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What Is A Role-Playing Game

There's this imaginary world, see, and you've got this character that is "you" in this world, right, and things happen – you find yourself in some situation, and you have decisions to make. What do you do? And there are consequences for your choices, maybe good, maybe bad, maybe a little bit of both. There will be another decision to make soon. What do you do?

That's role-playing. "You're pretending to be this guy, and stuff is happening to that guy. What do you do?"

Beyond that, role-playing is also a game. There are winners and there are losers. In fact, because RPGs are an interactive and cooperative social experience, it is often possible that everyone wins or everyone loses a particular game. When you become a character, you don't know whether you are destined for great things, or fated to suffer an ignoble and useless death. You are not living the life of a story-book hero, you are exploring a fantasy world as if it were real. And fantasy worlds are dangerous!

However, winning and losing in the end is not as important as playing the game itself. Was the game interesting? Was it exciting? If it was, then it really doesn't matter if your character failed to reach his goals, or failed to survive at all. If not, then does it really matter if the character defeated many mon-

sters and gathered a lot of treasure? No. In fact, sometimes losing is more interesting and exciting than winning.

Traditional role-playing games, such as LotFP *Weird Fantasy Role-Playing*, use rulebooks and dice to determine the outcomes of actions within the game. The game is typically played with all the participants around a table, with one player, called the Referee, moderating the in-game situations and enforcing the rules of the game.

Does this sound complicated? Perhaps it is, a little. This game creates a structure for you to imagine unlimited adventure and intrigue within an infinite number of possible worlds, after all. But learning a role-playing game is no more complicated or time-consuming than reading a book. Even children have gotten through these concepts and learned these games on their own. Jump in and don't be afraid to make mistakes – that will happen regardless – and you'll be fine.



The Dice

Dice are more important than oxygen to a gamer. If you really get into the hobby, you'll wind up owning *hundreds* of the damn things, and likelier than not, you'll have different dice that you take out in specific game situations, because they're lucky if used in just those situations. You'll develop little rituals which you will swear influence your dice to roll in your favor. You'll get annoyed when somebody else touches your dice without getting explicit permission first.

This exalted status is given to dice because they matter. In RPGs, you never know what is going to happen. Not until the dice tell you. Who wins in a fight? Does anybody notice while you sneak around? Are you zapped by that spell? Only the dice know. Treat them well, and maybe they will treat you well.

Here are the dice used in this game:



The 20-sided die, or d20, is one of the most important dice in the game: it is used to resolve whether you hit in combat and whether you escape traps, dragon breath, etc. In general, the die is rolled, modifiers added or subtracted, and if the total result equals or exceeds a target number, the roll is a success; otherwise it has failed.



The 10-sided die, or d10, is used to generate numbers from 1 to 10. One of them is numbered 0 to 9, but a roll of 0 is counted as 10. The other is a die numbered 00 to 90, and used together these dice generate numbers from 1 to 100, where a roll of 00 and 0 is counted as 100.



Rolling two d10s this way is called a percentile roll, or d%. These rolls are generally against target numbers, but for the roll to be a success, the result must be equal to or less than the target number. So, for example, if there is a 30% chance of a magic potion being brewed correctly, the player succeeds if the result is 01 to 30.



The 4-sided die, or d4, is a special case. As it has no flat surface on top, the number which is upright after rolling is the result of the roll.



The other dice normally used have 6, 8, and 12 sides, and are called d6, d8, and d12 respectively. d6's may be made with either numbers or pips (dots); it makes no difference which sort you choose.



When multiple dice are to be rolled and added together, it's noted in the text like this: 2d6 (roll two d6 dice and add them together), or 3d4 (roll three d4 dice and add them together). Sometimes a modifier makes a die roll higher (or lower). This will be noted as a "plus" or "minus" value, such as 2d8+2 (roll two d8 dice and add them together, then add 2 to the total), or 2d4-1 (roll two d4 dice and add them together, then subtract one from the total).



Your First Adventure

This introductory adventure will present basic concepts and situations of the game through a story form. Simply read through, making notes and rolling dice when instructed, and you'll have taken your first step towards mastering the game.

For your first adventure experience, you will pretend to be a warrior – which in this game is called a Fighter – a veteran of the local army who has mustered out of the service and is looking for something more out of life. There is an abandoned mansion at the edge of town that you know only two things about: It's haunted, and its previous owner supposedly left a stash of jewels there. Who are you to resist?

Your Character

In the game, it's not simply enough to describe the people and other things in broad terms. "You're pretty strong and fairly quick," might give a good starting mental picture of a character, but in terms of the game it is important to know exactly how strong and how quick.

These basic descriptors are called Ability Scores, or stats, and are measured on a scale of 3 to 18. Every character has six ability scores: Charisma, Constitution, Dexterity, Intelligence, Strength, and Wisdom. We will describe each ability score when the time comes, but for now just note a few of your character's stats:

12 Dexterity
9 Intelligence
13 Strength

In the full version of the game, you'd roll these scores randomly.

Ability scores ranging from 9 to 12 would be considered in the normal human range, so your character is about average in Intelligence and Dexterity, but is extraordinarily strong.

Your character will also need equipment to survive adventuring. Because of your military service, you own a suit of chain armor and a sword, and carry a dagger on your belt. You carry some other items, such as rope, a lantern, a bottle of oil, a tinderbox with flint and steel, and some food and pots. You keep all of these things in a sturdy leather backpack.

You should name your character. This name can be anything you want, but the more "real" the name is, the more you will come to see your character as a person and not just a game piece.

Are you ready to begin?

The Haunted House

According to local legend, the Lidenbrock family has always been spoken ill of. From the old rumors of black magic and witchcraft that old-timers tell in hushed tones, to more recent blasphemies against the Church and natural order in the name of this newfangled "science," the Lidenbrocks have always been involved with illicit activity.

More recently, one Professor Otto Lidenbrock ("educated" at one of those mysterious "universities" in the East) caused scandal with his theories about the nature of the planet. He had announced his intent to descend into the mouth of a dormant volcano, travel straight through the Earth's center and emerge on the other side of the world. He was gone for some months, and when he returned he was silent



about his travels. He soon left again, and never returned. And just a few weeks back, the town council condemned the abandoned family home of the Lidenbrocks.

Rumors abounded that he had sold some gems with the local jeweler. Had he found them in his expeditions below? More importantly, did he leave any behind? And were there any other secrets left behind when the last Lidenbrock left their ancestral home? Now that the property has been condemned, there is no legal barrier to going in and exploring the house yourself...

Adventures in role-playing often have exposition like this, delivered by the game Referee. It is done in an effort to make the game world more real and to give your actions within it a little more meaning than they would otherwise have.

At sunset, you put on your gear and head out to the old Lidenbrock mansion. Morning might be a better time to explore a house owned by those aligned with dark forces, but you would be easily seen traveling through town fully armed and armored or you could be seen entering the house. You wouldn't want to attract attention or inspire other, more-skilled profiteers to compete for any available riches...

This is a tutorial, so descriptions of your actions like, "You do this, you wouldn't want that," are given to you. In the full game, you choose what you do and when and why.

You steal through the main gate of the property and, guided by the moonlight, you sneak around to the back of the house. The windows are all boarded up, those on the first floor

anyway, and out back you find the cellar door is still padlocked. Trying the back door to the house itself, you find that door opens inward ever so slowly, with a small creak to announce your presence.

It is pitch dark inside. You take a moment to fill your lantern with oil and use the flint and steel within your tinderbox (alas, no matches exist in this world) to light the lantern. Then you step inside.

You find yourself in a hallway that leads straight into the darkness. As you advance, the aged floorboards give a small bit under your weight. Up ahead, you see two doors on either side of the continuing hallway. What an oddly constructed house!

Wanting to get an idea of the layout of the place before exploring any individual rooms, you pass the doorways, intending to reach the end of the hall. But suddenly the door on your right opens. A small grey humanoid creature about half your height, with oversized talons, a great toothy smile, and sickly spines comes out of the doorway, attacking you! It swipes at you with its claws, but they scrape harmlessly off your mail.

Only a lunatic engages in violence when it is not necessary, but in this world monsters are real, and those who step into dark places must be ready to defend themselves. Often it is possible to parley with any potentially hostile beings you encounter – but obviously not in this case. You wonder why this thing is so hostile, as humanoid creatures are usually at least somewhat intelligent and able to communicate. There must be a reason for this aggression!



When attacked, there is also the option of running away – but in this case, you're armored and have your sword at the ready so you feel you can easily outfight this small, nasty creature.

How to Attack

In this game, combat is played in game turns called Rounds. Each round is six seconds of time. There are all sorts of things that you can choose to do in one round of a regular game, but in this case you will be fighting with wretched creature.

"Rounds" and "turns" and other terms of time measurement in the game are just that – game terms. A six second game round may take far longer to play out in real life, and a ten minute game turn may pass with just a couple words in real life.

When you attack, you do not automatically hit your opponent (which is good – this means that whenever an opponent attacks, they do not automatically hit you). The more agile you are, and the more armor you have, the harder it is for opponents to hit you with damaging blows.

To swing at an opponent, roll the 20-sided die. This is called a To-Hit Roll. To hit this creature, you must roll a 12 or greater on the die. You only need a 12 because the monster has weak defenses and you are a strong fighter. If the creature was tougher, or you had another profession (that is, if you were not a combat-hardened Fighter but an arcane Magic-User or skilled Specialist, for example), you would need to roll a higher number.

If you roll an 11 or less, you miss. The monster suffers no damage from your attack. It will then attempt to attack you again, but it will also fail to inflict damage. Then you can attempt to hit it again.

If you hit it by rolling high enough, then you cut it badly with your sword! It screams and then darts down the hallway before you can stop it. You hear the *thump thump thump* of what sounds like the creature running up some stairs.

If you miss again, keep rolling until you hit. We will assume for the time being that this monster will not hit you.

Needless to say, combat in the full game is far more perilous.

Damage

When a person or a creature is hit in combat, this will cause damage. Damage, and the ability to withstand damage, is called Hit Points. Hit points, or hp, represent a number of factors. First of all, hit points represent the physical capacity of a character or creature to withstand punishment and injury. For advanced characters, who have more hit points than starting characters, hit points also represent subtler factors such as luck, the ability to lessen the damage of attacks by rolling with the blows, and the willpower to ignore minor wounds that beginning characters cannot.

