

A comprehensive, rules-light Old School fantasy role-playing game

- developed by -

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Featuring a DIY home-brew of original era fantasy gaming and modern game design theory.

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RULES FOR EVERYONE CHARACTERS & NPCS

The imaginary world that the *Players* will explore is populated by a cast of *Creatures*. The rules define *Creatures* as being one of the two following types:

- *Characters* controlled by the *Players*.
- Non-Player Characters (NPCs) and Monsters that are created and controlled by the GM.

TAKING TURNS & TIME

Every *Creature* has a *Turn*, on which they can *Move* and interact with the world with an *Action* - the *GM* will present and track these *Turns*, affecting what the *Creatures* can do in one of two ways:

- Moments are used during combat and represent split seconds - when everyone is attempting to act at once, often against one another.
- Minutes are used when exploring and adventuring. They represent a dozen or so real minutes - when time is not of the essence.

These abstract measures of time are written to be conversational in tone. **Moments** (called 'rounds' in other games) are fleeting, allowing enough time for quick and rapid **Actions** such as an **Attack**.

Minutes (called '**Turns**' in other games) function the same way but are longer than the quick and tense **Moments**, giving the **Creatures** more time to **Move**, think, and perform longer and more complicated **Actions**.

RELATIVE TIME

Time can scale up during periods of narrative play, instead of *Minutes* a *GM* may use *Hours* whilst in towns or areas of relative safety, or *Days* whilst resting or travelling large distances - a *Turn* still lets you *Move* and perform an *Action* as per normal. However, the scope of what can be achieved in that time increases.

OUICK EXAMPLES

If the **Characters** search for a hidden door, they each roll to see if they find it - perhaps taking them **Minutes**. If a Dragon attempts to tear them in two, they roll to **Defend** and evade its vicious jaws - happening in just **Moments**.

THE GM'S 'TURN'

The **GM** will respond to each **Character's Actions** by narrating the effects of each **Action** on the world, and then performing **Actions** and **Movements** in response by the appropriate **NPCs** and **Monsters**.

RESOLVING ACTIONS

Simple **Actions** are automatically successful - the **GM** just narrates what happens in reaction. However, if it's difficult or dangerous, with a chance of failure - the **GM** will ask the involved **Player** to roll an **Attribute Test** to determine the outcome of the **Action**.

CHARACTER ACTIONS & ATTRIBUTE TESTS

Every *Action* involving a *Character* that might fail or make the situation worse for the *Character* is resolved by *Testing* one of their six *Attributes*.

In order for their **Character** to succeed at an **Action**, a **Player** must **roll below** the **Attribute** on a d20.

Rolling **on or above** indicates things went poorly or that the *Action* did not go as planned. The *GM* will then narrate the outcome of the failed *Action* describing how the *Characters* are affected.

A *GM* never rolls dice to resolve *NPC* or *Monster Actions*, or negative elements of the environment such as traps - if they involve a *Character*, that *Player* will roll. Otherwise the *GM* will make a swift and fair judgement call that moves the story forward and abides by the logic of the unfolding fiction, taking notes if need be.

ADVANTAGE & DISADVANTAGE

A **GM** may decide that an **Action** or outcome isn't straightforward; perhaps something is more or less likely to happen - perhaps having a greater or lesser effect - this is called having an **Advantage** or a **Disadvantage**.

Advantage and **Disadvantage** means when a roll is being made, it should be made twice as follows:

- With Advantage the Player chooses which result to use.
- Disadvantage means the GM chooses the result to use.

Don't forget! This could apply to any die roll, such as damage, an item's *Usage Die* or a *Random Encounter Roll*. If a situation requires the *GM* to make a roll in secret with *Advantage*, then the *GM* should choose the result that is most favourable to the *Players*.

HIT DICE & HIT POINTS

Every *Character*, *NPC*, or *Monster* has something called a *Hit Die* (*HD*), accompanied by a number. This number represents their *Level* - for example a *Level* 6 Ogre has 6*HD* and a *Character* that has 3*HD* would be *Level* 3.

HD also indicate how many dice to roll to determine the number of **Hit Points** or **HP** a **Creature** begins the game with.

- **NPCs** and **Monsters** roll d8s for **HP**.
- *Characters* roll the dice given in their *Character* class for *HP* (p.11-14).

Hit Points are used to track how much damage something can take through physical and spiritual wear and tear. Bad things happen when a *Creature* runs out of *Hit Points* (p.5).

When a **GM** or **Player** first rolls to determine a **Creature's** starting **Hit Points**, this is the maximum they can ever have. No amount of healing, spells, or effects can take them beyond this amount. The only way for a **Creature** to increase their max **HP** is to gain a **Level** - when they do, a single **Hit Die** is rolled and the result is added to their maximum **HP**.

Rules for Experience and Levels are on p.6.

MOVEMENT & DISTANCE ABSTRACT DISTANCES

The Black Hack uses four range bands for measuring relative positions of **Characters**, other **Creatures**, and things in the world. From nearest to farthest:

Close, Nearby, Faraway and Distant.

These ranges are designed to support the narrative 'theatre of the mind' style of play, where a map and miniatures aren't being used. Therefore, it is useful if everything in the world is tracked by its relative distance from the various points of interest around it.

For example, in play a **GM** might narrate a room to the players by saying, "You are **Close** to the northern doorway, which is **Nearby** the fountain. The torch on the southern wall is **Faraway** from you."

CREATURE MOVEMENT

During their *Turn*, *Creatures* may normally *Move* somewhere *Nearby*. If a *Creature* is *Nearby* to something and decides to *Move* towards it, they're now *Close* to it. *Moving* shifts you one step along the range band, either closer to or further away from a *Creature*, object, or location.

TOKENS ARE USEFUL

Whilst a full range of miniatures isn't necessary to play *The Black Hack*, tokens such as coins or chess pieces may be extremely useful for tracking relative positions - such as who is behind or in front of someone and other complex situations like combat encounters.

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EXPLORING, DISTANCE & ACTIONS

Various interactions with the environment and the things in it will require *Characters* to be certain distances from the target. For example, to *Attack* someone with a sword a *Character* would need to be *Close* to them, to shoot them with a bow a *Character* should ideally be *Faraway*.

