge. Use dowels at the sides to roll out evenly. Cut into desired shapes. Bake at 350 degrees until desired darkness.

One eighth inch dowels will be crispy at 13 minutes. One quarter inch dowels take longer.

Have a tray of unbaked cookies ready when your players are ready to make their characters. Invite each to decorate a Gingerbread Man to be his own Gingerbread Cookie during the game. It takes about as long for this sheet of cookies to bake as it takes to instruct five players on how to create their characters, from spices to secrets. (But it's still a good idea to use the timer.)

Gingerbread Cookies have a number of **Backgrounds** that give them Advantages. Each Advantage is a die you can roll for your Gingerbread Cookie. There are three specific Backgrounds: Spice, Gingerbread, and Zen Cookie.

### First Background: Spice

Before the cookies are in the oven, the (typically) benevolent baker who creates them all adds a half-pinch of Spice to each cookie. In the house where Sarah and Allan are, this baker goes by the name of "Mother Baker."

This Spice is the first of three Backgrounds that each PC (Player Cookie) has. A Spice Background is the type of thinking, problem solving, and relating your cookie is best at, a general flavor of excellence. When you perform an action that relates to this Spice Background, you get an extra Advantage Die. More on the dice you get to roll later.

Choose one of these six Spice Backgrounds. A brief description of the power of each Spice is included here, but the abilities earned by these Spices need not be limited to these basic ideas.

- **Art:** This bonus applies when a Cookie is creating something abstract, or interpreting abstractions created by someone else.
- **Body:** When a Gingerbread Cookie attempts to perform some stupendous physical action (leaping, running, throwing), this Spice gives him a little extra boost
- **Logic:** Gingerbread Cookies with this Spice gain a bonus when working with numbers and patterns; they have a good sense of time and distance.
- **Music:** Although you'd never expect something so small to carry a tune, these Cookies have an advantage when hearing music.
- **Nature:** Others fear it, but these Cookies don't mind being outside, and can communicate more easily with animals.
- **Social:** Communicating with other Cookies is what these Gingerbread Cookies do best.

## Second Background: Gingerbread

After being Spiced, Gingerbread men are Ovened. They survive the fiery furnace, and emerge changed cookies. From this point forward, none shall be called "dough." All are Gingerbread.

Your second background is Gingerbread. This is your most basic advantage, as it is used every time a Gingerbread Cookie acts.

## Third Background: Zen Cookie

Through its existence, no matter how short, every living being, food or consumer, goes through experiences and learns from them. Growing apart from your origin to a unique creature is a large part of survival. How has your Gingerbread Cookie spent the days since emerging from the Oven?

The third and fully unique Background, you must choose for yourself. Zen Cookie. This will represent your personal area of experience, and offer an advantage whenever you do something similar in the future.

Examples of this Background are "Freedom Fighter," "Tree Climber," "Channel Surfer," "Cookiesmith Apprentice," "Sugar Cookie Translator," and "Accountant." What the last cookie is accounting for, we're not exactly sure, but he gets an advantage while doing it.

Although even a Gingerbread Cookie is more than just the sum of his parts, it must first be the sum of its parts. If you don't think a Gingerbread Man is made of parts, watch a child devour one. Arm. Leg. Head. Arm. Leg. Besides the obvious, baked in pieces, Gingerbread Cookies also have functional decorations added on top.



### Parts of a Gingerbread Cookie

Gingerbread Cookies have eight parts:

|           |          |
|-----------|----------|
| Right Arm | Left Arm |
| Right Leg | Left Leg |
| Right Eye | Left Eye |
| Mouth     | Head     |

Losing your head is considered the Final Breaking, but most other parts can be replaced or repaired. Also, the Head is always the last part of a Gingerbread Cookie that breaks.

Similar to sugar cookies, Gingerbread Cookies are often smothered with frosting below the neck. After that, they are adorned with a wide variety of sweets to give them more personality. (At least that is what the grown-up humans think.) From a Gingerbread point of view, the candies are not decorations, but instead magical tools and weapons.

Each Cookie has room for up to 12 individual sweets on its icing at a time. You can pick these from a list which starts on page 16. Any time you have less than 12 sweets and a bowl of candy is near by, you can stock up.

