

Rules of Play

For 1 referee and 1+ players

Tests. Roll an ability's die—Strength (STR), Dexterity (DEX), Willpower (WIL), or d6 to test your luck—4 or above to succeed. Roll an extra die and take the best result if you have a significant advantage, or the worst result with a significant disadvantage.

Actions. If it's not clear who goes first, test DEX to take your turn before enemies. On your turn, spend 1 stamina for each action you wish to take. (You can do a couple low-intensity things free—e.g., walk a few steps, draw a weapon). Regain all stamina at the start of your next turn.

Attack. Spend any amount of stamina (with multiple stamina representing multiple swings, heavier blows, or aiming). Roll your weapon die that many times, taking only the highest result. Subtract the target's armor score, and deduct the difference (if any) from the target's HP as damage.

Reactions. You may spend stamina to react outside your turn. Unless an item specifies otherwise, both sides roll, the higher takes effect first, and the side with initiative wins ties. If the first roll obviates the second (e.g., dodging an attack), the second never happens, but its action and stamina are still lost.

Harm. At 0 HP, you die. Test WIL; on success, your soul cannot be wrested from your body just yet. Either way, your spirit inspires allies: As your turn, roll WIL to replace an ally's die or armor. Provided your soul is in your body, whatever's left of you returns to life soon with 1 HP, though unattended corpses may be looted in the meantime. Rest in a safe haven to regain all HP.

Magic. To cast a spell on your turn, you must possess its text, hold a magical implement in hand, and roll WIL (or another die as noted). On a 1–3, you still cast it, but cannot cast that spell again until after you rest in a safe haven.

Stunts. When you strive for two goals at once (e.g., damaging and tripping on an attack), push for both by making a test (if a roll wasn't already called for), sacrificing something (e.g., HP, stamina, an item, an advantage, etc.) or using an especially clever approach (at the referee's discretion).

Supplies. When using an item with a limited supply, if you roll a 1, the supply runs low. If it was already running low, it runs out.

Advancement. Souls are traded as coin and consumed for power. Multiply your total stamina by the sum of your ability dice—to start, $3 \times 18 = 54$. Consume this many souls to raise stamina by 1 or an ability by 1 step (as high as d12).

Exhumed v0.6 by Jason Tocci (pretendo.games). Rules inspired by Chris McDowall's *Into the Odd* (bastionland.com) and Nate Treme's *In the Light of a Ghost Star* (natetreme.com). Thanks to playtesters Kaitlynn Hegarty, Casey Schlender, Lia Rothschild, Kerry McElhaney, Carmen Scaringe, Craig Herndon, Aaron Benner, Mackenzie Hayes, Michael Bridges, and Corey Mendes.



Character Creation

Roll d6 for background

You have 3 stamina and as many HP as your max STR roll.

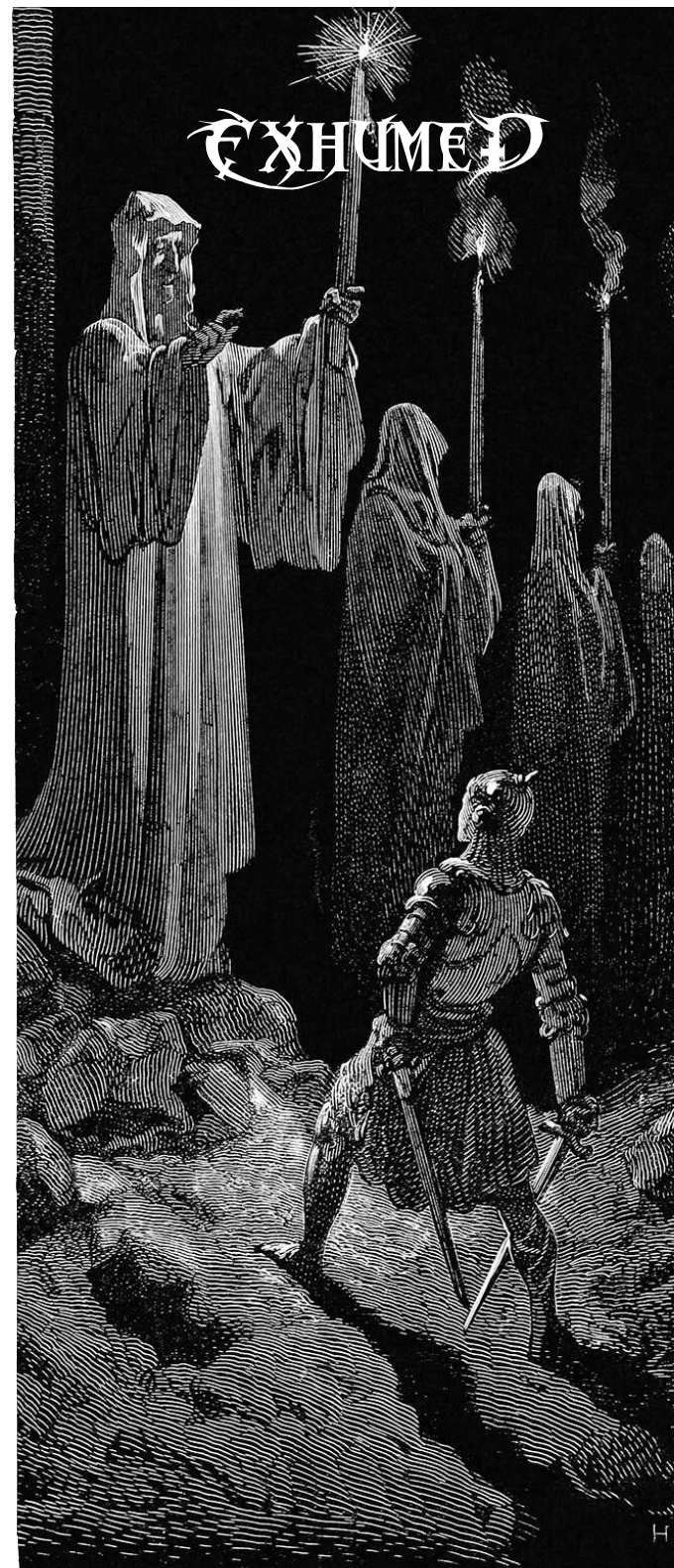
You remember your name, but little else.