RELATIVE DISTANCES

These range bands scale up or down to any level, much like *Relative Time* (p.1). From adjacent rooms to towns and mountains, everything in the world can be defined by its relative distance to another point. During tense *Moments* it scales down significantly - *Close* being less than 5 ft. away and *Nearby* around 25 ft. away. While the *Characters* explore a location and they have *Minutes* at their disposal, a *Nearby* place could be the end of a path, over 250 ft. away.

CONVERTING MEASUREMENTS

Here are some approximate guides to converting real measurements or increments onto a battle mat - useful for miniatures and using adventures written for other games.

- Close roughly 5 ft. or 1 Square
- Nearby up to 30 ft. or 6 Squares
- Faraway up to 60 ft. or 12 Squares
- Distant beyond 60 ft. or 12 Squares

ATTACKING, DEFENDING S- DAMAGE INITIATIVE S- THE ORDER OF COMBAT

When combat breaks out, everyone must be sorted into an order, so they may each act and react in *Turn*. At the start of every *Moment* each *Player* rolls a *DEX Test* for their *Character*. Those that succeed, take their *Turn* before their *NPC* opponents. They must then discuss as a group to decide their own order for individual *Character Actions*. Those that fail their *DEX Tests*, act after their opponents.

ATTACKING & DEFENDING

As an *Action* a *Character* might choose to deal damage to an opponent with an *Attack*. Their *Player* must succeed at an *Attribute Test* before they can roll their *Attack Damage* dice and subtract the result from their opponent's *HP*.

Likewise, something will surely attempt to inflict damage in return and reduce a **Character's HP**. To **Defend** and avoid this damage the **Character** must succeed at an **Attribute Test**. The **GM** will determine what test to use for both **Attacking** and **Defending** using the guidelines below:

- Melee STR Attribute Tests for Attacking and Defending with swords and axes etc.
- Ranged DEX Attribute Tests for Attacking and Defending with bows and thrown weapons.

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ARMOUR

Each piece of armour a *Character* wears gives the *Player* a 'pool' of *Armour Dice*. Each *Armour Die* is a d6 and the number of d6s in the pool is equal to the *Armour Value* (*AV*) of the armour worn. For example, leather armour (*AV*2), gives a *Player* two *Armour Dice* in their pool.

- If a Character fails to Defend or would take damage they can take one Armour Die out of the pool, put it to one side and declare it 'Broken'. In return, this allows all damage from that Attack or effect to be ignored.
- Armour Dice that have been Broken and put to one side cannot be used to ignore any further damage.

After a *Rest*, any *Players* with *Broken Armour Dice* can try to fix them by rolling them:

- If they roll above the armour's AV the die is no-longer Broken.
- If they roll on or below their armour's
 AV, the die is Broken permanently
 until it's repaired. If all the Armour
 Dice in a pool are permanently Broken
 the armour is destroyed.

Armour Values do not stack. Only the armour with the highest **AV** counts. Shields and helmets add +1 each to the pool size, they do not modify the armour's **AV** value in any way.

ARMOUR	AV
Cloth / Improvised	1
Leather	2
Chain Mail	3
Plate & Mail	4
Shield / Helmet	+1 die

DAMAGE & HIT POINTS

If an **NPC** or **Monster** takes damage from an **Attack**, or a **Character** fails to **Defend**, they subtract damage from their total **Hit Points** (**HP**).

- When a *Character* or *NPC* is reduced to o*HP* they are unconscious and taken *Out of Action (OofA)*.
- When a *Monster* is reduced to OHP, it is removed from the game.

LARGE WEAPONS

When a *Character* wields a large or two-handed weapon such as a polearm or heavy crossbow, 1d4 should be rolled and added to the *Attribute Test* to *Attack*, *Defend*, and to any *Attack Damage* rolls.

CRITICAL HITS

When the result of a d20 roll to **Attack** is a natural **1** or a roll to **Defend** is a natural **20**, the damage dealt to the **Creature** is doubled.

HINDRANCES

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Certain abilities, magical effects and consequences of *Actions* will leave *Creatures* hindered until a successful *Attribute Test* of the *GM's* choosing is made, sometimes needing an *Action* to complete.

- Weakened All Attribute Tests are rolled with Disadvantage.
- Distracted A Character cannot perform any Actions, but may still Move normally.
- **Stuck** A *Character* cannot *Move*, but they may take *Actions* as per normal.
- Paralysed A Character cannot Move or take any Actions.

ONGOING DAMAGE

Some Attacks and spells deal damage to Creatures after their initial effects. When a Creature takes Ongoing Damage it loses HP equal to its Level at the start of every Turn. An Attribute Test of the GM's choosing should be made by the Player at the end of the Turn to see if the Ongoing Damage continues.

OUT OF ACTION (OoFA)

When a *Character* is taken *Out of Action* they can no longer take *Actions* or *Move*. When they receive aid, or the danger they were in passes, the *Character* must roll on the table below to see what happens to them.

 If they survive (results 1-5) they regain 1d4 HP counting up from zero and are no longer OofA.

If the *Character's* side loses the fight or are unable to recover the body of the *OofA Character*, they are lost forever - and presumed dead!

OUT OF ACTION

- 1 KO'd Just knocked out
- Fat Head *Disadvantage* on all tests for the next half hour of play
 - Cracked Bones Disadvantage on
- all **STR**, **DEX**, and **CON Tests** for the remainder of the session
- 4 **Disfigured CHA** reduced by 1d4
- Badly maimed either STR or DEX is permanently reduced by 2
- 6 **Dead** The **Character** dies!

LEVELS & EXPERIENCE GAINING EXPERIENCE

The Black Hack uses an abstract system of Experiences to measure a Character's development as they adventure and grow in power. Unlike in many other games, Characters don't earn points incrementally, all that matters is that a Character is able to Experience enough things that will change them as a person. There are a number of potential ways a Character can be awarded an Experience by the GM.

- Defeating a powerful 'named' enemy either in combat or by thwarting their schemes.
- Discovering the entrance or a newer, deeper level of a 'dungeon' or lair and begin exploring it.
- Rediscovering a magical artefact from a previous enlightened age.
- Completing a quest for an NPC.
- Overcoming, disabling, or surviving a deadly and powerful threat such as a magical trap or curse.
- Failing so spectacularly and in such dramatic fashion that everyone around the table agrees it's worth it.

USING EXPERIENCE TO GAIN LEVELS & POWER

Once a **Character** has acquired a number of **Experiences** equal to their current **Level** they may 'share' them to gain a **Level**. Eg, a **Level** 2 **Character** would need to share 2 **Experiences** to advance to **Level** 3.