### Secrets

Into everything wonderful goes something secretive and Mother Baker's cookies are no exception. An extra special little something lurks under the surface and that something special makes each cookie stand out from its fellows. This is a

Gingerbread Man's Secret.

The Secrets Gingerbread Cookies keep can be fluid or long standing, heroic or mundane. Whether it changes from day to day, or lasts a Cookie's (albeit short) life does not matter. It always has something to hide.

Choose one secret for your Gingerbread Cookie that is being kept from the other cookies.

Some Secret Ideas include:

- The desire to become Mayor of the Village, and the plans you have to pull it off.
- A very close friend is ill, and you want to make his wish come true. He wants to visit the angel at the top of the Christmas Tree to ask her to heal his crumbling disease.
- You know that the day after Christmas, one of the Gingerbread Cookies is shellacked and made into an ornament to be hung on the tree next year. You want to be this Gingerbread Cookie.
- Last night a group of cookies was taken away to be given to friends, and your fiancée was among them. You are determined to rescue your love.
- You have no secret. An open book with nothing to hide, you are an abnormality, but everyone thinks you lie about it. So you keep your absence of a secret a secret.
- The cat has offered you a bounty of access to a "hidden stash of candy" if you bring him a few of your fellows to eat.

- You are an Atkins diet cookie. Imposter!
- Mother Baker is worried because the Muffin Man has gone missing. Not only do you know where he is, but also you were in the crew that helped him take his... "vacation."
- The Muffin Man is your godfather.
- Despite having a number of Nature-loving friends, you have a crippling fear of the outdoors.
- You have celery stalkers.
- You are stalking celery.

## Ovening & The Baking Bond

Ovening is such a changing experience that a close bond forms among the cookies on the same sheet; Gingerbread Men who are Ovened at the same time have a special tie between them. This is called a **Baking Bond**.

When acting near, with, or for the benefit of Gingerbread Cookies with whom you have a Baking Bond, you have a special advantage, and your actions are stronger, more confident, and more accurate.

Performing an action within an "indoor voice" distance of one or more Cookies you have a Baking Bond with gives you one additional Advantage. This is gained through moral support. It only takes one Cookie to creep over and retrieve a dropped candy from between the cat's paws, but that one Cookie

will be much less scared if there are friends nearby.

If you are acting with one or more Cookies you share a Baking Bond with, it earns you one more Advantage. "Acting with" are actions like pulling together to open a door, getting a boost when jumping, or working together to operate a can opener.

Last of all, an additional Advantage is gained if you are acting for the benefit of a Gingerbread Cookie you share a Baking Bond with. This earns you an edge of bravery induced adrenaline when you and your stick arm are all that is left between a crippled Cookie and the King of Rats, or emphasizes the sincerity in your voice when telling the Patrol Cookies that you had no idea who broke the kitchen glass that Jeremy tipped over.

All told, if you and a close friend are holding a fork to fend off a hungry bird from eating your blind companion while another fellow digs the last Red-Hot from his frosting, you have three advantages through the virtue of your Baking Bond.

## Advantages

*The Secret Lives of Gingerbread Men* operates on the simple principle of finding advantages in each and every situation. All advantages a Gingerbread Cookie has materialize as dice for its human player to roll. Each advantage is one die, henceforth called Advantage Dice. All dice in this game are d6.

Every action is a Gingerbread Man pitting his Advantages against the

Advantages of his target. A target could be another PC (player cookie), an NPC (non-player cookie), or an IAO (inanimate object). An action could be throwing a piece of candy at an NPC, testing the sincerity of another Gingerbread Man's words, or leaping off a counter onto a chair without injury. The acting cookie is called "the Actor" and the target is called "the Target." (We like to keep things simple.)

When resolving the contest, the Actor and the Target roll their own Advantage Dice appropriate to the situation. (The GM is responsible for devising all non-PC advantages, and rolling all non-PC dice). Any die that rolls even (2, 4, or 6) counts as a **success**. Any die that rolls odd (1, 3, or 5) counts as a **failure**. Actor and Target compare the number of successes rolled, and the higher prevails. Should there be a tie in successes, the values of the even dice are counted, and the totals compared. If the situation is still a tie, the preference goes to the Target but, in storytelling terms, by a slim margin.