- Knight.** d8 STR—d4 DEX—d6 WIL—8 HP
Broadsword. d8 attack.
Shield. Raise (1 stamina) to block attacks until taking other action.
Plate mail. 3 armor. Dodge (1 stamina) by rolling DEX over 6.
- Hunter.** d6 STR—d8 DEX—d4 WIL—6 HP
Dagger. d6 attack. Add +DEX damage to a sneak attack.
Bow. DEX attack, 2-handed. Includes limited supply of arrows.
Leather. 1 armor. Dodge (1 stamina) by rolling DEX over 4.
- Wizard.** d4 STR—d6 DEX—d8 WIL—4 HP
Stave. d4 attack. Casts spells of enchantment, illusion, and conjuring.
Academy robes. 0 armor. Dodge (1 stamina) by rolling DEX over 3.
Moonbeam (spell). WIL ranged attack.
Light (spell). Conjure a faintly glowing orb for WIL minutes.
- Cleric.** d6 STR—d4 DEX—d8 WIL—6 HP
Mace. d8 attack.
Horsehair robes. 0 armor. Dodge (1 stamina) by rolling DEX over 3.
Holy symbol. Casts spells of healing, protection, and divination.
Cure (spell). Touch to restore d4 HP.
- Soldier.** d8 STR—d6 DEX—d4 WIL—8 HP
Halberd. d10 attack, 2-handed.
Crossbow. d6 attack, 2-handed. Includes limited supply of bolts.
Chainmail. 2 armor. Dodge (1 stamina) by rolling DEX over 5.
- Noble.** d6 STR—d6 DEX—d6 WIL—6 HP
Ornate rapier. d8 attack.
Duelling pistol. d6 attack. Includes limited supply of lead.
Finery. 0 armor. Dodge (1 stamina) by rolling DEX over 3.

Items

Roll d12 for 1 starting item

- Acid.** d4 attack, lowering armor by damage absorbed (1 use); or use a few drops to burn through common objects (roll d6 to test limited supply).
- Adamantine dust.** Repair a damaged item, or strengthen an ordinary weapon in good condition by 1 die step.
- Cockatrice wishbone.** Cure all toxins, diseases, and curses. 1 use.
- Coin.** Considered lucky. Discard to re-roll any die with a d12.
- Healing herbs.** Spend 1 stamina to restore d4 HP. Limited supply.
- Lantern.** Light source with a limited supply of oil.
- Poison.** On each of the target's turns after exposure, they take d4 damage, then test STR to attempt to cancel the effect.
- Primordial clay.** Lower any ability die 1 step to increase any other by 1 step as many times as you wish. 1 use.
- Pendant.** Effect unknown. One must wonder what powers it may hold.
- Skeleton key.** 1 in 6 chance to fit a common lock.
- Spirit salts.** Spend 1 stamina to start your next turn with +d4 stamina. Unused stamina disappear by your next turn after that. Limited supply.
- Starmetal.** Commission a blacksmith to graft this into an ordinary weapon. Raises its damage die 1 size and makes it count as magic. 1 use.