 Each class gains something different when they go up a *Level*, see pages
 11-14 for each class' benefits.

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SHARING EXPERIENCE

In order for the *Character* to 'share' their *Experiences* - they must go carousing and regale their companions in revelry with stories of their exploits and growing renown. A *Player* who wishes their *Character* to share *Experiences* must:

- Tell the other *Players* one very short story from their *Character's* past - over a round of drinks and toasts - for each *Experience* they wish to share.
- The *Player* should roll 1d6 for each story told. This is the cost in coins that must be paid for the accompanying drinks and feasting if they don't have the coin the *GM* will determine the amount of debt they owe and to whom.
- Find the highest result rolled on any of the d6 and consult the Carousing table below.

CAROUSING

- **Drunk and Disorderly!:** Fined for bad behaviour - roll all the d6s again, adding to the cost
- Drunken brawl: Lose a number of Max *HP* equal to the *Character's Level*, regain them next session
- Fame: *CHA Tests* have *Advantage* for the remainder of the session
- 4 **Revelry!:** Roll a d20, if it's higher than **CHA**, gain 1 point of **CHA**
- 5 **Real story:** Alter a *Background*
- 6 **Secrets revealed:** Gain another entirely new *Background*

RULES FOR THE PLAYERS CHARACTER TURNS

Every **Character** normally gets to do two things on their **Turn**: **Move** somewhere **Nearby**, and perform an **Action**. Anything a **Character** does to interact with or impact the state of the world is considered an **Action**. They may alternatively forgo their **Action** and make

an extra Move instead.

The length and complexity of the **Action** must match the amount of time the **Character** has to complete it. The **GM** determines the time, either **Moments** or **Minutes**. Often when there is no danger or intrigue involved, **Hours** and **Days** might be used to allow for longer or more complex **Actions**.

LIMITED RESOURCES AND THE USAGE DIE

When an item described has *Ud* and then a number after its name, it is considered to be a consumable, limited item. The '*Ud*' stands for *Usage Die*, the number indicating what size die it is. For example, oil (*Ud6*) has a *Usage Die* of 1d6.

When that item is used its *Usage Die* should be rolled. If the result is 1-2 then the *Usage Die* is downgraded to the next smallest die in the following chain:

Ud20 > Ud12 > Ud10 > Ud8 > Ud6 > Ud4

When you roll a 1-2 on a d4 - the lowest die in the chain - the item is expended, and the **Character** has no more of it left.

USAGE DIE & AMMUNITION

When tracking the *Usage Die* for ammunition such as arrows and bullets, roll the *Ud* after the combat is resolved.

ARMOUR PROFICIENCY

If a **Character** wears armour that is not listed in their class - they should add its **Armour Value** to the d20 result when making any **Attribute Tests**.

RESTING

When **Characters** take an **Hour** to **Rest**, they may roll any **Broken Armour Die** to see if it is **Broken** permanently and needs repairing by an armourer, or can be used again as per normal.

After an **Hour's Rest** a **Player** may roll one of the **Character's HD** and regain that many **HP**.

For every **Day** of narrative story time spent resting - taking no **Strength** or **Dexterity Attribute Tests**, a **Character** may roll all of their **HD** and recover that many **HP**.

HEALING

Characters can recover **Hit Points** from spells, potions, resting and abilities. Regardless of how many **Hit Points** are healed, the **Character** can never recover more than their maximum **HP**.

If a **Character** who is **Out of Action** recovers **HP**, but hasn't rolled on the **OofA** table yet, start at zero and count up. That **Character** is now back on their feet and no longer **OofA**.

USING BACKGROUNDS TO GAIN ADVANTAGE

Once per session, a *Player* may tell the *GM* that their *Character* is using a *Background* to aid them in making an *Attribute Test*. The *Player* should give a convincing narrative explanation as to how their *Character's Background* relates to the current *Action*, and provide some kind of useful exposition about the *Character's* story.

If the **GM** agrees - the **Player** may roll that **Attribute Test** with **Advantage**.

INVENTORY

A *Character* may happily carry a number of items up-to or equal to their *STR*.

- Carrying more items than their STR means they are Encumbered and ALL Attribute Tests are taken with Disadvantage.
- Characters simply cannot carry a number of items more than double their STR.

BANISHING UNDEAD

Clerics may attempt to **Banish Nearby** undead **Monsters** as an **Action**. They must test their **WIS** adding the **Creatures'** highest **HD** to the roll for each group of undead that they are attempting to **Banish** (groups are determined by the **GM** when unclear).

Undead *Monsters* that are *Banished* take damage equal to the Cleric's *Level* and must spend all their future *Movement* (and convert *Actions* to *Movement*) so they are *Distant* from the Cleric that *Banished* them. A successful banishment lasts for 1d4 + the banishing Cleric's *Level* in *Moments*.

MAGIC & SPELLS

Wizards and Clerics - known as **Spellcasters** - have the ability to memorise and cast spells and prayers, chosen from their class list (p.15-16).

MEMORISING SPELLS

Once per **Day** a **Spellcaster** may spend an hour memorising a number of spells or prayers equal to their **Level**, from scrolls and books. A **Spellcaster** can only memorise spells or prayers from levels up to and equal to their own **Level**.

CASTING SPELLS

A *Spellcaster* can spend an *Action* on their *Turn* to cast a spell or prayer from memory. Once the effects of the spell have been resolved, the *Spellcaster* should make an *Attribute Test* - adding the spell's or prayer's level to the roll. If they have already cast the spell this session, the *Attribute Test* is made with *Disadvantage*. If they fail, the spell or prayer is no longer memorised.

When *Turns* are being tracked using *Minutes* a *Spellcaster* may spend an *Action* to attempt to cast a spell or prayer by reading it from a book or scroll. To do so they must make an *Attribute Test* - adding the spell's or prayer's level to the roll. If they succeed, it is cast. If they fail, it misfires and the *Player* should roll on the *Magical Side Effects* table (p.43 in the main rule book).

A **Spellcaster** can only cast spells up to and equal to their **Level**.

Arcane spells use *Intelligence* and prayers use *Wisdom* for all *Attribute Tests*.

CREATING A CHARACTER ROLLING DICE AND FINDING A CONCEPT

The first step to creating a memorable *Character* is coming up with an engaging 'concept'. In your mind, think of one sentence that summarises who the *Character* is, and what might make them interesting to play.