PCs are not limited in the number of Advantages they can find in any situation. Instead, you are always guaranteed the Advantage of experience living as a Gingerbread Man. This is granted through the Background "Gingerbread." In other words, for any action, even if you can't find any other Advantages, you can *always* roll your Gingerbread Background.

Spice Backgrounds allow for specific advantages, as mentioned during Cookie Creation. The Spice, chosen before your cookie was Ovened, gives one Advantage Die for actions

within its scope. The Art Spice gives an advantage to a PC trying to draw a picture of someone for identification purposes. The Body Spice gives an advantage to a PC trying to hurl a candy at the cat as a distraction, and so on.

Also, unique Backgrounds, from Cookie Creation, give Advantages. Each unique Background gives one Advantage die in any action it is applicable to.

Above and beyond these, Advantage Dice can be gained from situational advantages, such as having the high ground, being in shadow, being driven by a secret, or holding a weapon.

### NPCs and IAOs

Inanimate objects (IAOs) the PCs encounter have their own Advantages. This means that the GM can roll multiple dice on behalf of the IAO targeted by a PC, depending on how many advantages the GM claims. IAO advantages often have to do with distance from the Actor, size, texture, and movement.

A candle that a PC wishes to extinguish can be far away and small. The GM rolls two Advantage Dice for the candle flame: (1) small and (2) far away.

A balloon ribbon that the PC needs to catch may be slippery, waving, and rising. The GM rolls three Advantage Dice for the ribbon the PC is grabbing: (1) slippery, (2) waving, and (3) rising.

NPCs are not limited in the number of Advantage Dice they roll. All be-

ings that are alive, or have the power of speech (or both), have a single background describing what they are. This is similar to the Gingerbread background held by PCs.

Whenever a human acts towards a Gingerbread Man, or is targeted by a Gingerbread Man, it has the Advantage of being Human. The Cat has the Background of being a Cat, and the Dog has the Advantage of being a Dog.

## Human Advantages

Humans have one other standard Background, depending on who they are: Family, Relative, Neighbor, or Child.

**Family Members** are those who live in the house that the Gingerbread Men are from, or are the immediate relatives of the residents (visiting parents, children home for the holidays). Family will eat broken cookies, or one with replacement parts, often targeting the damaged baked goods.

**Relatives** are very close to the Family and feel very comfortable in their home. Sometimes a Relative has no blood ties, but knows the Family very well. They will casually pick up cookies to admire and eat, sometimes picking one up just to see the handiwork.

**Neighbors**, casual friends and acquaintances, wait until Family Members offer them cookies, but once Bob is off the plate, he's a goner unless you do something. *Fast.*

**Children** are an exceptional group. **Anyone who believes in Santa Claus is a Child.** Children still

understand that there is magic in the world, and sees Gingerbread Men move and talk. They retain the ability to talk to cookies, pets, and toys. A Child, when he grows up, could be Family, Relative, or a Neighbor, but as long as he still believes in Santa, he is a Child.

For basic NPCs, beyond these Type Backgrounds (Gingerbread Man, Cat, Dog, Human, Family, Relative, Neighbor, Child), all advantages are situational. Special NPCs, such as a human or pet specific to the house or essential to a story arc, can have other Backgrounds based on key attributes or reputations. A Dog that the Cookies live with have a "Friend of the Cookies" or "Terror to the Treats" Background, depending on its attitude towards baked goods.

## Cookie Crumbs

Every so often a cookie will come away from an action with more successes than were needed. Maybe his sugar is part fairy dust, or maybe he caught a gust of wind, but he had a moment of extra good luck.

Extra successes can be banked as **Cookie Crumbs** and saved for later. If a Target rolls 2 successes, and you, the Actor, roll 4, you use 3 of your successes to win the contest and may save one success as a Cookie Crumb.

Later in the game, you can use Cookie Crumb points as guaranteed successes on any roll. You must announce the number of Crumbs you are using before the roll, and not use more Cookie Crumbs than the number of dice you would normally roll. Each Crumb used diminishes

## Cookie Breaking

the number of dice you roll by one.

For example, if you have sufficient Advantages to roll six dice and want to use four Cookie Crumbs, you only roll two dice.

If you have excess successes from an action in which you used Cookie Crumbs, the extra successes cannot go back into your Cookie Crumb stash.