The number of hit points a character or monster possesses is the amount of damage that can be withstood until unconsciousness or even death results. Normally, when you successfully



attack, you roll a die to determine how many hit points worth of damage your attack inflicts, and that damage is subtracted from the defender's hit point value.

Your character, being a hearty Fighter, has 10hp. Note this alongside your Ability Scores. The monster attempted to attack you, but never penetrated your defenses, so you did not lose any hit points. That the creature physically touched you when it first attacked and scraped your armor does not matter; it did not succeed in its to-hit roll, so your armor did its job and no damage was inflicted – so we call the attack a miss.

One combat round lasts six seconds of game-time, and any skilled warrior will strike multiple times in a pitched combat. The to-hit roll is merely a summary of your attacks that round, determining whether you have successfully inflicted damage. That's all. It does not represent one attempted blow per roll made. Hit points are a measure of how much damage you can sustain before being out of a fight, not a record of every wound received.

You can describe your actions in detail, if you wish. "I raise my axe and rain mighty blows upon his head, attempting to sever it from his shoulders!" Many players feel that doing so makes the game more exciting, more life-like for them. Other players simply wish to find out what happened, and quickly make their dice rolls without saying more than "I attack him." Role-playing preferences are very personal, and many players approach it differently. Play the game as makes it most comfortable and enjoyable for you.

Constitution

Your Fighter is extraordinarily healthy. This is represented by the Constitution ability score. Constitution influences your character's hit points. You have 10hp because you are both a battle-trained Fighter and because your Constitution is well above average. If you had the Constitution of a normal person off the street, you would only have 8hp. You are impressive!

Note your Constitution score near the other scores:

17 Constitution

Now back to the adventure:

After taking a few moments to catch your breath and make sure there is no more immediate danger, you decide to find out what the little gremlin was up to. You look through the doorway from which the monster emerged. In this room is a large amount of furniture, all covered in cloth. You stick your head in the doorway to get a better look, but can see no other threat and no immediate items of interest. Making a mental note to return to this room for a more thorough search later, you close the door. Now that you know there are creatures of the night lurking in this house, you decide to go through the opposite door in the hallway, just so any potential enemies would not be able to sneak up on you from behind.

You open the door slightly, and then push it the rest of the way open with the tip of your sword. The creature's ichorous blood, still fresh on your sword, leaves a sticky black spot on the door. This room appears to have been some sort of study. Much of the furniture is covered, as in



the other room, but a desk in the center of the room looks to be bare. Maybe it contains information about where Lidenbrock hid his jewels!

You move over to the desk to search it, but notice that the cloth that you guess used to cover this desk is now laying on the floor behind it. And something is under it! Something... moving. You lift the cloth a bit with your sword, and see a pale, unmoving arm. Is there a body under there? Suddenly the cloth moves again, and from underneath it slithers a deadly poisonous snake – a giant sort of cobra not unknown in these parts! It's agitated and attacking!

In the full game, you would be able to do almost anything you wanted in this situation. Try to use the cloth to cover the snake, run away, or jump up on the desk to escape the snake's reach. But for the purpose of learning more about the procedures of the game, you will once again enter combat.

Your Second Battle

For this battle, you will keep track of hit points. Your hit points are still 10, and the snake has 4hp.

Your to-hit roll will be 11 this time, as the snake has weaker defenses than the earlier creature did. However, it will be able to hit you with greater frequency than the previous monster.

Make your to-hit roll. If you succeed, the snake loses one hit point, and now just has three left. This time, as it attacks it bites your leg! You lose one hit point and now have nine. However, do not forget that your normal hit point total is ten, as that will be important to know later.

Poison?

This snake is poisonous, so in addition to the damage caused by its bite, there is also a chance that it has poisoned you. Roll the twenty-sided die. If you roll 12 or higher, then the snake did not get to inject its venom before you pulled away. If you roll under 12, you take two more points of damage as the poison enters your system.

This roll is called a Saving Throw. It is used for all sorts of situations in the game. Usually, failing a saving throw is very bad news. In fact, when poison is involved, failing a saving throw usually means your character dies. But because you're learning, we'll take it easy on you this time.

Now it's your turn to make a to-hit roll again. Remember that against the snake, your to-hit roll needs to be 11 or higher to inflict damage. If you hit, you subtract another hit point from the snake's current amount.

After your attack, the snake bites you again! Subtract another hit point from your total. Make another saving throw. If you roll 12 or higher, you're safe from the poison. 11 or less, and once again you take two extra points of damage – you're really hurting!

It's your turn again. Roll to hit. The snake will miss its return attack. From this point on, when the snake has its turn, it will automatically miss. We don't want to kill you on your first training game, but you should recognize how often it might have hit you, and how often you are likely to have made your saving throw. Fighting in this game is very dangerous.



Keep rolling to hit until you have succeeded in bringing the snake to ohp. Once that happens, it is incapacitated, and you can easily finish it off. Note that if you are ever brought to ohp, you too will be unconscious, or worse.

A Gruesome Discovery

You are hurt after the battle with the snake, but there are more important things on your mind right now. There's still something under this cloth, and it would be risky to leave it in case it is another dangerous creature. You use your sword to lift the cloth and throw it across the room, and what you reveal beneath it shocks and disgusts you – here is the fresh corpse of a man! It seems something has torn into his gut, ripping his belly wide open. You are no stranger to death, having seen grievous wounds during your tour of duty in the military, but in this situation, on a floor in a house, viscera exposed and falling out of the open wound, it just seems unnatural. And the edges of the wound... has something been eating the man's flesh? You shudder.

Another reminder that in the full game, you choose whether to do all this or do something else instead.

Yet... within his hand, the one you hadn't uncovered earlier, are two small red stones that shine in your lantern light. An intruder wouldn't just walk around with such things in his hands, so he must have found them here! There *is* treasure to be found!

Money can't help the dead, so you collect the gems off the corpse and begin to search the desk. You find nothing, not even old papers, but in the middle of your search you hear a small

crash from outside the door. Fearing that the monster from earlier has returned, you rush out the door to confront it! But there's nothing there. Turning left, you continue down the original hallway. You come to a large room, perhaps once a dining room. A number of hallways and doorways lead from the room, and...

"Pssst. Come here, quick!"

From one of the doorways you see the face of a woman, maybe the same age as you. She's motioning for you to join her. Advancing carefully, you see that she has no weapons in her hands, so you let down your guard and enter the room. "Put that lantern out! They'll see!" she hisses through gritted teeth. You shutter the lantern, and all goes dark, with only the moonlight slicing the gloom through the slits of the boarded windows.

It is light enough to see that she is a fit and capable fighter, ready for trouble and carries a mace which hangs from her belt. Around her neck is the symbol of the largest church in town, so she's obviously quite religious.

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?" you ask.

"Keep your voice down!" she spits at you, tugging you down so you're sitting on the floor as she is. "My name is Alice, and I came here with my partner Tolliver to catch a criminal. But we were ambushed and before we could... oh, you're wounded!"

She sees the bites you suffered from the snake. "I am a cleric," Alice says. "I can heal you if you agree to help me."



This makes sense. You know that a Cleric is a type of occupation that tends toward adventuring, much like a Fighter (like yourself) is.

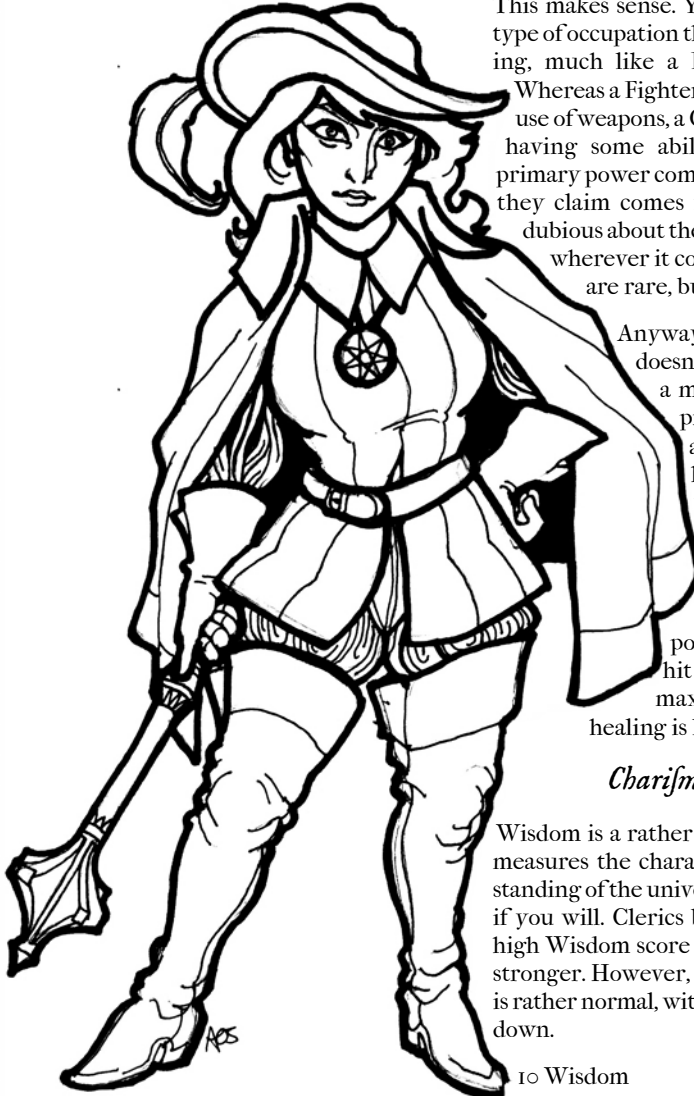
Whereas a Fighter is trained primarily in the use of weapons, a Cleric is a religious warrior, having some ability with arms but their primary power comes from their magic, which they claim comes from their faith. You are dubious about the source of their power, but wherever it comes from, it works. Clerics are rare, but always valuable.

Anyway, her offer sounds fair, doesn't it? She enters a trance for a moment, speaking words of prayer and moving one hand around while clutching her holy symbol. She touches you, and she heals you of seven points of damage! Make a note that your hit points are at their maximum once again, ten points. You cannot raise your hit points above their starting maximum level. Any excess healing is lost.

Charisma and Wisdom

Wisdom is a rather esoteric ability score, as it measures the character's fundamental understanding of the universe. Call it spiritual power, if you will. Clerics benefit from Wisdom, as a high Wisdom score makes their magic powers stronger. However, in this respect your fighter is rather normal, with a Wisdom of 10. Note that down.