To figure out all the rules and mechanics, follow steps **A**, **B**, **C**, and **D**.

A ROLL DICE FOR THEIR ATTRIBUTES

Characters have six defining **Attributes** that are listed to the right, along with what each attribute is and what it relates to in the rules. They define everything about the **Character** - how strong, dexterous, resilient, intelligent, wise, and charismatic they are.

- Take 3d6 and roll them, adding them together. Do this for each of the *Attributes* to the right in order writing the results in pencil, next to the *Attributes* on a *Character* sheet.
- If you roll 14+, don't roll dice for the next Attribute - instead it will be 7.
 Roll again as per normal after this.

B SWAP TWO ATTRIBUTES

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Swap the values of two *Attributes* around if it suits the *Character's* concept better.

Strength (STR)

Physical power and Melee Attacks

Dexterity (DEX)

Swiftness, agility and Ranged Attacks

Constitution (CON)

Resilience and physical well being

Intelligence (INT)

Knowledge, judgement and Arcane Spells

Wisdom (WIS)

Cunning, perception and Divine Prayers

Charisma (CHA)

Influence and power of personality

G CHOOSE A CLASS

Choose a class from pages 11 to 14, this determines what sort of adventurer they are and what innate abilities they have. The four choices are:

Warrior, Thief, Cleric and Wizard.

Each class will also determine how much damage a starting *Character* can take - measured in *Hit Points*, also what armour they can use, damage they deal when they *Attack*, and what they gain as they advance in *Levels*.

MAKE A BACKGROUND

Use the information on the next page to create a unique piece of history that will aid the *Character* on their adventures, frame their story, and who they are.

USING A CHARACTER'S BACKGROUND

Backgrounds are significant times in a **Character's** past life that give them **Advantages** in their current exploits. They can represent all manner of experiences, skills and moments in a **Character's** past - helping define who they were before their current adventures, and what type of **Actions** they are good at now.

HOW TO MAKE A GOOD BACKGROUND

Decide on a short sentence that encapsulates an interesting time in the **Character's** past - consider the following:

- Backgrounds should ideally contain one piece of world-building fiction, allowing a Player to craft a narrative tie to the game world, and a story element unique to their Character.
- It should also reveal one specific skill or narrow field of proficiency or knowledge, that they learned or relied upon during this time.

Here are some short example backgrounds and a table of inspiration to help get started:

"Once spent a summer in Yvesh hunting the Black Banner. Made a lot of enemies. Tracked down most of them 'n' killed 'em."

"I was raised as a sewer child of Sorrowset, pickpocketing and hiding in the shadows was my way of survival."

"Being raised up to Brother Chaplain in the 11th Legion taught me all I need to know about tactical warfare and death." "I lived with the Black Hill tribes. I learned to live off the land. Learned to hate the Black Baron's dog soldiers too."

"I'm a Loremaster for the Magisteriat of Bulgator Craxis - the ONLY thing I don't know is why the Council want me dead."

"A hefty price is on my head from the Black Bank! They don't take kindly to being conned out of large sums of money."

"The Black Wind took me from the forest in my youth. Humans of Gloomhaven raised orphaned elves such as myself."

"It's been 100 years since I was young but by my beard I know nothing of the surface - the deep mountain highways are like veins to my heart - a true dwarf."

D12	INSPIRATION
1	Raised as a poor street child
2	Escaped being held prisoner
3	Won freedom through valour
4	Reputation ruined by vices
5	Fleeing a broken noble house
6	Sold to a wizard as a child
7	Fought a distant, useless war
8	Smuggler of illegal goods
9	Chosen as a god's instrument
10	Survived an arcane disaster
11	Child of political exiles
12	Lost heir to an old throne

WARRIOR

Starting Hit Points (HP): roll 1d4 + 6 Starting Hit Die (HD): 1d8 Usable Weapons & Armour: Any and all

Attack Damage: See 'Dealer of Death'

D6	WAR TROPHY
1	Scalp of an enemy chieftain
2	Vial of widow's tears
3	My lord's sundered shield
4	Ears from a goblin tribe
5	An enemy's heraldic banner
6	A dragon-tooth pendant

EOUIPMENT

Every **Warrior** starts with a Decorative Shield displaying their heraldic device. which the *Player* should design. Also choose to start the game with either A or B:

- **A** Scale tunic (**AV**2), a one-handed weapon, large shield (+1 Armour Die), 2d6 coins, unopened orders.
- **B** Thick hide (**AV**2), tin helm (+1 Armour Die), two-handed weapon, 4d6 coins, war paint, book of grudges.

SELF RELIANT

When rolling Broken Armour Die a Warrior may re-roll results of 1.

SHIELD BASH

When you are **Attacked** in melee combat whilst holding a shield and your roll to **Defend** is 1-5, the attacker takes damage equal to your Level

DEALER OF DEATH

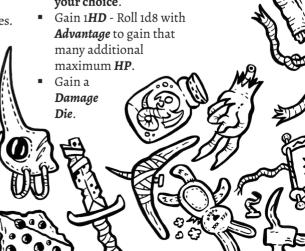
A Warrior has a 'pool' of Damage Dice (d6s) equal to their **HD**.

- When making an **Attack** distribute any number of these **Damage Dice** among any number of **Nearby** targets.
- For each target the *Player* assigns the Damage Dice, the Player must come up with an exciting and bespoke narration for the **Attack**.
- Make an **Attribute Test** for each target to see if it is hit, if so, roll the **Damage Dice** assigned to it and reduce its **HP** by that amount.
- The pool of **Damage Dice** resets at the start of the Warrior's Turn.

WHEN YOU GAIN A **NEW LEVEL**

Acquire and share a number of **Experiences** equal to your current **HD** to advance a Level. When you gain a Level:

 Roll a d2.0 once for each Attribute - if you roll over, it goes up one point, make an extra roll for one Attribute of your choice.



THIEF

Starting Hit Points (HP): roll 1d6 + 2 **Starting Hit Die (HD):** 1d6

Usable Weapons & Armour: All onehanded swords, all bows, daggers, cloth, leather, small shield

Attack Damage: 1d6 or 1d4 if unarmed

D6 LUCKY CHARM

- 1 Oversized moon-shaped coin
- 2 Bag of knuckle bones
- 3 Locket with a portrait
- 4 Praying hand tattoo
- 5 Eyepatch (both eyes are fine)
- 6 Fishhook made of gold

EQUIPMENT

Every **Thief** starts with a *Disguise* of your choosing. Also choose to start the game with either A or B:

- A Black leather hood & vest (AV2),
 2 short swords, 2d8 counterfeit
 coins, stolen heart still beating.
- **B** Cloth gambeson (**AV**1), bow & arrows (**Ud8**), 3d6 coins, a small waxy jade statue of an octopus-man.