### Under Attack

When cookies get into a fight with animals or other cookies, time becomes divided into rounds. During each round of conflict, each Cookie and non-Cookie involved may take one action. The participant with the most Advantages goes first, followed by the next highest amount of Advantages, down the line. If two characters have the same number of Advantages, they act simultaneously.

As characters take offensive action, they also determine their success condition for the attack. When Gingerbread Men are attacked, they can be knocked down, moved, affected with a spell, or damaged.

NPCs can be affected in different ways, but Gingerbread Men cannot seriously maim or kill any pets or humans. A weakness of pets, however, is this: if a Gingerbread Man removes one of his own limbs and throws it, the cat or dog (or ferret) fixates on (and eats) the limb. Having been rewarded for the "game," the pet then leaves the PCs alone.

When a round ends, all participants re-count their Advantages and begin

a second round of fighting. The character with the highest number of Advantages goes first as above.

### The Cookie Crumbles

Dangers to Gingerbread Men are not just pets and humans who wish to eat them. Perils also include fire, large quantities of water, and falling or jumping down more than one foot.

When your Gingerbread Man is afflicted with physical damage, one of your components is lost. The parts of Gingerbread Men that can be lost to damage are the Left Eye, Right Eye, Mouth, Right Arm, Left Arm, Right Leg, Left Leg, and Head.

Each time your cookie takes damage, cross off one relevant word (not component) from your list. If only the "Right" or "Left" word of a cookie part is crossed out, the component is still operable. But when both words are crossed out, the limb or feature is gone.

Before a Gingerbread Man can lose his head, he must first lose, and not have remade, all other parts.

## Important Non-Player Cookies

### The Cookiesmith

Somewhere in the house, usually apart from the rest of the cookies, the Cookiesmith can be found. This fellow is made of gingerbread and keeps watch over the cookie decorat-

ing supplies. It is often a difficult journey to see the Cookiesmith, partially because those who visit him are missing a limb or two. Also, when Gingerbread Cookies run out of candies on their frosting, the only place that has replacements is the Cookiesmith's forge.

Procuring new limbs or sweets is not as simple as only reaching the 'Smith; he does not work for free. Cookies who seek his assistance will be forced to pay in any way they can. The Cookiesmith may ask for items he cannot get himself, or for a Cookie to use her influence with the Mayor, or whatever suits his whims the particular day.

The difficulty, however, is seldom a waste of effort. Replacement limbs (in truth, even the loss of limbs) disqualifies a Gingerbread Cookie from Mayorhood and shellacking, but also wards against being given to, or being eaten by Neighbors and Relatives.

While the Cookiesmith cannot replace eyes or mouths, he does have options for replacement arms and legs, each of which have special abilities.

**Arms:**

Pretzel – If a Family Member sees your pretzel arm, they WILL break it off and eat it, but will not eat anything else.

Licorice – A licorice arm can grab onto and hold anything, but animals can smell you from farther away.

**Legs:**

Candy Cane – Candy cane legs can glide on any smooth surface as if it was ice, but stick on surfaces of cloth or carpet.

Stick – Makes the Gingerbread Man undesirable to be eaten by anything, but immediately thrown in the trash by any Human that spots the stick.

## The Oracle

The Oracle is a dusty old cookie from several years back who spends her time on top of the refrigerator. While many Gingerbread Cookies believe in her strange powers, others think the crone is simply eccentric, making up all her predictions.

Believing herself to be the protector of secrets, the Oracle bewitches Gingerbread Henchmen to bring offending Cookies to her. If the Oracle thinks too many other Cookies know your secret, believes you have a dangerous secret, or suspects that you have no secret, don't be surprised to hear a heavy knock on the door of your gingerbread house.

In the past, some Cookies have dared to call her bluff, refusing to confess their crimes. It could be coincidence that they were taken away, delivered to friends and neighbors, soon after. On the other hand, these brave Cookies have reported seeing a black leather book sticking out from behind the cereal boxes kept on the fridge.

## Non-Cookie Personalities

Cookies aren't the only folks meandering around the kitchen, there are many personalities found in the cupboards. For example, Aunt Jemima and Sara Lee are over for the holidays, and guess who brought Mr. Clean?

### Advancement

Christmas is a busy and exciting time of year, and a Cookie cannot always do everything he wants to in one evening. But, the next time a Gingerbread Cookie is up and about, he is a little bit smarter, a little bit better, a little bit more experienced in surviving in the world beyond the Cookie Jar.

