Shapeshifting

Summary

Shapeshifting is a specialised ability available to Heroes and adepts with significant levels of divine blood. It involves the physical transmutation of the body, allowing a practitioner to alter their appearance, gender, skin colour, and even species. This power is used by the Department of Resolutions for clandestine operations and is central to the tradecraft of high-level Skyssian agents.

Description

The Mechanics of Will

The process of shapeshifting relies upon two primary factors: a clear mental image of the desired form and the application of divine will. Unlike simple rituals, shapeshifting is a direct use of “Divine Intervention” magic where the hero's imagination shapes reality. To achieve a successful transformation, the practitioner must “have a clear picture in their head of what they want to happen and then will it.” Novices often require multiple attempts (sometimes as many as twenty) to lock a new image into their mind before their body successfully flows into the new shape.

Disguise and Humanoid Mimicry

Humanoid shapeshifting is an important tool for operational security. Practitioners use this ability to:

- **Gender and Age Alteration:** Female heroes can assume the form of men (and vice versa) to bypass social or military barriers. For example, Yngvild the Fierce assumed the persona of “Ingwald” to travel through Grunwald and Salicia.
- **Tactical Concealment:** Heroes can make themselves appear unarmed or “inconspicuous” even while carrying weapons or wearing battle gear. This effect ensures that “people see you as you want to be seen,” baffling sentries and checkpoint guards.

Animal Transmutation

Assuming the form of an animal is significantly more difficult than human mimicry. It requires a deep understanding of non-human anatomy. Practitioners must study how hind legs differ from human legs and how to account for unfamiliar appendages like tails, which are essential for balance.

- **Ursine Forms:** Members of Alfarinn's lineage, such as Alfinna, are known to assume the forms of bears to test seekers or travel through forests.
- **Avian Forms:** Agents like Inibrakemi Funeresdottir frequently use bird forms, such as the black-and-white Skua, for rapid reconnaissance and travel.
- **Canine Forms:** In populated environments, assuming the form of a common dog (such as the Galician sheepdog) is an effective way to monitor movements without attracting suspicion.

Limitations and Risks

Despite its power, shapeshifting has inherent limitations:

- **Sleep Vulnerability:** It takes significant practice to maintain a different shape while sleeping. Novice shapeshifters often revert to their natural forms when unconscious, which can lead to catastrophic failures in operational security.
- **Template Requirement:** It is always easier to assume a form when the practitioner has studied a physical template or has assumed that form before. Most heroes can only retain a small number of 'templates' in memory, so they tend to have some favoured looks.
- **Physical Anomalies:** A shapeshifter's skin or hair may take on unnatural hues if the mental image is imprecise, and "blushing" sensations are common during the transition.

Relationships

People

- Inibrakemi Funeresdottir: A master shapeshifter and mentor who taught the "will and image" method to the seekers.
- **Gudrid the Gull**: A legendary figure from the sagas whose name is synonymous with the mastery of avian transformation.

Concepts

- Heroes: The divinely-blooded individuals who possess the power to shift.
- Divine Intervention: The highest tier of magic to which shapeshifting belongs.

Skyss - Story Background	Characters	Skyss - Places	Pantheons of the World	Other Background

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