ROGUISH TALENTS

Roll **Attribute Tests** with **Advantage** when performing the following **Actions**:

- Delicate tasks
- Climbing

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- Listening and eavesdropping
- Moving silently and unseen
- Understanding written languages
- Finding secret things

NIMBLE EXPERTISE

Roll with **Advantage** when testing **Dexterity** to avoid damage or effects from traps and magical devices.

SNEAK ATTACK

If a *Thief* has *Moved* silently to get behind a *Creature*, and they are unaware of the *Thief's* presence, the *Thief* may make an *Attack* that automatically hits and deals 2d6 + the *Thief's Level* damage.

DEEP & MURKY PAST

At the start of the gaming session roll 1d10, if the result is **below** your current **Level** - you can customise or entirely change your **Background**.

A DAGGER FOR EVERY OCCASION

Regardless of what the **Thief** is carrying, they can produce a small throwing knife from somewhere about their person.

GAINING A NEW LEVEL

Acquire and share a number of **Experiences** equal to your current **HD** to advance a **Level**. When you gain a **Level**:

- Roll a d20 once for each Attribute

 if you roll over, it goes up one
 point, make an extra roll for either

 Dexterity or Wisdom.
- Gain 1HD Roll 1d6 gain that many additional maximum HP.



CLERIC

Starting Hit Points (HP): roll 1d6 + 4 Starting Hit Die (HD): 1d8

Usable Weapons & Armour: All blunt weapons, cloth, leather, mail, all helmets, all shields

Attack Damage: 1d6 or 1d4 if unarmed

1 Mummified pointing hand 2 Ornately engraved crescent 3 Small vial of divine blood 4 Flaming brass hammer 5 Face made of thorns 6 Thrice knotted cord

EQUIPMENT

Every *Cleric* starts with a *Prayer Book* containing 1d4+2 prayers of your choosing from levels 1 & 2 (p.16). Also choose to start the game with either A or B:

- A Studded hide breastplate (AV2), flail, shield (+1 Armour Die), 2d8 coins and purse, forbidden holy scriptures.
- B Thick cloth vestments (AV1), two handed hammer, tiny stone box with a voice trapped in it.

BANISH UNDEAD

A *Cleric* may spend an *Action* to *Banish* all *Nearby* undead by testing their *WIS* and adding the *Creatures' HD* to the roll. For full *Banish Undead* rules see p.8.

DIVINE FORTIFICATION

Roll with **Advantage** when making a **CON Attribute Test** to resist poisons or being **Paralysed** or impeded.

MEMORISING PRAYERS

Once per *Day*, a *Cleric* may spend an *Hour* memorising a number of prayers equal to their *Level*, from scrolls and books.

A *Cleric* can only memorise prayers of levels up to and equal to their current *Level* (p.16).

INVOKING PRAYERS

A *Cleric* can spend an *Action* on their *Turn* to cast a prayer from memory. Once the effects are resolved, the *Cleric* should make an *Attribute Test* - adding the prayer's level to the roll. If they have already cast the spell this session this *Attribute Test* is made with *Disadvantage*. If they fail, the prayer is no longer memorised, and the *Cleric* cannot cast the prayer until they memorise it again.

For expanded spellcasting rules see p.8.

GAINING A NEW LEVEL

Acquire and share a number of **Experiences** equal to your current **HD** to advance a **Level**. When you gain a **Level**:

- Roll a d20 once for each Attribute if you roll over, it goes up one point, make an extra roll for either Strength or Wisdom.
- Gain 1HD Roll 1d8 gain that many additional maximum HP.



WIZARD

Starting Hit Points (HP): roll 1d4 Starting Hit Die (HD): 1d4

Usable Weapons & Armour: Cloth, one-

handed sword, staff, dagger

Attack Damage: 1d4 or 1 if unarmed

D6	FAMILIAR
1	A 6-inch tall moon-faced man
2	Spellbook with legs and tail
3	Three eyed hummingbird
4	Small swarm of ladybugs
5	A toad with human legs
6	Luminescent crab

EQUIPMENT

Every **Wizard** starts with a *Spellbook* containing **1d4+2 spells of your choosing** from spell levels 1 and 2 (p.15). Also choose to start the game with either A or B:

- **A** Cloth robes (**AV**1), bent oak staff, short sword, a void creature's egg, 2d8 coins & purse.
- **B** Ceremonial headdress (**AV**1), angry shrunken head, 4d6 coins & purse, sacrificial dagger.

ARCANE FORTUNE

If you roll a 1 for starting *Hit Points* - generate a random magical item from p.114-115 in the main rule book as part of either of the starting equipment choices.

MEMORISING SPELLS

Once per *Day* a *Wizard* can spend an *Hour* memorising a number of spells equal to their *Level*, from scrolls and books.

A *Wizard* can only memorise spells of levels up to and equal to their current *Level* (p.15).

CASTING SPELLS

A *Wizard* may spend an *Action* on their *Turn* to cast a spell from memory. Once the effects are resolved, the *Wizard* should make an *Attribute Test* - adding the spell's level to the roll. If they have already cast the spell this session this *Attribute Test* is made with *Disadvantage*. If they fail, the spell is no longer memorised, and the *Wizard* cannot cast the spell until they memorise it again.

For expanded spellcasting rules see p.8.

GAINING A NEW LEVEL

Acquire and share a number of Experiences equal to your current HD to advance a Level. When you gain a Level:

Roll a d20 once for each Attribute

 if you roll over, it goes up one
 point, make an extra roll for either

 Intelligence or Wisdom.

 Gain 1HD - Roll 1d4 - gain that many additional maximum HP.



SPELLS

Charm: A Nearby NPC or Monster obeys a simple command and will perform a simple Action. Magic Missile: A Faraway or Distant target takes 1d6 damage for each of the Spellcaster's Levels. **Light:** Creates dim light from a **Nearby** spot or object that lasts for **Ud**8 **Minutes**.

Shield: Gives the caster Arcane Mail (AV2) - when each Armour Die is Broken it's gone for good.