After each session of the game, players think back to everything their Cookie did. One of these actions becomes a new Background for the character. In future sessions, this Background can be called upon for an extra Advantage when the Cookie does something similar.

Also, between games, players may convert left over Cookie Crumbs into additional spaces of frosting to hold more sweets. Cookie Crumbs that are not traded in for a larger arsenal remain Cookie Crumbs to be used as automatic successes in the next game session.

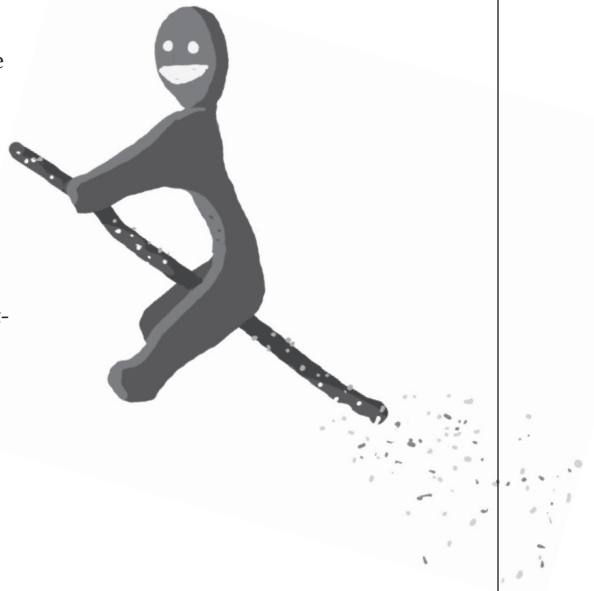
### A Last Bit of Christmas Magic

There are only twelve days of Christmas and at the end of those twelve days, Cookies lose all their magic. It's a sad fact, but there may be a way to dodge it.

Some Gingerbread Cookies believe one Cookie is shellacked every year and made into an ornament to hang on the tree. This means that lucky Cookie will come back to life *next* Christmas and every Christmas thereafter.

While being covered in plastic and hung on the tree every year may sound like a high accomplishment to many Cookies, there is a faction that believes there is another way to survive the end of Christmas. A rumor in some circles says that one human – a grown child named “Santa Claus” – shows up on the last day of Christmas. He supposedly comes from and returns to a place called the North Pole. From what the grapevine says, at the North Pole, it is Christmas all year. If a Cookie could get to such a place, he could live forever.

The Oracle doesn't believe the Santa Rumor, but the Cookiesmith does. There's only one way to find out the truth.



## Appendix A: Arsenal of Sweets

Some types of sweets are very common decorations for Gingerbread Cookies, and most have magical properties in the hands of those cookies. This is not a complete list of candies that can be used by Gingerbread Cookies, but it is what new Cookies can start with. Besides searching the house or visiting the Cookiesmith for more, the candies you create yourself are sometimes the most fun to play with.

### Black Licorice

Two-inch strips grow to a two-foot long of miniature ladder. Going up?

### Blue M&M

Thrown, this becomes a liberal splash of water. It can, among other things, extinguish small fires, enrage a cat, disintegrate part of a gingerbread house wall, or temporarily immobilize a cookie.

### Brown M&M

This is simply as hard as a rock, and will adhere to other brown M&Ms. They can be carved.

### Candy Corn

One piece can be used as a knife, and will be sharp enough to cut or puncture anything that isn't human or animal. Glows when giant spiders are nearby.

### Green M&M

By pulling this off and stomping on it, a Gingerbread Man becomes invisible for two minutes, but cannot use any other candies.

### Gumdrops

Not magical, but possibly handy.

### Orange M&M

This erupts into a thin cloud of gas which affects things with lungs. If inhaled, the affected drifts into a happy daydream for a full minute.

### Peanut

When a peanut is pulled off and stomped upon, it turns into a sticky paste with the holding power of glue, but not superglue.

### Pretzel

As a non-limb decoration, this can be used for flying, like a broomstick. It can only lift one Gingerbread Man at a time, and breaks in half as soon as the rider touches down.

### Red Licorice

Two inch strips stretch to a full two feet of super strong string. The string can be cut, but not broken

### Red M&M

When thrown, this will burst into a small rattling explosion. The noise is only loud enough to attract the attention of a wakeful human in the same room, or a sleeping animal in the next.