10 Wisdom





Charisma is a measure of a character's authority and how much others are drawn to follow them. Although players aren't affected by others' Charisma scores, it is pretty obvious that Alice has a decent Charisma – she seems commanding and used to getting her way. Your Charisma is about average, perhaps a little above average if you had to argue the point.

12 Charisma

Alice continues: "I heard that a criminal Magic-User named Iri-Khan was using the old Liden-brook house as a hideout," Alice begins. "He was hoping to conduct black magic rituals here, counting on the haunted house rumors to keep people away. Me and my Specialist Tolliver found out about it when our sources down in the market told us about a suspicious man buying supplies. Checking around, we found out what was going on."

This is bad news! Magic-Users are not like normal men. As their name suggests, they study the art of magic, bending reality to their whim. If an evil Magic-User is here, then this expedition is now ten times more dangerous than you'd bargained for. And Tolliver? That must be the poor fellow whose body you found. Specialists are resourceful folks, good at a great many practical things like finding booby traps and opening locked doors. They're usually fairly aware of their surroundings, so if he was surprised, then whatever it was that attacked him must have been very fast and silent.

Adventuring as a Group

You'll now be exploring with Alice the Cleric. Adventuring with others is usually much more

beneficial to any expedition, as a group is more than the sum of its parts – even a two-person group like this. Typically, any treasure found would be split between all the adventuring parties, but that is usually no bother, as larger groups can explore more, search more thoroughly, and handle larger amounts of trouble than a lone explorer.

In the full game, once again you'd have the choice whether or not to team up with other characters you meet. The game does assume you to be adventuring with your fellow players, however.

Alice gets up. "We should get moving. I was worried about walking through the house by myself in the dark after we were attacked, but with you here we should be able to deal with the problem. Let's go!"

You stand up, grabbing your sword and cracking open the lantern's shutter. Creeping out through a different doorway than you came in, you see two stairways, one going up, and one going down. "I saw a small creature run past me and go up the stairs," Alice says. "I would bet that's where Iri-Khan is." You nod in agreement.

But before you can start up the stairs, there is a noise from below. Running up those stairs are two... *things*. They once were human, when they were alive. Now they are rotting, undead creatures, hungry for the flesh of the living. Though their feet make noise on the stairs, they make no noise as they move toward you. Deathlike silence.

Alice steps in front of you, holy symbol held high, and casts another spell. Because Cleric spells are like prayers, you understand what she is trying to accomplish. It's another common



Cleric trick which involves calling on the power of her god to frighten away living dead such as these. It's a trick called Turning the Undead.

Luckily, it works this time, although it doesn't always. The Cleric's holy power is too much for the ghouls to stand, and they quickly retreat back down the stairs.

"We'd better move fast," Alice says. "There's a good chance someone would have heard that, and I have no more spells that I can cast today. We have to hit fast and hit hard!" You can't find any flaw in that logic, so you go first up the stairs, Alice hot on your heels.

At the top of the stairs is a landing with many doors. Behind one of the doors you hear voices.

"That's Iri-Khan!" Alice whispers. "That other voice must be that creature that attacked us." She describes the thing, and you recognize it as the monster that attacked you. After seeing Tolliver's wounds, you sure are glad you have armor on! The two of you move quietly to the door.

"I don't hear any sounds, master!" the voice comes from beyond the door, small and tortured. "Your undead servants must have already killed the intruders! Killed them dead, yes!"

"We must be sure. There is too much evidence left in the basement, and we can't risk their finding it if they've somehow overcome the resurrects." This voice must be Iri-Khan. You hear the sounds of spell casting. "Now I will turn you invisible as well..."

Alice is mortified. "We must attack now, before they are both invisible, or we'll be sitting ducks!"

"Can't we go back?" you ask.

"No. My turning does not last very long, so those things will likely be ready to attack again if we pass by the stairs. We have to attack now!"

You wonder how you'll ever escape then even if you do win this fight, but whatever you do, it's best to do it together and Alice seems hell-bent on attacking Iri-Khan. "Fine. Let's go!"

This is another example of something you would have control over in the full game. Here, the story progresses so that you are led into a situation where escape is unlikely and it really is the best idea to attack. In the full game, you'd decide where to go, in what order, and what the solution is for any situation you find yourself in.

You kick the door in and the sickly-looking creature you'd encountered earlier whirls to meet you.

"You take care of that thing!" Alice shouts. "I'll deal with Khan!" You wonder when she started being in charge, but you certainly believe you can handle this creature better than an invisible Magic-User.

The creature has two hit points remaining. You still have eight. You will run this battle much the same way you did the battle with the snake, with one addition: you will be rolling to see if the monster hits you as well. Make your first to-hit roll. You need a 12 to succeed, just as before. If you hit, subtract one hit point from your opponent. If you miss, do nothing. Either way, it is the monster's turn. Make a to-hit roll



on behalf of your opponent. If that roll is 14 or greater, it hits you – subtract 2 hit points from your total. It's a hard hitter!

During this first round of combat, Alice charges into the room and swings her mace confidently. To your amazement, you hear a *thump* and a groan of pain. She's hit him!

Play out another round of combat with the monster. First you roll to hit and apply damage if you do, and if the creature still has hit points left, it will attempt to hit you.

During this round of combat, there is a flash of light as Iri-Khan reappears. Glowing energy crackles around his hands, and he throws it at Alice. The room blazes with a green-orange glow, and when the magical energy hits Alice, there is an instant smell of burnt hair and flesh. She is dead before she hits the ground, her body burned beyond all recognition. You shudder, as that could just as easily have been you. Khan chuckles to himself.

If your opponent is not dead yet, play another round of combat. In fact, Khan merely watches as you fight his servant. Continue the combat until the monster is reduced to zero hit points. If you are reduced to zero hit points, pretend you remain at 1hp and ignore all other hits against you. Again, the idea is not to die on your first adventure but do be aware how easy it is to be defeated.

Once the creature falls, it is easily finished off with one slash of your sword. Then you have more serious things to worry about. Iri-Khan looks at you, and you see the sweat on his brow. He begins to cast another magic spell. You rush

at him, hoping you can get within sword's reach before he can finish the spell.

You fail. You can feel Iri-Khan grasping within your mind, attempting to take control. Your thoughts become fuzzy, and not quite your own...

Roll the twenty-sided die once again. You are now making a saving throw against Khan's spell. Spells are more difficult to save against than poison for a Fighter, so this time you need to roll a 16 or higher. If you manage to succeed, the spell doesn't work! Read Ending #2. If you roll a 15 or less, Khan's spell dominates your mind. Read Ending #1.

Ending #1

"Are you badly injured, great warrior?" Iri-Khan's face shows concern as he asks you.

Your head feels fuzzy, and your wounds ache. But you don't feel too badly hurt. "I'm fine. I think I got knocked on the head. What happened?"

Khan smiles. "You were to help me with my important research here in this house, guarding against any intruders. This woman here," he motions to Alice's body, "tricked you into bringing her to me, and then she attacked me! It was horrible. She slew our homunculus there, but you were able to fend her off until I was able to finish her off with a spell. Filthy assassin, she was!"

No, that's not right, is it? That can't be what happened... yet Khan has a look of total sincerity on his face. You believe him.





"Now help me gather my things here. There's been too much noise, too many lights coming from this house. I'm afraid the ignorant populace will be coming to interfere before too long." You gather up some bags, and then Khan leads you downstairs. "Wait here," he says. You do, and in a couple minutes he returns, with his undead servants behind him carrying a large chest.

"We can go now. Follow me." He leads your unlikely bunch out the back door, and to the edge of the property. Already you can hear voices and commotion coming from the front of the house.

"Maybe we should let the people know about our attacker?" you ask Khan, but as you turn to him to get his answer, you see he is already casting another spell. You fall instantly into a deep sleep, and know no more...

You wake up in pain and horror as Alice's companion, Tolliver, dead and still spilling guts out of his abdomen, is leaning over you, and ripping a chunk out of your shoulder with a vicious bite! You howl in pain, struggling to kick him off, but it's no use. You're too injured, too tired, and why is your mind so cloudy...?

Salvation comes in the form of the angry mob. Before Tolliver's corpse can finish you, its head is smashed with a cudgel. Several townsfolk are around you now, pulling the zombie off you. As it stumbles, half a dozen strong working men strike it repeatedly with clubs, pipes, and tools. Tolliver dies a second death, his body completely ruined from the blows.

"Oy, you're a lucky one! We got here just in time!" One of the men is already applying a

makeshift bandage to your shoulder. The townsfolk help you to your feet. "What happened here?" one of them asks.

You struggle to think. You remember! The creature, the body, the snake. Khan. And... "Alice!" you cry out loud, and race back into the house, down the hall, and up the stairs.

In the room lies Alice's charred remains. You notice that the homunculus has evaporated; all that is left is a sticky goo where it once laid. Within seconds, several of the men are here with you. They wince when they see the body, and become nauseous when they smell it.

"She was brave," you say. "She deserved better than this. We – I – must return her body to her church. It is only right to do that much, at least, for one that has given her life in the fight against evil."

You pick her up and begin to walk out of the house. As you reach the street you notice the men, about a dozen in all, following you. And there you walk, a macabre procession honoring the dead, with the still-smoldering corpse of the deceased in your arms.

Her church is not difficult to find, as it is the largest in town. The doors are locked, but the banging by the mob brings the vicar promptly. "What's all that commotion? I'll hear your confessions in the morning!"

"Please open up," you plead. "One of your own has fallen, and we are here to deliver her to you so that she may be given a proper burial."

There is silence for a moment, and then the noise of someone fiddling with a series of door





locks. The door opens, and a middle-aged man in his nightgown peers out at the crowd. His sharp demeanor gives way to sorrow as he sees what you cradle in your arms.

"Alice..." his voice trails off. He motions for you to come in. The crowd does not follow. He asks you to place the body on a table in a private chamber, and asks you what happened. You tell the priest, leaving no detail out.

"I thank you for returning Alice to us," he says. "Although I am sorry to hear that poor Tolliver was able to bite you. You likely have the sickness now. In a matter of days you will become ill, and it will become worse until you succumb to the fever. And then you will rise as one of the undead."