Sleep: Roll the **Wizard's HD. Nearby Creatures** with fewer **HP** than rolled fall asleep - lasts **Ud6 Minutes**. **Detect Magic:** Everything **Nearby** that is magic glows - lasts **Ud**6 **Minutes**.

Knock/Lock: A Nearby door or lock is either opened or locked.

Web: Traps a *Nearby* area, stopping movement - lasts *Ud*6 *Minutes*.

Darkness: Pure darkness covers a **Nearby** area and blocks all types of vision - lasts **Ud6 Minutes**. **Dispel Magic:** Removes or reverses the effects of a **Nearby** Arcane spell.

Magic Mouth: Creates an illusory mouth that repeats a phrase to all Nearby Creatures. **Read Languages/Magic:** Read all languages and magic - lasts **Ud**12 **Minutes**.

Invisibility: A *Nearby Creature* is made invisible until it *Attacks* or the spell is dispelled. Fireball: 1d4 Nearby Creatures take 1d6 damage for each of the Spellcaster's Levels. Darkvision: A Nearby Creature can see in absolute darknesss - lasts Ud6 Minutes. **Confusion:** 2d6 *Nearby* targets immediately make a *Reaction Roll* (p.31 in the main rule book).

Telekinesis: As an **Action**, the **Spellcaster** may **Move** a **Nearby** object - lasts **Ud10 Minutes**. **Polymorph Self/Other:** Transform a *Nearby Creature* to have the appearance of another for a *Day*. Remove Curse: Removes a curse from a Nearby target. **Elemental Wall:** Wall of one of the four elements (air, earth, fire, or water) covers a **Nearby** area, any Creature that comes Close takes damage equal to its HD.

Dimension Door: Teleport a target to a **Distant** location.

Animate Dead: Reanimate 2d4 Nearby corpses. Each has half the Spellcaster's HD and is under the effects of Charm.

Flesh to Stone: *Turns* a *Nearby Creature* into stone (or vice versa). Feebleminded: Reduces a Nearby target's INT to 4 - lasts Ud6 Moments.

Elemental: Create an elemental (p.91 in the main rule book) with 1d6 **HD**. It is under the effect of *Charm*. **Invisible Stalker:** Summons an extra-dimensional monster (1d6 *HD*) to perform a complex task. **Cloudkill:** Creates a cloud **Nearby**, **Creatures** that touch it are taken **OofA** - lasts **Ud4 Moments**. **Teleport:** Transports a *Nearby* target to any place known to the *Spellcaster*.

Anti-Magic Shell: Cancels all Arcane magic **Nearby** to the caster - lasts **Ud**6 **Moments**. Death Spell: 2d4 Nearby targets with 7HD or fewer are taken OofA. **Contact Higher Plane:** Ask three questions and receive truthful answers from the outer gods.

Meteor Swarm: Nearby Creatures take 8d6 damage.

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Conjuration of Daemons: Summons a daemon (p.84-85 in the main rule book) with 1d8 HD that is under the effect of a *Charm* spell - the caster must make a *INT Test* to maintain the *Charm*. **Disintegrate:** A single **Nearby Creature** of lower **Level** than the **Spellcaster** turns into a fine powder.

Power Word, Kill: A Nearby Creature with 50HP or less dies and cannot be resurrected. **Level Drain**: A **Nearby Creature** must **Test** its **CON**, if they fail that **Test** they lose a **Level** and all its benefits. **Time Stop:** Stops time completely in a *Nearby* area - lasts *Ud4 Moments*. **Limited Wish:** Change reality in a minor and limited way (at the **GM's** discretion).

IvI

PRAYERS

Cure Light Wounds: Heal a Nearby target 1d8 HP.

Detect Evil: Everything **Nearby** that is evil glows - lasts **Ud**6 **Minutes**.

Light: Create dim light from a Nearby spot or object - lasts Ud8 Minutes.

Protection from Evil: Advantage on all harmful tests against an evil source - lasts Ud8 Minutes.

Purify Food and Drink: Purifies all Nearby food and drink.

Bless: Nearby allies gain +1 to stats when making Attacks and saves - lasts Ud8 Minutes.

Find Traps: Notice all Nearby traps - lasts Ud6 Minutes.

Hold Person: Paralyses 1d4 Nearby targets. Test WIS each Turn to see if the effect lasts.

Silence: Magical silence covering everything **Nearby** to a target - lasts **Ud**8 **Minutes**.

Speak with Animals: Can understand and talk with animals - lasts **Ud**8 **Minutes**.

Daylight: A **Nearby** area is illuminated by sunlight - lasts **Ud**8 **Minutes**.

Cure Disease: Cures a **Nearby** target of all diseases.

Locate Object: Sense the direction of a known object - lasts **Ud**6 **Minutes**.

Prayer: All Nearby allies Defend against Attacks with Advantage - lasts Ud4 Moments.

Remove Curse: Removes a curse from a **Nearby** target.

Speak with the Dead: Ask a *Nearby* corpse three questions.

Create Food/Water: Create enough food/water for all *Close Creatures* for one *Day*.

Cure Serious Wounds: Heal a Nearby target 3d8+3 HP.

Neutralise Poison: Instantly remove a poison or immunise a **Nearby** target from poison.

Protect: Gives Nearby Characters Aura (AV2) - when each Armour Die is Broken it's gone for good.

Commune: The *Cleric's* deity truthfully answers 3 questions.

Dispel Evil: Removes a **Nearby** evil spell.

Finger of Death: Choose a Nearby evil Monster and make a WIS test. If passed the target is OofA.

Plague: Test WIS. On a success 1d12 Nearby targets lose 2d8 HP and take Ongoing Damage.

Quest: Force a *Nearby Creature* to obey a complex series of up to 2d4 orders or steps.

Raise Dead: Return a **Nearby** willing target to life, who's died within the last seven **Days**.

Animate Object: Give a **Nearby** object motion and a simple intelligence.

Blade Barrier: Blades cover a Nearby area, any Creature that comes Close takes its HD in damage.

Conjure Elemental: Create an elemental (p.91 in the main rule book) with **HD** equal to caster's **Level**

- lasts **Ud**12 **Minutes**.

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Find Path: The path to a chosen location is made known - lasts **Ud**10 **Minutes**.

Word of Recall: Gives the caster the ability to teleport back to the location this spell was cast.

Astral Spell: Projects an avatar of the caster into a chosen place - lasts **Ud**8 **Minutes**.