Awakening

An introductory dungeon adventure

1 Burial Vault. The characters awaken in a dimly lit, cavernous space, each in a recess carved into the floor. They remember their names, but little else. Irregularly placed pillars reach up into the dark, and stone floor tiles give way to unworked, rocky ground. There is a quiet *crunching sound*. The only sources of illumination are a *faint glow* from motionless cadavers in a few other recesses, and *pinpricks of light* receding in the distance, up an *incline* with an unworked stone wall on one side, and a seemingly bottomless drop into darkness on the other.

- + The *crunching* is a corpse being chewed by a **pack ghoul** (4 HP, d8 DEX, d6 bite, clamp down on a 4+) with beady eyes, papery skin, and a snout with protruding canine teeth. Flees from bright light or fire.
- + The glow is from a **soul**. Collecting it dims its glow. The corpse it sits on bears the equipment of a random background, like the characters.
- + The pinpricks of light up the incline lead to **The Procession (2)**.

2 The Procession. Tall, robed, ghostly figures carry long candles away into darkness. A rocky path continues upward.

- + The figures can answer 1 question per character, but only with gestures. If they are attacked, they all vanish.
- + The upward path leads to the **Catacombs (4)**. Searching along the walls may reveal d6 additional tunnels to **Hidden Vaults (3)**.

3 Hidden Vaults. Unlit tunnels lead to d6 dead-end burial vaults featuring a mix of architectural features among unworked stone surroundings, much like the first one.

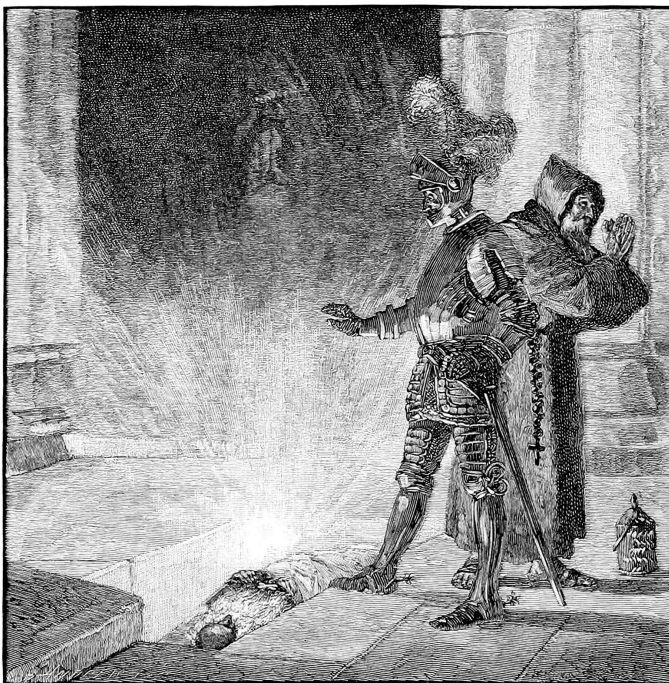
- + Each vault has d4–2 corpses. Each corpse has either (1) a random background's equipment, (2) a random item, (3) a random spell (at right), or (4) one of the above, plus a ghoulish creature feeding on it.

4 Catacombs. The upward sloping path eventually becomes a staircase cut into the stone. At the top is a tunnel four people wide, branching off into other corridors, all lined with recesses—some bearing remains, some empty, a few glowing with souls. Shafts of sunlight fall through cracks in the ceiling. Ghoulish creatures skitter around, nibbling at bodies.

- + d6 corpses, wrapped in fabric, still bear faintly glowing souls. Some other corpses have coins or mementos left as funerary offerings.
- + 2d4 **pack ghouls** are scattered about, gnawing on bones.
- + A slightly more intelligent **scavenger ghoul** (6 HP, d8 DEX, d6 bite) sifts through corpses' offerings. Wears a pouch around its neck, with an unusually **brightly glowing soul** inside. Flees if approached.
- + Following the main tunnel leads to the **Circular Chamber (5)**.

5 Circular Chamber. The catacombs lead to a large, circular chamber featuring five pillars and three large, stone sarcophagi; two lids featuring armored figures lie broken on the floor, but a third, with a robed figure, remains in place. The space is dimly lit by a few shafts of sunlight from cracks in the ceiling. On the far wall, stone stairs lead upward, strewn with rubble. A soft crunching noise comes from beyond the sarcophagi.