He reads the horror in your eyes. "Don't despair. It sounds like this Iri-Khan was some sort of necromancer, and such a man would not risk contact with the undead without protection from his creations. You say you left in a hurry from the house. Maybe he has left something behind which can help you. Here, take this." He hands you two small bottles filled with oddly hued liquid. "These are potions of healing. They act just like a healing spell cast by a Cleric of our faith. Go home and take one and rest for tonight, and tomorrow return to that house. Save the other potion for when you might need it! Tell no one of your purpose and bring no one with you, for if certain people knew what has bitten you, they'd kill you as a precaution before you ever had the chance to save yourself!"

You thank him for his gift, and his kindness. He thanks you for your respect. You leave the

church and head home, thinking of everything that has happened this night, and thinking what you will face tomorrow...

Now read Ending #2 and pretend that you succeeded in your saving throw. Discover what might have happened.

If you already have read it, skip ahead to the Conclusion.

Ending #2

With a quick blast of concentration, you clear the fog in your mind. Iri-Khan's spell fails! You advance on him.

Make a to-hit roll, and because Khan is unarmed, you only need to roll a 10 or higher. If you hit, you deal him a vicious blow and he screams in pain! If you miss, he manages to dodge. Either way he then darts past you, out the door, and down the stairs. And more stairs... he is going into the cellar, where the ghouls are. Following him would probably be unwise, as it would then be a three-on-one battle.

You turn to the body of your fallen ally Alice. You kneel for a moment, mourning her passing. Downstairs you hear Khan's voice: "Careful, careful! Don't drop it. Hurry! They're coming! We have to go!" And then you hear a crowd gathering on the street before the house. It sounds like Khan won't be bothering you anymore; he doesn't want to meet the growing mob.

You gather the things that Khan had left behind. It isn't much, just a pouch of various leaves and animal bits (likely the reagents he uses to help him in his foul magic), and a bag full of... ahh! There are some coins, including 23



pieces of silver and one valuable gold coin! Also here is a vial of strange liquid. You put those things in your pack, pick up Alice's body, and begin to walk downstairs.

You find the front door to the house and open it. The gathering crowd gasps at the sight of you and your burden. "People! This is Alice, a Cleric from our fair town, who has fallen in combat with the foul necromancer Iri-Khan! He was just here! Don't let him get away!" The people mumble among themselves, organizing a search plan... and then one points at you. "Look out! Behind you!"

You wheel around just in time to stare into the vacant eyes of Alice's companion Tolliver, who minutes ago had laid dead on the floor! Your arms full, you can't defend yourself as the mockery of life surges forward, knocking you off your feet. As you land it is already tearing into your exposed wrist with its gnashing teeth. Your blood sprays as the zombie tears your flesh away, but it can do no more. The mob is there already, pulling the creature off you and pummeling it with any implement at hand. Its unlifeline was far shorter than its real life.

Yet another reminder that none of this would be "automatic" in the full game. For purposes of leading you through the basics, forgive us this bit of forced plot.

A few of the men are already helping bind your wound. "This looks nasty, but I've had far worse hunting wolves!" one reassures you. "We need to get you to a leech to have this looked at!" They help you up.

"No," you say. You pick up Alice's remains once again. "I must return her body to her church. It

is only right to do that much, at least, for one that has given her life in the fight against evil."

You pick her up, and begin to walk towards the church. Behind you, you notice the men, about a dozen in all, following.

Her church is not difficult to find, as it is the largest in town. The doors are locked, but the banging by the mob brings the vicar promptly. "What's all that commotion? I'll hear your confessions in the morning!"

"Please open up," you plead. "One of your own has fallen, and we are here to deliver her to you so that she may be given a proper burial."

There is silence for a moment, and then the noise of someone fiddling with a series of door locks. The door opens, and a middle-aged man in his nightgown peers out at the crowd. His sharp demeanor gives way to sorrow as he sees what you cradle in your arms.

"Alice..." his voice trails off. He motions for you to come in. The crowd does not follow. He asks you to place the body on a table in a private chamber, and asks you what happened. You tell the priest, leaving no detail out.

"I thank you for returning Alice to us," he says. "Although I am sorry to hear that poor Tolliver was able to bite you. You likely have the sickness now. In a matter of days you will become ill, and it will become worse until you succumb to the fever. And then you will rise as one of the undead."

He reads the horror in your eyes.

"Don't despair. It sounds like this Iri-Khan was a cowardly fellow, and such a man would not



risk contact with the undead without protection from his creations. You say he left in a hurry from the house. Maybe he has left something behind which can help you. Here, take this.” He hands you two small bottles filled with oddly hued liquid. “These are potions of healing. They act just like a healing spell cast by a Cleric of our faith. Go home and take one and rest for tonight, and tomorrow return to that house. Save the other potion for when you might need it! Tell no one of your purpose and bring no one with you, for if certain people knew what has bitten you, they’d kill you as a precaution before you ever had the chance to save yourself!”

“Thank you,” you say. “I found another bottle such as those within the house. Can you tell me what it is?” You present the vial found among Khan’s belongings. The priest takes it from you, unstoppers the container, and sniffs a bit. “Hmm. HMMM.” He takes the smallest sip. “Ah! This is a powerful potion! It will give you the power of three men if you drink it! Haha, I feel like a young man again just from that sip! Yes, this should help you in your quest!”

You thank him for his gift, and his kindness. He thanks you for your respect. You leave the church and head for home, thinking of everything that has happened this night, and thinking what you will face tomorrow...

Now read Ending #1 and pretend that you failed your saving throw. Discover what might have happened.

If you already have read it, skip ahead to the Conclusion.

Conclusion

To reiterate what has been noted several times, this did not give you the full experience of playing the game. If this were the “real thing,” many things would have been different:

- * You could have gone anywhere in the house you wanted, in the order you wanted to go.
- * Nobody would have told you what your character does or what your character feels or agrees to.
- * You would not have had to team up with or listen to Alice unless you really wanted to.
- * There would have been no predetermined ending – Tolliver might not have bitten you.
- * Perhaps you would have been slain in one of your several fights. Maybe even the first fight!
- * Maybe you would have slain or captured Iri-Khan.
- * You would have been playing with real people and negotiating the features of the game verbally, rather than reading static descriptions from a book.

Playing the full game, the possibilities are limitless. This time the action was restricted because, right now, you’re learning. Your next game will give you greater freedom of choice, and greater responsibility for those choices. But first, there is more that you need to know.

The Second Adventure

This adventure will work differently than the first. Start at the beginning, and rather than reading straight through, follow the instructions in each section on where to read next.

Here is some additional information you need to know about playing this adventure:

Combat

Combat will be a bit more complicated in this adventure. When you need to fight, there will be a description of combat information in the section that looks like this:

Monster's Name

Hit Points:

Roll Needed to Hit Them:

Roll Needed to Hit You:

Damage:

When combat begins, every round you will roll a d6 for you and for the monster. Whoever rolls highest gets to attack first, and after that strike is resolved, the other will attempt to attack. Then, with the round ended, you will roll d6 for the both of you again and repeat as long as the combat lasts.

The "Roll Needed to Hit Them" is what you need to roll on a d20 in order to inflict damage on your round. When you do hit, since you are using a sword, you will roll a d8 to determine how much damage you do.

When you do inflict damage, you subtract the damage done from the "Hit Points" listed. If the Hit Points are reduced to 0 or less, you win the combat! If there is more than one opponent, then you must bring both opponents down to

0 hit points, and you must decide which opponent you are attacking that round. You may not split damage you inflict between more than one opponent in a round!

The "Roll Needed to Hit You" is what the monsters will need to roll on a d20 to hit you. You will make these rolls on behalf of your enemies (no cheating!). If your opponent succeeds with the roll, you will then need to roll the amount listed under "Damage" and subtract that from your own hit points. If you are facing more than one opponent, they both have a chance to hit you and inflict damage on their turn! If your hit points fall to 0 or less, you lose the combat.

Record Keeping

Keep a record of the monsters you defeat and the treasure you recover. Experience will be awarded if you survive the adventure!

Mapping

There are a number of different locations in this adventure, and your life could depend on you remembering where they all are! Every room description will also include a map of the room. Use graph paper to make your personal map, and add every new room to your map as you explore. At the end of the adventure you can compare your map to the real one to discover if you mapped correctly.

Turn Counter

For this adventure, you will need to keep track of time. On a scratch sheet of paper, make a "Turn Counter" for yourself. It will begin at 0.



At various points during the adventure, you will be told to advance the turn counter. Simply keep track of the current total, and if you reach certain numbers the adventure will instruct you what to do.

In the full game, the game Referee will be keeping track of all game time, including turns, so you would not have to do this. However, since there is no Referee, and to reinforce the importance of keeping track of time, we use this method for the tutorial.

Plot Points

Adventuring locations are not static locations, and things will change as you go from room to room. The “Plot Point” system is something used just in this tutorial adventure to keep track of such changes. When the adventure tells you that you gain a Plot Point, simply write it down. The adventure will prompt you what to do in certain locations when you have particular Plot Points.

This is another thing the Referee would keep track of in a full game.

Other Notes

After your last adventure, you were given two healing potions by the priest. You used one to heal yesterday’s injuries before retiring to bed, and now you have one left. At any time, you may drink the healing potion. When you do that, remember the entry you are on and read entry 19. If you are in combat and choose to drink a healing potion, you do that instead of attacking that round.

If you “won” the first adventure, then you will also have the other potion you found in Iri-Khan’s belongings. This is only useful in combat. If you drink this potion, remember your current entry and read entry 88 to discover its effects. Drinking the potion is also something you do instead of attacking for the round.

The full game would have no restrictions on when you could use such an item.

The Start

Time is running out! Having been bitten by the walking dead, you must search the old mansion in hopes that Iri-Khan had kept a cure somewhere inside.

You’re carrying a minimum of equipment. You still have your mail and your sword, but in all the excitement of the previous night’s events, you’ve lost your lantern, and now carry a torch. You have a backpack, just in case you find anything worth keeping, but your main mission is to find a cure for the bite.

You guess that something important is in the basement. There were guards there, and Iri-Khan was anxious to remove items from that area.

As night falls and you can again sneak onto the property, you go around back. The cellar doors in the rear of the property are not locked this time. You light your torch and descend down the stairs, wondering if this is the final night of your life...