Control Weather: Controls the *Nearby* weather to all extremes - lasts *Ud*6 *Minutes*.

Earthquake: Test WIS for each Nearby Creature, on a success, they are taken OofA.

Holy Word: Nearby Creatures with 5HD or less drop dead, those with 6-8HD are Paralysed and Creatures with 9-10HD cannot make an Action for the next 1d6 Minutes.

Wind Walk: The caster may turn into mist and back, at will for the rest of the session.

Restoration: Returns all Levels lost by the caster or a single Nearby Creature via Level drain.

RULES FOR THE GM

PLAYING A GAME STEP BY STEP

The **GM** should use these steps to help structure and run the game, they work regardless of where the **Characters** are, or what they are doing, and create a **Turn** structure using **Minutes** for exploration or **Moments** for combat and danger.

- 1. Quickly recap the last Turn's Actions.
- 2. If you're using *Minutes* to track time anyone with a *Light* source should roll its *Usage Die*. Roll any other time sensitive *Ud* rolls now as well.
- 3. Figure out who can act right now, rolling *Initiative* if enemies or dangerous circumstances are involved. Ask those players "What do you want to do for the next few *Minutes/Moments?*" Then narrate those *Actions* and the outcomes of any *Attribute Tests* you call for.
- 4. Narrate the *Actions* of *NPCs* and the environment around the players.
- Make sure everyone has acted who is able, make a *Random Encounter Roll* (p.19) if necessary.
- 6. Go to Step 1 and repeat.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT ATTRIBUTE TO TEST

Anything that a *Character* might do to interact with the world and has a legitimate chance of failure - requires an *Attribute Test* to determine the outcome.

Here are some guiding concepts behind what *Actions* each *Attribute Test* governs.

Strength (STR)

- Physical harm which *cannot* be dodged.
- Athletics and Actions such as running, lifting, and bearing weight.
- Melee combat and any attempt to restrain or *Move* an opponent through force.

Dexterity (DEX)

- Physical harm which *can* be dodged.
- Acrobatics and Actions such as jumping, accuracy, and balancing.
- Remaining unnoticed.
- Ranged combat and any attempt to hit or interact with a swift opponent.

Constitution (CON)

- Poison, disease, or death magic.
- Healing and endurance.
- Actions that rely on physical resolve and longevity.

Intelligence (INT)

- Resisting spells and magic.
- Recalling lore and languages.
- Knowing 'what' you're supposed to do.

Wisdom (WIS)

- Seeing through deception and illusions.
- Searching and listening.
- Knowing 'when' you're supposed to do something.

Charisma (CHA)

- Resisting *Charm* type magic effects.
- Persuasion and performance.
- Imposing your will onto another.



BACKGROUNDS AND ATTRIBUTE TESTS

If a player can provide a convincing narrative reason, they may use their **Background** to give them **Advantage** on an **Attribute Test** of their choice. They may only do this once per session.

DEALING DAMAGE TO THE CHARACTERS

Damage dealt to the *Characters* can be based on the *HD* of whatever is dealing it. A *GM* can roll the dice to determine how much damage the *Characters* take or use the average in brackets.

HD	DAMAGE
1	1d4 (2)
2	1d6 (3)
3	2d4 (4)
4	1d10 (5)
5	1d12 (6)
6	1d6 + 1d8 (7)
7	2d8 (8)
8	3d6 (9)
9	2d10 (10)
10	1d10 + 1d12 (11)

POWERFUL FOE

If an opponent's **HD** is higher than the **Character's**, the **Player** should add the difference between the two **HD** values to the d20 when making any **Attribute Tests** to **Attack, Defend,** influence, or otherwise interfere with their opponent.

CREATURE REACTIONS

Some *Monsters* and *NPCs* will have predetermined personalities and goals that will guide a *GM* when choosing their *Actions* and feelings towards the *Characters*. For those that do not, such as randomly encountered *Creatures*, a *GM* should roll 2d6 on the *Reactions* table:

	REACTIONS
2	Surrender/offer allegiance
3	Give PCs an item/info/aid
4	A mutually beneficial trade
5	Mistake the PCs for allies
6	Wait for the PCs to act first
7	Withdraw to a safer location
8	Demand the PCs withdraw - if they don't add 1d6 to this result
9	Call for 1d6 reinforcements - then see result 6 on this table
10	Trick the PCs using result 2-4 (roll again for true intentions)
11	Capture the PCs
12+	Kill/eat the PCs

CREATURE MORALE

If 50% of a group of **NPCs** or **Monsters** are taken **OofA**, or a single powerful **NPC** or **Monster** loses 50% of its **HP** - they must pass a **Morale Test** or use all further **Actions** and **Movements** to escape danger and combat.

 The GM tests Morale by rolling on or under the highest Creature's HD value with a d12.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS WHAT AND WHY?

A **Random Encounter** could be anything from a **Distant**, suspenseful noise to a **Nearby** deadly **Monster**. They serve two major purposes; firstly, they ensure that the 'game' will always offer unexpected situations for the **Players** to tackle. Secondly, they reinforce the fact that the world the **Characters** belong to exists beyond their own **Actions** in it.

HOW TO MAKE AN ENCOUNTER ROLL

The **GM** should make a secret **Encounter Roll** every 15 minutes of real time play in dangerous environments OR when the **Characters** linger in one place/perform **Actions** that would reveal themselves.

 Secretly roll 1d6 and apply the effects from the table below immediately:

D6 ENCOUNTER ROLL

- 1 Introduce a *Creature* to encounter
- 2 Introduce signs of **Nearby** life
- 3 Introduce signs of *Faraway* life
- 4 Reduce a light's *Usage Die* 1 step
 - A randomly determined **Character**
- 5 is overcome with stress and suffers **Disadvantage** on their next die roll
 - All **Characters** must consume food
- 6 and water or lose **HP** equal to their **Level** through fatigue

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D6 NEARBY LIFE

- 1 Bloody, still wet footprints
- 2 Still warm abandoned camp
- 3 Irregular approaching footsteps
- 4 Rancid smell of body odour
- 5 Knocking from a closed door
- 6 Nearby yelp of pain

D6 FARAWAY LIFE

- 1 Quiet shouts and fighting
- 2 Delicate wisps of black smoke
- 3 Echoing bangs and clanking
- 4 Quiet drumming and chanting
- 5 Faint smell of burning flesh
- 6 Low muffled sounds of talking



EQUIPMENT & ECONOMY

COINS AND MONEY

The Black Hack simplifies realistic approaches to currency and uses a base unit of 'coins'. A GM or group can easily introduce a more granular currency system if they wish.