- + Stairs lead up to the **Ruined Shrine (6)**. Rocks have fallen and blocked the way, but you could squeeze through, given time.
- + The **closed sarcophagus** contains a robed figure clutching a stave (per Wizard's starting items) and the text for the Torchlight spell (at right).
- + Crouching behind an opened sarcophagus, gnawing on its former occupant, is the huge **alpha ghoul** (20 HP, 1 armor, d10 STR, d6 DEX, d8 WIL, 3 stamina). On its turn, it will attempt to (1) attack with claws for d8; (2) rip off armor, then bite up close for d10; (3) bark to call nearby pack ghouls to it; or (4) devour a corpse to heal d4 HP. On others' turns, it reacts by dodging or counterattacking. It is less intelligent than the scavenger ghouls, but aggressive enough to attack on sight. If burned with fire or maneuvered into a shaft of sunlight, it loses all stamina, and attacks on it are at an advantage. If killed, it yields d6 +20 souls, its own **alpha ghoul soul**, and a larger, purplish **interred warlord's soul**.



6 Ruined Shrine. Broken walls open up to a sunny sky. A frail, desiccated woman in a cloak sits on a marble altar, peering at you curiously. Items are spread out on a tarp on the floor before her, including a statue of a scrawny old man with a scraggly beard.

- + This is a **safe haven**. The characters can rest to heal all HP, and can consume souls to advance, if they collected enough. They may sense this intuitively, or it may come up in conversation with the woman.
- + The woman is **Vanda**, a merchant. She has 2d4 common items for sale, each costing 1 soul. She will answer any question for the price of 1 soul, though she can only offer hearsay when it comes to topics like why the dead cannot stay dead, or what happened to their memories. If asked, she would be adamant that the souls she trades are just fragmentary memories, no more a part of a living person than a severed limb.

- + The **brightly glowing soul** can be consumed to advance immediately, but characters will sense it tugs in the direction of its remains; Vanda would recognize it as bright enough to revive a grateful owner.
- + The statue is Vanda's husband **Vassily**, cursed with petrification. If cured, he offers gruff thanks and makes his way to a nearby forge where he offers smithing services. If the characters cannot cure him, Vanda offers to sell the statue for 5 souls. (Can be haggled down to 3.)
- + The **alpha ghoul's soul** and **interred warlord's soul** can each be consumed to advance at once, but if Vassily smells either, he offers to bind it into a weapon. ("It is safer that way.") This increases a weapon's die 1 step and imparts a fitting effect (e.g., cowing ghouls).
- + Vanda or Vassily may ask the characters to retrieve their son, **Vanya**, who was kidnapped by serpent-folk. They lament that he refuses to consume souls anymore, believing them to be alive, so now he cannot "grow up big and strong." (Vanya is in fact over 8 feet tall and is also cursed with petrification; the serpent-folk are using a basilisk to create a surprisingly beautiful sculpture garden.)
- + If the **robed figure** from the closed sarcophagus is left intact, they will be alive upon return to the shrine. They can copy spell texts for 10 souls each, but will be angry if they recognize their stolen stave.

Creating New Monsters

Monsters have d6 for abilities, unless they are obviously bad (d4) or good (d8) at something. Instead of tracking individual monsters' stamina, just act on their turn, with a shared pool of 1 per monster for reactions. Noteworthy and powerful monsters have high HP and abilities, armor, special attacks, and their own stamina, but also have a weakness that can be exploited. You may roll a monster's ability dice to determine souls carried.

Creating New Treasure

Weapons are *small* (d6, plus a free effect on a high roll or in certain circumstances), *medium* (d8), or *large* (d10, 2-handed). Reduce die 1 step if ranged, increase 1 step if magical or advanced, and use STR or DEX if very heavy or very precise. **Armor** is equivalent to *cloth* (0), *leather* (1), *chain* (2), or *plate* (3); roll over armor + 3 to dodge. Magic offers special protections (e.g., 5 vs. fire). **Spells** cost 1 stamina for simple effects, such as:

- 1 Charm.** Target sees you as a friend until made to question this.
- 2 Disguise.** Make yourself for another target look like something comparably sized until taking damage or spending stamina.
- 3 Fog.** Conjure thick fog, impairing visibility.
- 4 Force.** Move a small item with your mind, or a human-sized target for 2 stamina. Multiply cost by number of intended targets.
- 5 Guidance.** Ask a question; receive an answer in d6 words.
- 6 Levitate.** Float at half walking speed until after your next turn.
- 7 Lightning.** d8 attack. On 5+, target can't react until its next turn.
- 8 Protection.** Target has d4 armor for this battle.
- 9 Torchlight.** Conjure fire in hand to glow as torchlight. Can be thrown for a d6 attack against clustered enemies.
- 10 Ward.** Draw a line to raise an invisible barrier for WIL minutes.