## Appendix A: Arsenal of Sweets

### Red-Hots

These glow a dull red and emit cookie-scorching, frosting-melting heat for several minutes.

### Spearmint Leaf

When eaten, this induces a peaceful happiness into cookies. Cookies are more vulnerable to suggestion when under the influence of spearmint leaves.

### Starburst Mints

This floats on water, and is steady enough that a Gingerbread Man can stand on it.

### Yellow M&M

After activation, this will glow for 10 minutes, casting a 2-foot radius circle of clear light.

### Not So Sweet, but Helpful Decorations

Depending on how picky the judge is, cookies who have these foods may be thrown in the trash, or worse, not selected to be shellacked and turned into a Christmas tree decoration.

### Chili Pepper

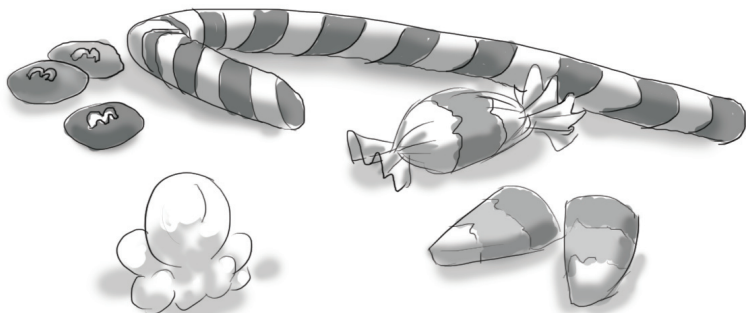
The fiery red powder, once pressed onto frosting, cannot be removed as a dry substance. When the Gingerbread Cookie uses the chili pepper, it forms a sticky paste. When this spicy paste is smeared onto a Cookie, the leavening agents in it remember the heat of Ovening, and expand again. Chili pepper causes a Gingerbread Cookie to grow three times its usual size for thirty seconds.

### Parsley

Oh, how decorative! One of these sprigs of green can be fanned to generate gusts of mystical wind. If the using cookie believes hard enough, the parsley wind can create scent-trails, erase scent-trails, or gust a small, airborne object off-track.

### Popcorn

Unpopped kernels come clustered together in groups of 4. The cookie using it must yell "Pop" at the top of its lungs to pop the kernel. An open piece of popcorn can cushion a fall (or jump) of 5 feet, or two pieces (one in each hand) can reduce any drop to "non-damaging" status.



## Appendix B: Non-Christmas Cookies

Despite the widespread celebration of Christmas, the tradition is not a part of all households. Instead of twelve days of magic, some families only have eight.

In homes that celebrate Chanukah, the baked ladies and fellows that run around the house are not mere cookies, but are Gingerbread Golems. When the forms are cut, spiced, and ready to be Ovened, the baker spends a bit of extra time with the cookies. A tiny piece of paper is pressed into the forehead of each raw Gingerbread Cookie, and the Baker whispers to it. Though the exact message changes each time, the last words are always, "...and keep it a secret."

Under the conditions of a shortened holiday, Gingerbread Cookies are sometimes more frantic, sometimes more peaceful. The attitude towards the time of magic often depends on the secret kept by each Cookie. Despite all secrets and antics, one feeling is shared by all: protectivity of the Family, their home, and fellow Gingerbread Cookies.

## Appendix C: The Sugar on Top: NPCs and Plot Elements from My Cookie World

### Mother Baker

Mother Baker pays a lot of attention to her cookies, but does not believe in their magic. When she sees a cookie missing an eye or its mouth, she will take the time to fix it. She likes gingerbread well enough, but if there is something healthier to eat nearby, Mother Baker usually chooses the non-cookie to munch on. Her favorite toppings are peanuts and pretzels.

### Family Father

The Family Father spends a lot of his time by the fire when he is home. The Cat does not like to stay in the same room with him. He loves gingerbread, but isn't supposed to eat any cookies. If Mother Baker is around, he won't take or eat any sweets, unless it is an Atkins Diet Cookie. Sometimes he brings home a box full of Atkins Cookies. They don't like to mingle much, and their secrets seem more like subversive plans. Unsupervised, the Family Father will pick out real Cookies with lots of M&Ms.