ECONOMY BASED ON RARITY & VALUE

It's simpler for the **GM** to classify things by their rarity and roll to see how much that item would cost as-and-when it is sought out. If something is not on the following lists, it's simply a case of the GM deciding how rare or how valuable it is.

Common/Cheap (1d8 coins) ■ arrows/ ammunition (Ud8) \blacksquare backpacks/sacks \blacksquare candles (*Ud*₄) ■ canvas/cloth ■ 10ft chain ■ chalk (Ud6) ■ commoner's garb ■ crowbar & labourer's tools ■ flasks/ wineskin ■ grappling hook ■ climbing gear ■ flint & steel ■ garlic/herbs (**Ud**6) ■ ink & quill (Ud6) ■ jug of oil (Ud6)

■ one-handed weapon ■ light bow ■ parchment ■ 10ft pole ■ pots/cooking

utensils \blacksquare 50ft rope \blacksquare rations - dried (*Ud*8) ■ wax (Ud4) ■ whistle ■ iron spikes (Ud6)

■ small tent ■ torches (Ud6) ■ cloth

armour (AV1) ■ one Broken cloth Armour **Die** ■ shield ■ helmet.

Rare/Valuable (2d8 x 5 coins):

■ custom or exotic weapon ■ two-handed weapon ■ heavy bow ■ crossbow

 \blacksquare caltrops (*Ud*6) \blacksquare disguise \blacksquare well-made clothing \blacksquare holy symbol \blacksquare holy water (Ud6)

■ lock ■ musical instrument ■ thieves' toolkit ■ roll twice for leather armour (AV2) ■ one Broken leather Armour Die. Exotic/Expensive (4d8 x 10 coins)

■ fine jewellery ■ alchemical ingredients $(Ud_4) \blacksquare poison (Ud_6) \blacksquare sextant &$ navigation tools ■ accurate map

■ materials for alchemy and magic

■ roll three times for chain mail (AV3)

■ one Broken chain mail Armour Die

■ roll four times for plate armour (**AV**4)

■ one Broken plate Armour Die.

THE USAGE DIE

Consumable items use a die to track their quantity and inject a little drama into otherwise boring bookeeping. Here are the average rolls or 'Uses' for each **Ud** before it is consumed.

UD	USES
d4	2
d6	5
d8	9
d10	14
d12	20
d20	30

HAGGLING

It is not uncommon for a player to want to haggle with a merchant over the cost of an item. If they roleplay the encounter well, or if the **GM** chooses, succeed at a CHA Test - they may roll the cost of the item with Advantage. If they fail either however, the item's cost is determined with Disadvantage.



















EXAMPLE OF PLAY

GM: "I hope the cultists don't find you and eat your hearts!" Laughs the mad sorcerer maniacally as he waves goodbye. **Warrior**: Oh, this is going to go great. Thief: I sarcastically shout back "Thanks!" **Wizard**: Ouick, let's just get out of here! **Thief:** Okay! Is the sewer cover **Nearby**? **GM**: Yeah and it's made of rusty iron bars Thief: I'll Move to it and as my Action I'll check it for traps.

Warrior: Assuming it's safe, I want to bend the bars, so we can slip through. Wizard: And I want to cast Light on my

staff so we can see Nearby.

GM: Okay, Thief, test your **Wisdom** by rolling a d20 under your **WIS** score - to check the portcullis for traps.

Thief: *rolls* Made it!

GM: You're confident it's free of anything designed to do you harm. Warrior, still want to bend the bars? If so test your Strength!

Warrior: *rolls* Piece of cake!

GM: Good stuff. Now Wizard, you cast Light on your staff - it glows. That's a level one spell that you've memorised right? Wizard: Yup.

GM: Okay, well test your *Intelligence* and add one to your d20 roll - because it's a level one spell - if you fail you can't cast that spell from memory anymore.

Wizard: *rolls* I need to roll under, not on it, right?

GM: That's right.

Wizard: Damn, I failed.

GM: Unlucky! Beyond the bent iron bars is a long dark sewer tunnel heading deep down. What do you want to do next?

Warrior: Explore down the tunnel...? **Thief:** Agreed! I'll sneak ahead. **Wizard:** And I'll protect the rear!

GM: Okay Thief, you *Move* down the

sewer tunnel, still **Nearby** to your friends, please test your **Dexterity** to see how quiet you are - remember you get Advantage on tests when sneaking, roll two d20s and choose the result you like. **Thief:** *rolls* despite rolling two dice I've got a 17 and 19. What are the odds? GM: Ouch. You're making so much noise being sneaky, a Ghoul hiding in the darkness *Close* to you leaps out and Attacks!

Thief: Bugger!

GM: Initiative time! Everyone test their **Dexterity**, passing means you act before the Ghoul, failing means you go after. Thief you test with **Disadvantage**.

Warrior: I go before. Wizard: I'm after.

GM : Thief?

Thief: How long was it to roll up a Character again? I go after.

Warrior: I want to run down the tunnel and hack the Ghoul with my broad sword. GM: Okay Warrior, you Move Close to the Ghoul. Test your **Strength** to see if you hit it, you should add +1 to the roll, as the Ghoul's a Powerful Foe.

Warrior: *rolls* Rolled a 7! *rolls again* So that's 8HP damage.

GM: Good hit! Now it's the Ghoul's **Turn**. Thief, test your Strength to try and fight off the Ghoul's paralysing claws and bite. Remember to add the +1 to your roll.

Thief: *rolls* Ugh! 18.

GM: Oh dear. You feel a painful numbing sensation run through your body. Test your Constitution, if you fail the Ghoul Paralyses you.

Thief: *rolls* Oh no, 20!

GM: Wizard, you see the Thief fall rigid

to the floor, what do you do?

Wizard: I'll start backing away slowly. **Thief:** I'll get you in the next life you git!

NAME

CLASS

STRENGTH DEXTERITY CONSTITUTION INTELLIGENCE WISDOM **CHARISMA**

HD & HIT POINTS

ATTACK DAMAGE

MAPS & NOTES

Armour	AV	•
		-
		Put any Usage
		Die & Armour Die here
		-

	INVENTORY	
1	11	
2	12	
3	13	
4	14	
5	15	
6	16	
7	17	
8	18	
9	19	
10	20	

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