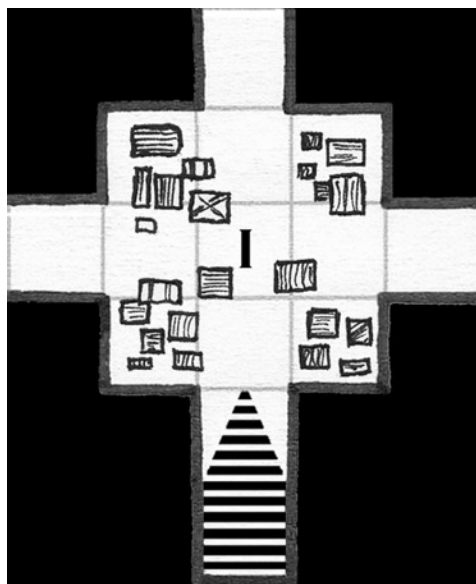
I

This room is a mess. With the south stairs leading up to the surface, this became the most convenient place to throw all the junk needed to maintain the estate grounds. And somewhere along the line, somebody stopped caring about the appearance and organization of the storage. The many years that have passed since people used any of these tools hasn't helped.

So there are a lot of miscellaneous gardening tools, lumber, crates, boxes, and just a ton of refuse that can't be of use to anyone anymore.

Passageways lead to the north, east, and west, and of course to the south the stairs lead back up to the surface.

Reference Map I for this room.



- If you listen for noises down the passages, go to 21.
- If you search the room, go to 23.
- If you go down the east passage, go to 109.
- If you go down the west passage, go to 82.
- If you go down the north passage, go to 115.
- If you go up the stairs to the south and leave the area, go to 87.

2

You search through the old junk, and in a box you find a small pouch. You empty out the pouch on the ground and a bunch of small rocks are revealed... and among them, a small gemstone! You estimate its worth at about 10gp. Not a rich find, but a welcome one nonetheless. You pocket the gem.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 1 and choose again.

3

You stand still and listen for a moment. To the north you hear what sounds like a human voice, muttering, or perhaps chanting. To the east, you hear scratching and skittering about. Sounds like the basement has vermin.

- Return to 1 and choose again.

4

This room looks to be some sort of art storage room, but unfortunately all the artwork looks to have been destroyed. Frames are knocked loose, canvas torn, drop-cloths scattered about. You see the transient's former "nest" as well.



There are doors to the east and west, and a passage leading south. Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If you search the room, go to 60.
- If you search the room for secret doors, go to 74.
- If you listen at the east door, go to 133.
- If you listen at the west door, go to 92.
- If you go through the east door, go to 41.
- If you go to the west door, go to 82.
- If you go down the south passage, go to 57.

5

You stand still and listen for a moment. To the east you hear scratching and skittering about. Sounds like the basement has vermin.

- Return to 1 and choose again.

6

To determine the results of your search of the closet, roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1 or a 2, go to 79.
- If you roll a 3, 4, 5, or 6, go to 51.

7

Have you gained Plot Point A?

- If so, go to 4.
- If not, go to 84.

8

Despite your best efforts, you hear nothing.

- Return to 4 and choose again.

9

You spend several minutes searching the walls, but you find no secret doors in this room.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 4 and choose again.

10

You press your ear to the door to listen. Roll d6.

- If you roll a 1, go to 114.
- If you roll a 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6, go to 65.

11

You leave the cellar and the property of the old mansion. After a short time, you realize that something is happening! You feel the change starting... you are turning into... into... an undead thing!

But no! You had mixed and drank the cure for your affliction! The zombie change stops!

You are cured, free and clear to live and explore and adventure again!

- Go to 149.

12

You hear nothing.

- Return to 4 and choose again.

13

How embarrassing! The creature has destroyed all of the metallic gear and valuables that you had on you. But it seems the monster has stopped at that, and has no more interest in you.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, go to 67.



14

The man seems pleased to meet you. He introduces himself as Henry, and says he's fallen on hard times so has taken to squatting in abandoned buildings. He says a haunted mansion wasn't his first choice, but here the authorities don't hassle him. He occasionally has to avoid a mean man that wanders around, but that's not so difficult.

He warns you that a fearsome monster guards the room beyond the west door in the west wall, and says you shouldn't go there. He says through the door to the east is a laboratory, and that he hasn't dared to disturb anything there for fear of being discovered and turned into a newt! He also says there are rats in the furniture storage room, but if you don't bother them, they won't bother you.

He sees that you have business beyond talking to old farts, so he says he'll find someplace else to stay the night. He bids you farewell and wanders off to the south.

Gain Plot Point A.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 35.
- If not, go to 4.

15

You carefully pour some of the yellow liquid into a fresh beaker. Taking the bottle of clear liquid, you add a single drop. It sizzles on contact with the yellow liquid, and there is a sweet honey smell in the air now. This seems fine. You pour more of the clear liquid in.

You don't have time for another thought as the mixture explodes. You are immediately thrown back and witness each of the bottles boil and explode, in what looks to you like slow motion. The air in the room ignites and as you see the fireball swell towards you, you notice half a body laying in front of the workbench. That's *your* lower half. You weren't just thrown back across the room, then. Not all of you, anyway. It doesn't hurt as much as you'd think, and you fade into unconsciousness as the warm, comfortable fire consumes you...

Your adventure has ended.

- Go to 149.

16

This is a loaded and cluttered closet, with all sorts of jackets and overcoats stuffed onto hangers. Shoes and small boxes cover the floor, and even more boxes are piled on a shelf above the hangers. Everything has obviously been here for quite some time, as the clothing is long out of fashion (not to mention moth-eaten) and there are cobwebs choking the place. It's so crowded and disorganized that you wonder if the old owners of the house ever had any sort of housekeeping help.

Reference Map IX for this room.





- If you search the room, go to 6.
- If you go back to the hallway to the west, go to 82.

17

You hear nothing.

- Return to 134 and choose again.

18

Drinking the blue liquid, you feel tingly, like all of your body has just fallen asleep. It passes after a moment, and you feel much the same as before.

You gain Plot Point H.

- Return to 41 and choose again.

19

You drink the healing potion, and you immediately feel your wounds close and your bruises heal. Your hit points are now at their maximum level once again!

- Return to the entry you were at before drinking the potion.

20

The poor filthy fellow now lies dead at your feet. You rifle through his rags, just in case he had found something in his stay here, but he has nothing of value. And nothing that doesn't stink. You can take his dagger if you'd like.

You gain Plot Point A.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, go to 4.

21

You quiet down and attempt to hear. Roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1, go to 25.
- If you roll a 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6, go to 100.

22

The strange roach creature has been slain and it will disturb you no further.

Gain Plot Point F.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, go to 67.

23

To determine the results of your search of the room, roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1 or 2, go to 2.
- If you roll a 3, 4, 5, or 6, go to 32.

24

To determine the results of your search for secret doors (aside from the one on the south wall you already know about, of course), roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1 or 2, go to 119.
- If you roll a 3, 4, 5, or 6, go to 46.

25

- Do you have Plot Points A and D? Go to 100.
- Do you have Plot Point A but not D? Go to 5.
- Do you have Plot Point D but not A? Go to 125.
- Do you have neither Plot Points A or D? Go to 3.



26

Do you have Plot Point B?

- If so, go to 86.
- If not, go to 121.

27

To determine the results of your search, roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1 or 2, go to 140.
- If you roll a 3, 4, 5, or 6, go to 135.

28

You press your ear against the south door. Roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1 and do not have Plot Point D, go to 141.
- If you roll 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6, or have Plot Point D, go to 126.

29

You hear nothing.

- Return to 82 and choose again.

30

You hear incoherent mumbling through the door.

- Return to 82 and choose again.

31

You find nothing hidden among the stacks of furniture.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 33 and choose again.

32

You find nothing useful, valuable, or relevant.

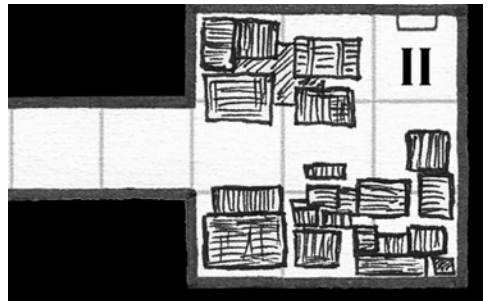
Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 1 and choose again.

33

This is where the unneeded furniture for the mansion must have been stored. Old-fashioned, well-crafted, heavy furniture of all types is stacked here. It would actually be quite valuable if it wasn't all chewed up and generally wrecked.

There is a door in the north wall and a passage to the west. Reference Map II for this room.



- If you search this room and have Plot Point D, go to 45.
- If you search this room and do not have Plot Point D, go to 95.
- If you search this room for secret doors, go to 112.
- If you listen at the north door, go to 10.
- If you go down the west passage, go to 43.
- If you go through the north door, go to 134.



34

As you step out into the moonlight, your vision becomes blurry. Your legs are so heavy... You stumble onto the street and try to get home. But you can't. You manage to make it to the steps in front of a shop and lean on the railing. Why are you so dizzy? A woman and her young child, well dressed and out for their evening walk about town, come around the corner. The woman seems to say something (but you can't hear it) and rushes to you. You do your best to raise your head to greet her. And she screams. Your hand, *your hand*, oozing and spotted, grabs the woman by the arm, and you sink your teeth into her hand, all the while feeling as if you are but an observer and not a participant in these events. The last thoughts you have before the darkness takes you is your view of the young child, horrified, as you consume the flesh of his mother before his eyes.

Your adventure has ended.

- Go to 149.

35

You twitch violently, for no reason. Pain shoots from your gut to every extremity. You fall to your knees. Henry rushes back to the room, looking concerned. He says something, but you cannot hear him. He reaches out to help you up, and you snatch his hand without realizing you are doing it. Your horror increases as your body rises and you lunge at Henry, biting a chunk of his face off. Your body is no longer in your control. Is this what death is like? Retaining consciousness, being a passive observer in an unresponsive body? But your body has transformed into an undead thing, and you can do

nothing but silently scream and frantically pray for the mercy of oblivion as you see "yourself" rip Henry apart, feel the spray of hot blood upon "your" skin, and taste the internal organs of a fellow man...

Your adventure has ended.

- Go to 149.

36

You hear nothing.

- Return to 41 and choose again.

37

The unnatural *thing* has overcome you. The only consolation to you as it delivers the fatal blow is that its talons, and its teeth, somehow have a numbing effect. You do not feel pain so much as just inconvenient pressure as it proceeds to feast upon you. Unfortunately, it seems to find extremities far more palatable than vitals, and it takes you far longer to expire than you would prefer.