### Huckleberry

The Dog can also see cookie magic, but he is a friend to the Gingerbread Men. Or at least he tries to be. If there are no humans around,

the Dog must check his willpower against his sweet tooth (see sidebar). The Dog can be distracted and repelled the same way the Cat can, with a discarded cookie limb.

*To calculate the Dog's willpower, start with his Background of Dog, and the Background of Friendly to Gingerbread Men. To this, add one Advantage Die for each PC present that he has befriended. The Dog's sweet tooth has the Background of being a Sweet Tooth, plus one Advantage Die for each Gingerbread Cookie the Dog has eaten.*

### Circe

The Cat can see cookie magic, but if it doesn't attack her, it doesn't frighten her much. The threat of possible harm is often overcome by her sweet tooth. She can be scheming and sinister, bribing Gingerbread Men to cross their fellows and lure them into traps. The Cat has no preference, but will not attack if humans are around. To distract the Cat and temporarily defeat her, a PC can break off a cookie limb and throw it as a decoy. This removes a full limb from the cookie parts list, not just one word.

### The Muffin Man

The Muffin Man looks more like a muffin snowman than an actual human. He normally lives behind the toaster, trundling out twice a day to tend the blueberry plants that Mother Baker is growing. Normally they are kept in the kitchen window, to be protected from birds, but sometimes the bushes are taken outside. Those days, the Muffin Man hires a Gingerbread Cookie or two to make the journey with him. Safety in numbers, you know.

### The Angel

At the top of the Christmas tree is the Angel. She watches over the presents, the family room, and as much of the house as she can see. Sometimes this charge of "watching over" is a curse, for when she sees trouble, there is no way for her to leave her post. The Mayor of the Gingerbread Village has struck a deal with her. In exchange for the Gingerbread Cookies troubleshooting for the Angel, she will occasionally grant wishes to the brave Cookies who venture to visit her atop the 10-foot tree.

### The Un-Cookies

A coalition of Un-Cookies has risen up in the past year or so. This includes a Gingerbread Cookie magnet on the refrigerator, a Gingerbread Cookie block of cheese inside the fridge, ceramic Gingerbread Cookie ornaments on the tree, and normal Cookies that fell into the "junk drawer," and went native. This last group of Gingerbread Men and Ladies believe themselves to be made of cardboard, and use the tools of humans (thumbtacks, string, measuring tape, batteries, masking tape, and so on) to accomplish their goals.

### Neighbor Cookies

Crumble and crumble alike. You've wrapped up your latest case, when who should stumble over the fence but some funny shaped gingerbread cookies from next door. They say that somecookie fell into the pool. And their Baker lost her recipe. And do you have some spare tacks and hands to help hold up the lights?

# COOKIE SHEET

## PARTS

HEAD

RIGHT EYE

LEFT EYE

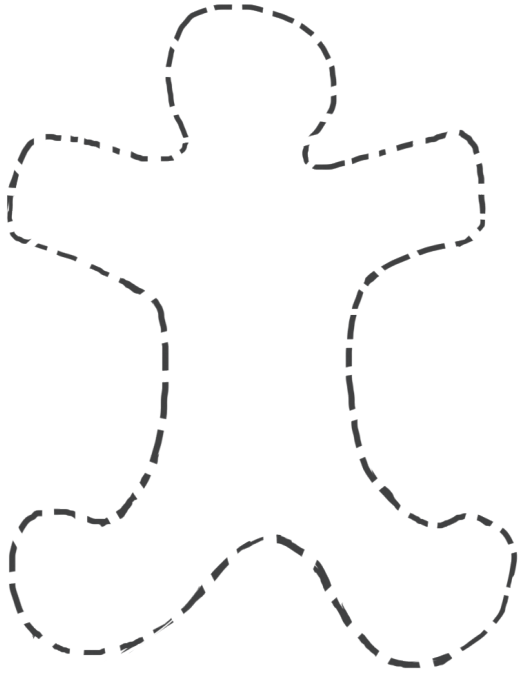
MOUTH

RIGHT ARM

LEFT ARM

RIGHT LEG

LEFT LEG



SECRET

## INVENTORY OF SWEETS

|       |       |
|-------|-------|
| ..... | ..... |
| ..... | ..... |
| ..... | ..... |
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