Your adventure has ended.

- Go to 149.

38

You press your ear against the west door. Roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1 and do not have Plot Point A, go to 68.
- If you roll 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6, or have Plot Point A, go to 36.



39

Do you have Plot Point F?

- If so, go to 67.
- If not, go to 101.

40

Unfortunately the effect of the orange mixture is not minor, and you feel your stomach burst. Your only consolation is that the intense agony does not last so terribly long...

Your adventure has ended.

- Go to 149.

41

The smell hits you before the sight. This room, whatever it once was, is now a macabre laboratory. In one end of the room is a workbench with a full alchemical apparatus. Rows of glass beakers stand on the table. They are mostly empty, but the four biggest are each filled with different colored liquids. One is red, one blue, one yellow, and one is clear, but definitely not water. Water doesn't move around on its own quite like *that*.

This wouldn't be so disconcerting except that on the other side of the room is a stone slab, upon which lays a naked cadaver. Its head is tilted to one side, so it appears to be looking at the workbench.

There are doors to the north and south, and down a short hallway to the west is another door.

Reference Map IV for this room.



- If you inspect the cadaver, go to 73.
- If you search for secret doors, go to 72.
- If you listen at the south door, go to 137.
- If you listen at the west door, go to 38.
- If you listen at the north door, go to 48.
- If you drink the red liquid, go to 90.
- If you drink the blue liquid, go to 18.
- If you drink the yellow liquid, go to 107.
- If you drink the clear liquid, go to 61.
- If you mix the red and blue liquids together and drink the mixture, go to 108.
- If you mix the red and yellow liquids together and drink the mixture, go to 52.
- If you mix the red and clear liquids together and drink the mixture, go to 44.
- If you mix the blue and yellow liquids together and drink the mixture, go to 71.
- If you mix the blue and clear liquids together and drink the mixture, go to 124.
- If you mix the yellow and clear liquids together and drink the mixture, go to 15.
- If you go through the south door, go to 134.
- If you go through the west door, go to 7.
- If you go through the north door, go to 39.

This room gives you the closest hint of what the full game is like and having the ability to do anything at any particular time.



42

The old man becomes instantly and inexplicably angry and attacks you!

- Go to 113.

43

You travel west down the short passage.

- Go to 1.

44

You mix the red and clear liquids together, and it forms a pink mixture that smells like roses. You raise the beaker to your lips and take a sip.

It tastes awful, even as its scent continues to please. You can tell that you have ingested a foul poison! But how much? Roll a d20.

- If you roll a 12 or higher, then you did not ingest enough to truly harm you. Return to 41.
- If you rolled 11 or less, go to 49.

45

You find nothing among the furniture. Apparently the rats had not hidden away anything of value.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 33 and choose again.

46

You find no additional secret doors within the secret room.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 122 and choose again.

47

You have run out of time! You feel the change happening... you are turning into... into... an undead thing!

Do you have Plot Point E?

- If so, go to 58.
- If not, go to 123.

48

You listen at the north door. Roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1 and do not have Plot Point F, go to 62.
- If you roll 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6, or have Plot Point F, go to 89.

49

The poison overcomes you. The end is mercifully swift and relatively painless. Your body will be found, some weeks later, with dried rose-colored foam around your mouth, nostrils, eyes, and ears.

Your adventure has ended.

- Go to 149.

50

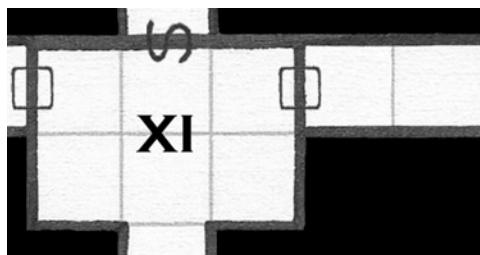
The old guy wants to talk to you!

- Go to 75, and add 1 to the roll you will make there.



51

Your search bears fruit: you have found a rough map of the basement that reveals the location of a secret door (see map XI)!



Gain Plot Point C.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 16 and choose again.

52

You mix the red and yellow liquids together, forming a bubbling orange mixture. Bottoms up!

Agh! It burns! This was not a good idea. Take d6 hit points damage as if you were hit by a monster.

- If your hit points are 0 or lower, go to 40.
- Otherwise, return to 41 and choose again.

53

The man gets an angry look on his face, and begins to hoot, then stares at the ground and screams, "You bastard! You unbelievable bastard! You too! You'll never get away with this! It's mine! MINE!" His momentary and venom-

ous glances towards you make you unsure whether he's yelling at you or his feet.

He settles down again.

- Return to 84 and choose again.

54

In your rush to find useful information, you are frightened that you are missing key documents among the pile. But what choice do you have? Any minute now, you could transform into a hideous undead creature!

But you think you have found something! Notes talking about transforming humans to corpses and back. This is it! Apparently there is a reagent called Polyxidone, that appears blue in color, which must be added to a yellow liquid taken from the glands of giant squid.

Do you know where the lab is?

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 122 and choose again.

55

Going up the stairs, you realize you're on the ground floor of the mansion. You've been around here already, and you know there's no cure here!

- Return down the stairs to 86 and choose again.

56

You hear nothing.

- Return to 82 and choose again.



57

You go south along the corridor.

- Go to 1.

58

Salvation! You have mixed and drank the cure for your affliction! The zombie change stops!

If you would like to continue exploring, return to the entry that asked you to add to your turn counter.

If you'd like to consider this enough of a victory and exit the basement of the house, then your adventure is over and you have won!

- Go to 149.

59

You find no secret doors in this room.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 67 and choose again.

60

You search amongst the ripped and broken artwork, hoping to find something of value or use.

Roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1 or 2, go to 64.
- If you roll a 3, 4, 5, or 6, go to 118.

61

You drink the clear liquid. It tastes somewhat like the feeling you had as a child when you lied

to your mother about a bit of mischief you had done.

You feel faint and promptly pass out. You wake up sometime later.

Gain Plot Point J.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 41 and choose again.

62

You hear nothing.

- Return to 41.

63

To see if your search for secret doors in the hallway succeeds, roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1 or 2, go to 142.
- If you roll a 3, 4, 5, or 6, go to 144.

64

You find nothing of value, or really intact at all, amongst the piles of ruined artwork.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 4 and choose again.

65

You hear nothing.

- Return to 33 and choose again.



66

To see if your search for secret doors in the room succeeds, roll a d6.

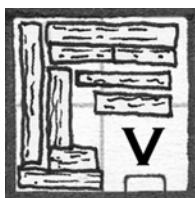
- If you roll a 1 or a 2, go to 148.
- If you roll a 3, 4, 5, or 6, go to 9.

67

If you carry or possess any metal items and do not have Plot Point F, go to 101 instead of reading this entry.

This room is filled with bookshelves. Large, small, tall, short, narrow, wide. Stacked to the ceiling, stacked four or five deep from the walls. All made of solid wood. They've been knocked around pretty good, so they'd need some repair, but they aren't in as bad condition as other stored items in the place have been.

Reference Map V for this room.



- If you search the room, go to 27.
- If you search for secret doors, go to 81.
- If you return through the south door to the lab, go to 41.

68

You hear a muffled voices, perhaps incoherent mumbling, coming from the other side of the door.

- Return to 41 and choose again.

69

Your search finds a loose flagstone in the floor! Lifting it, you see that a small pouch has been stuffed into a space in the floor. It contains 84 silver coins! You pocket them.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 86 and choose again

70

You hear nothing through the door.

- Return to 134 and choose again.

71

You mix the blue and yellow liquids in an empty beaker. The result is the consistency of porridge, pale green and bubbling, even though it is not hot. You take a deep breath and then swallow the stuff.

You are momentarily dizzy, and then you realize you must have fallen. No, something is wrong! You see yourself lying on the floor before the workbench, green liquid about your chin and on the floor around the shattered beaker. But you're looking at yourself from outside your body!

It takes a moment but you realize from your point of view you must be seeing through the eyes of the corpse on the slab! You try to move but cannot. Time passes, and you see your torch burn low on the ground. Your body begins to twitch. Your body begins to stand, albeit stiffly. You see that the exposed skin has become shriveled, and has oozing sores. Your body turns to face you... and its face is dead!



The transformation begun by the bite is complete! You, or more accurately your body, has become an animated undead corpse! You struggle once again to move, desperately now, but to no avail. Your deceased yet ambulant body shambles over to the shell your consciousness now inhabits. "It" sniffs "you." When it takes its first bite (of quite many), you realize that you not only are able to see out of this body, but you can feel everything that happens to it. In the instant before your mind shatters, you beg to be taken to hell, for its tortures surely cannot be any worse than this.

Your adventure has ended.

- Go to 149.

72

To determine if your search for secret doors in the lab succeeds, roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1 or 2, go to 76.
- If you roll a 3, 4, 5, or 6, go to 80.

73

This being a necromancer's hideout, it's only natural to make sure that any body you find isn't going to get up and kill you. You've been bitten by enough zombies!

You approach the body carefully. You wave your hand in front of its face. No reaction. You take your sword and you poke it a few times. Deep enough to have inflicted a fatal wound if it was a living body. No reaction.

OK. You're safe enough then.

You hope.

- Return to 41 and choose again.

74

Do you have Plot Point C?

- If so, go to 139.
- If not, go to 66.

75

You attempt to engage the transient in conversation.

Roll 2d6.

- If you roll 2, go to 83.
- If you roll 3, 4, or 5, go to 14.
- If you roll 6, 7, or 8, go to 143.
- If you roll 9, 10, or 11, go to 98.
- If you roll 12, go to 117.

76

You find no secret doors.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 41 and choose again.

77

You find no secret doors.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.

If not, return to 67 and choose again.



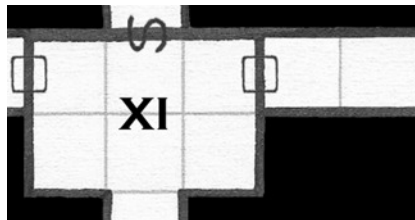
78

You hear scratching and groaning coming from the other side of the door.

- Return to 82 and choose again.

79

Your search is successful! You discover a rough map of the basement (see Map XI) revealing a secret door in one of the rooms! You also find, hidden deep in the pockets of a jacket hanging up, a small silver ring, worth perhaps 250sp. You take it.



Gain Plot Point C.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 16 and choose again.

80

You find no secret doors in the lab.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 41 and choose again.

81

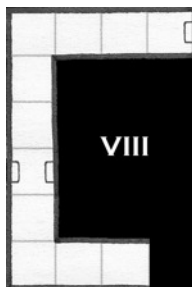
To determine if you find any secret doors in this room, roll d6.

- If you roll a 1 or 2, go to 77.
- If you roll 3, 4, 5, or 6, go to 59.

82

You are in a long hallway that forms a horse-shoe from north to south. There are two doors opposite one another in the middle of the hallway, a door around the north corner, and an open hallway that continues around the southern corner.

Reference Map VIII for this location.



- If you search for secret doors, go to 63.
- If you listen at the door around the corner to the north, go to 111.
- If you listen at the western door in the middle of the hall, go to 128.
- If you listen at the eastern door in the middle of the hall, go to 105.
- If you go east around the southern corner, go to 1.
- If you go through the door around the northern corner, go to 136.
- If you go through the western door in the middle of the hallway, go to 26.
- If you go through the eastern door in the middle of the hallway, go to 16.



83

The man seems overwhelmed to meet you. "I've heard of you! You're that young 'un who's trying to make a name and become some sort of famous explorer? Excellent! I've heard the folks around town talking about you. Mighty pleased to meet ya!"

He introduces himself as Henry, and says he's fallen on hard times so has taken to squatting in abandoned buildings. He says a haunted mansion wasn't his first choice, but here the authorities don't hassle him. He occasionally has to avoid a mean man that wanders around, but that's not so difficult.

He warns you that a fearsome monster guards the room beyond the west door in the west wall, and says you shouldn't go there. He says through the door to the east is a laboratory, and that he hasn't dared to disturb anything there for fear of being discovered and turned into a newt! He also says there are rats in the furniture storage room, but if you don't bother them, they won't bother you.

"Ah, but you're lookin' fer something! Let me tell you, I was rifling through a closet looking for something warm to wear, and I found something that looked like a map! Now good old Henry doesn't need any maps, but you might! Yes! It's in the closet, down that hall to the west!"

Noting that he's just an old fool and in need of rest, he figures he needs to go someplace else for the night in order to not get in your way. He bids you farewell and wanders off to the south.

Gain Plot Point A.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

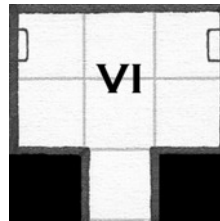
- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 35.
- If not, go to 4.

84

This room looks to be some sort of art storage room, but unfortunately all the artwork appears to have been destroyed. Frames are knocked loose, canvas torn, drop-cloths scattered about. And in the middle of the north wall is an old man laying among a makeshift bed. He looks to be a street person, a bum, a transient. He sees you and shields his eyes from your torchlight. He flashes a big smile full of rotten teeth as he stands.

The man is looking at you. What do you do?

(Reference Map VI for this room.)



- If you talk to him, go to 75.
- If you attack him, go to 113.
- If you wait to see what he does, go to 91.
- If you want to leave the room, go to 99.

85

You hear nothing.

- Return to 41 and choose again.



86

This now-cleared room is bare of furniture or any notable features. Its stone construction has seen better days, as the stone blocks in the walls and on the floor are chipped in many places. Minor debris is scattered here and there in the room.

- If you search the room, go to 147.
- If you go up the stairs, go to 55.
- If you return through the east door, go to 82.

87

You are leaving the mansion's basement. Are you sure you want to do that?

- If you want to remain in the basement, return to 1.
- If you want to go up the stairs and leave the basement, and have Plot Point E, go to 11.
- If you want to go up the stairs and leave the basement, and do not have Plot Point E, go to 34.

88

You drink the potion, and you feel miraculously stronger and more skilled!

Add 15 to your current hit points, and for the rest of this combat add 3 to all of your rolls to hit.

At the end of the combat, the bonus to hit disappears. If your hit points are still above your normal maximum at the end of the combat, then they drop to your normal maximum. If your current hit points are lower than your maximum, then your current hit points will not change.

- Return to the combat you were engaged in.

89

You hear skittering and scratching.

- Return to 41 and choose again.

90

You drink the red liquid. You feel light-headed and dizzy for a moment, but it soon passes.

You gain Plot Point G.

- Return to 41 and choose again.

91

To determine what the filthy old man does, roll 2d6.

- If you roll 2, go to 94.
- If you roll 3, 4, or 5, go to 50.
- If you roll 6, 7, or 8, go to 103.
- If you roll 9, 10, or 11, go to 53.
- If you roll 12, go to 42.

92

To determine if you hear anything through the west door, roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1, go to 146.
- If you roll a 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6, go to 8.

93

You go through the door.

- Go to 33.



94

"I haven't talked to anyone all day!," the man says.

- Go to 75, and add +2 to the roll you will make there.

95

As you move some furniture out of the way and begin your search, you hear a shrill squeak and see evil glowing eyes... two sets! Two vicious jaws use this room as a nest, and you have disturbed them! They move to attack you!

You are now engaged in combat! Here is the information about your opponents:

Vicious Dogs

Hit Points: 3, 4

Roll Needed to Hit Them: 10

Roll Needed to Hit You: 16

Damage: d4

- If you win the combat, go to 138.
- If you lose the combat, go to 131.

96

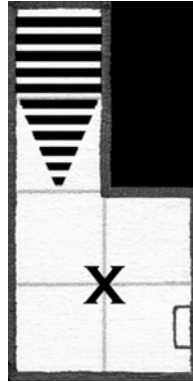
Whew! It was a bad situation, but you have overcome the ghoul. You have the opportunity to look at your surroundings.

Reference Map X for this room.

Gain Plot Point B.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, go to 86.



97

You search and search through the documents, but there are so many of them! You're having trouble making heads or tails of what you're reading. It's all formulas and equations and theories and philosophies concerning alchemy. There's still more to search through though.

Add 2 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10 or greater, go to 47.
- If not, return to 122 and choose again.

98

The man seems angry. "Can't a man get any rest without some dang fool bothering him? A pox on you! A pox on your house! Lousy son of a... grrr, no respect. No respect these days! I'm going to find a better place to crash in! Good day, blackguard!"

He storms off to the south.

Gain Plot Point A.



- Go to 4.

99

As you go about your business, the transient gets an annoyed look on his face. He hops up and down, waving his arms like a lunatic. "I'm right here! Don't you dare ignore me!"

It seems you must deal with him in one way or another.

- Return to 84 and choose again.

100

You hear nothing.

- Return to 1 and choose again.

101

As you go through the door, you see a creature about the size of a large dog. It looks something like a giant cockroach with tentacles where its antennae should be. It charges at you!

You are now engaged in combat! Here is the information about your opponent:

Tentacle Bug

Hit Points: 19

Roll Needed to Hit It: 13

Roll Needed to Hit You: 11

Damage: Special

Whenever the monster hits you, it does not inflict any actual damage against your hit points. Instead, its special powers will destroy an item that you carry as its tentacles touch it. Your items will be devoured in this order:

- * Your chain armor. From this point forward, all opponents will get a +4 bonus to their roll to hit you.
- * Your sword. From this point forward, you can only attack using your torch as a club (d3 damage). Or you can use a dagger if you've picked one up (d4 damage).
- * The dagger if you've picked one up.
- * Any treasure in the form of gold or coins you've collected.

If you lose all of your metal items, the creature will lose interest in you. It can't actually harm you, so if at that point you want to beat it to death with your torch, you automatically win the combat. But that would just be mean, wouldn't it? If you just give up the fight after all your metal equipment is destroyed, you lose the fight.

- If you win the combat, go to 22.
- If you lose the combat, go to 13.

102

You start rifling through the documents on the desk. Roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1 or 2, go to 130.
- If you roll a 3 or 4, go to 145.
- If you roll a 5, go to 97.
- If you roll a 6, go to 54.

103

"Say there, mind if we talk a bit?" he says to you.

- Go to 75.



I04

You hear nothing.

- Go to 4.

I05

To determine if you hear anything at the door, roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1, go to 29.
- If you roll a 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6, go to 106.

I06

You hear nothing.

- Go to 82.

I07

You drink the yellow liquid. It tastes rather foul! Your vision goes blurry, and then you realize you are no longer seeing in color! Luckily, it passes quickly.

You gain Plot Point I.

- Return to 41 and choose again.

I08

You mix the red and blue liquids, forming a truly disgusting purple goo. Ah well, nothing ventured, nothing gained, so you suck down the paste as quickly as possible.

This mixture is a healing potion! All your wounds are healed! Your hit points are restored to their normal maximum value.

- Return to 41 and choose again.

I09

You travel east down the hall.

- Go to 33.

I10

To determine if you hear anything through the door to the north, roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1, go to 70.
- If you roll a 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6, go to 17.

I11

To determine if you hear anything through the door, roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1 and do not have Plot Point A, go to 30.
- If you roll a 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6, or have Plot Point A, go to 56.

I12

Do you have Plot Point D? If not, go to 95.

If you do have Plot Point D, roll a d6.

- If you roll 1 or 2, go to 31.
- If you roll 3, 4, 5, or 6, go to 129.

I13

You are now in mortal combat with the old man! He moves around like a crazy person, and is quicker and more cunning than you would have thought. The dagger he carries also means that he is capable of delivering a killing blow.

Here is the information about your opponent:



Weird Old Man

Hit Points: 4

Roll Needed to Hit Him: 10

Roll Needed to Hit You: 16

Damage: d4

- If you win the combat, go to 20.
- If you lose the combat, go to 120.

114

You hear nothing.

- Return to 33 and choose again.

115

You travel north through the hallway.

Do you have Plot Point A?

- If so, go to 4.
- If not, go to 84.

116

You find nothing.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 86 and choose again.

117

The old man twitches violently, gives a bit of a howl... and then pulls a dagger from his raggedy clothing and attacks you!

- Go to 113.

118

You find nothing.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 4 and choose again.

119

You find nothing.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.

If not, return to 122 and choose again.

120

Are you serious? You've been defeated by a bum? What kind of adventurer did you think you are?

It is highly suggested that you never tell anybody about this. Trust the game book here. It would be embarrassing if anyone found out.

Your adventure is (mercifully) over.

- Go to 149.

121

As you open the door, a clawed hand reaches out from the room beyond! It seems that Iri-Khan has left behind one of his ghoulish guards! You are now in for the fight of your life!

You are now engaged in combat! Here is the information about your opponent:

Ghoul

Hit Points: 10

Roll Needed to Hit It: 10

Roll Needed to Hit You: 14

Damage: d6

Every time the ghoul hits you, you must make a saving throw versus its terrifying paralyzation. To do that, roll a d20 whenever you are



hit. If you roll 14 or greater, nothing further happens and you continue the combat as usual. If you roll a 13 or less, then you are paralyzed – the combat immediately ends and you lose. The stakes are high, the opponent is fearsome!

- If you win the combat, go to 96.
- If you lose the combat, go to 37.

I22

This secret room looks to be some sort of study. Books, papers, and scrolls are piled on a desk against the wall, and a small bookshelf beside the desk is likewise packed.

Reference Map VII for this room.



- If you search through the documents, go to 102.
- If you search for secret doors, go to 24.
- If you return to the secret door to the south, go to 4.

I23

You notice you're sweating profusely. Your heart is beating rather quickly. Then you must squeeze your eyes tightly shut as they feel as if salt was thrown in them.

You realize that your time has run out.

A tingle rolls over your flesh like a gentle wave. Your body convulses, just once, but violent enough to send you to your knees. You vomit, and by the light of the torch now laying beside you, you see that not only is it bloody, but it's rather chunky.

Another convulsion sends you forward, and your face smashes into the stone floor. You grab your face instinctively and can feel that it's no longer whole – it's broken in several places. It's your hands that give you this information, moving bone fragments around with your fingers. You can't actually feel anything directly from your face.

And then you can't notice your heartbeat anymore. You check your pulse. Nothing.

Your thoughts scatter. Everything that was you shuts down, bit by bit, piece by piece.

By the time your body stands back up and starts to wander once again, you are no longer in it.

Your adventure is over.

- Go to 149.

I24

You mix the blue and clear liquids in a separate beaker, and quickly gulp it down, half-expecting it to be acid which will eat straight through you, and possibly the floor below.

But nothing happens. Hmm.

Gain Plot Point E.

- Return to 41 and choose again.



I25

You hear incoherent mumbling to the north.

- Return to 1 and choose again.

I26

You hear scratching and skittering.

- Return to 134 and choose again.

I27

You hear nothing.

- Return to 82 and choose again.

I28

To determine if you hear anything through the door, roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1 and do not have Plot Point B, go to 78.
- If you roll a 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 or have Plot Point B, go to 127.

I29

You find nothing.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 33 and choose again.

I30

You have a stroke of luck and manage to find, in a short amount of time, several documents that look to be of great use:

One scroll has a great amount of writing which you can't decipher. It's not written in any language you recognize. This might be a magical scroll that would be useful to Magic-

Users! You stuff it in your pack, hoping to either sell it later or trade it to a mage in exchange for something you could actually use.

One journal details how the combination of yellow squid extract and the blue chemical called Polyxidone is a dead end for research. The mixture was supposed to animate corpses, but it can't be made to work, and simply puts anyone drinking it into a permanent coma.

And you have hit the jackpot! Necromancers must take precautions since they deal with the undead on a regular basis, and sure enough it looks like Iri-Khan had a formula to save himself if ever he was bitten by a zombie who would not obey his commands. Simply mix the blue and clear liquids found in the lab, and that will cure you! Now where's the lab?

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 122 and choose again.

I31

Giant rats are often thought of as the weakest of foes by many adventurers, but as you've just discovered, being outnumbered and unprepared can mean that these giant, disgusting vermin can get the better of you.

To look on the bright side, they do find you to be a most excellent meal.

Your adventure is over.

- Go to 149.



132

You hear nothing.

- Return to 41 and choose again.

133

To determine if you hear anything through the door, roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1, go to 12.
- If you roll a 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6, go to 104.

134

You seem to be in a short connecting room. There's really nothing here but the doors to the north and south.

Reference Map III for this area.



- If you'd like to listen at the north door, go to 110.
- If you'd like to listen at the south door, go to 28.
- If you'd like to go through the north door, go to 41.
- If you'd like to go through the south door, go to 93.

135

You find nothing.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 67 and choose again.

136

You go through the door.

Do you have Plot Point A?

- If so, go to 4.
- If not, go to 84.

137

To determine if you hear anything through the door, roll a d6.

- If you roll a 1, go to 132.
- If you roll a 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6, go to 85.

138

You have bested the oversized rodents, and should now be able to search the room in peace.

You gain Plot Point D.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, go to 33.

139

You easily find the secret passage in the north wall.

- To discover what is beyond, go to 122.

140

Wow! Stuck behind the shelves of one of the furthest bookcases is an intact, original edition, book of poetry by one of the old masters! You remember being told about these sorts of books



by a scribe you know. You figure this could be worth 100sp to a collector. Score!

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 67 and choose again.

I41

You hear nothing.

- Go to 134.

I42

You find nothing.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 82 and choose again.

I43

This guy seems really disturbed at having his rest interrupted, but sees you meant no harm. He says he's going elsewhere to get some sleep, but before he leaves through the south entrance, he gives you some advice: "In the long hall, the far doorway holds a dangerous creature. Avoid it!" He then departs.

You gain Plot Point A.

- Go to 4.

I44

You find nothing.

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 82 and choose again.

I45

What luck! You've found exactly what you're looking for! According to this journal you've just found, all you need to do is mix the blue and clear liquids found in the lab, and drinking that will cure you! Now where's the lab?

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, return to 122 and choose again.

I46

You hear nothing.

- Return to 4 and choose again.

I47

To determine the results of your search, roll a d6.

- If you roll 1 or 2, go to 69.
- If you roll 3, 4, 5, or 6, go to 116.

I48

You find a secret door in the center of the north wall!

Add 1 to your turn counter.

- If your turn counter is now 10, go to 47.
- If not, gain Plot Point C. Go to 47.

I49

Adventure Wrap-Up

If you died in the course of the adventure, don't worry! Simply start over from scratch. You're still learning, so it's OK to practice a bit. There is a solution to the scenario, so keep at it!

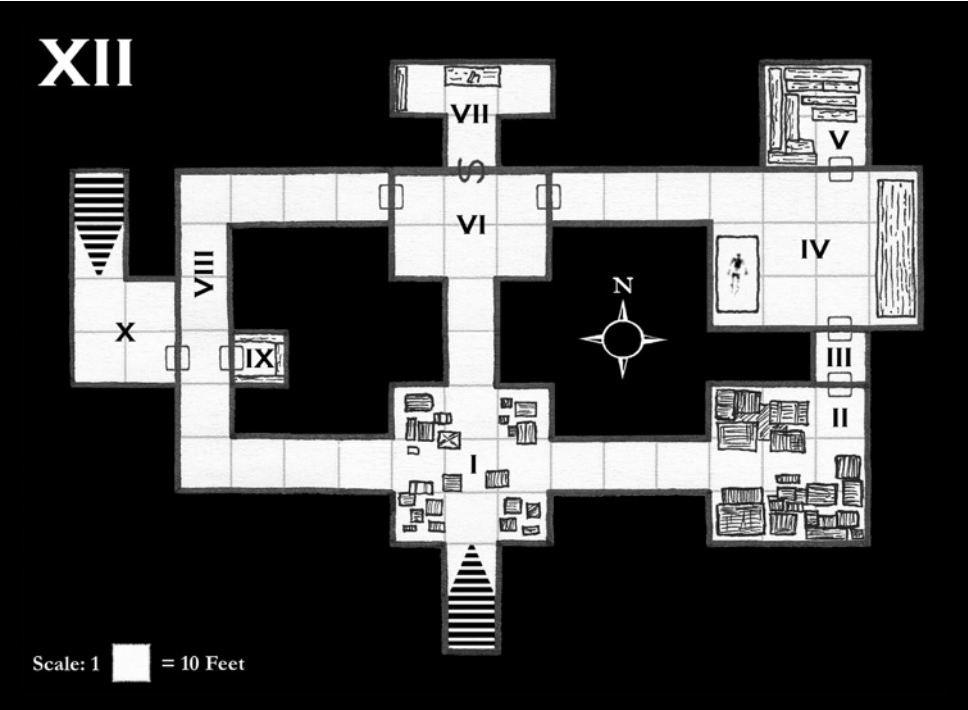


If you succeeded, then congratulations! You’ve encountered more of the basics of game play: Exploration, mapping, puzzles, and deciding where to go next.

Dungeon is a generic term for any adventuring area. Whether it’s an old house and its basement, or a tower, or a castle, or an honest-to-goodness underground complex, if it’s an enclosed area with doors and passages, it’s often called a dungeon.

But of course, this isn’t the full experience of the game either. There is more to learn (there’s always more to learn!), but with these games under your belt, you will now be better equipped to understand the complexities of the full game.

Below is the full dungeon map. Compare it to the map you made:



More About the Game

Up until this point you've been limited by the restraints of a single-player game run out of a book. You need to take the next step, and join a real role-playing group.

RPG groups typically number between four and ten, and meet every once in awhile to play (once a week is common, although really dedicated players meet several times a week).

One person in the group must assume the role of Referee, and is basically in charge of the game. This gives the Referee great influence over the game, but it also entails much responsibility – the entire game depends on the effort and talent of the Referee. While the rest of the players can just show up and play their characters, a Referee has much, much more to do.

Preparation

Refereeing a role-playing game is a fair amount of work, and putting together a game session takes a bit of thought. There are a few things that every game session needs. These may seem like common sense, but experience has shown that gaming groups are not always endowed with common sense, and many new game groups are composed of strangers meeting for the first time as the game begins.

Materials (Pencil, Paper, Dice, Screen)

Each player, and the Referee, is responsible for having their own gaming materials. Only the Referee needs a copy of the rules, and of course he must have his adventure notes.

The Referee could also use a screen or other device that blocks his notes from view of the players. A clipboard with a blank page over the notes could easily be used as a screen.

All players should have their own pencil, eraser, and dice, and show up ready to play, but a good host will have extras available because somebody always forgets, or doesn't own one of these items and no matter what they say aren't really interested in getting them, ever.

Playing Space

The traditional arrangement for playing role-playing games is that all participants sit around a table. This allows all participants to more or less face each other, and provides a surface for rolling dice and writing.

There must be space for all players to sit comfortably for several hours, there must be space to roll dice, and the players and Referee must all be able to hear each other clearly. It's not so uncommon that too many people are invited to a session and then there's nowhere to put everyone. Or a game is scheduled in a public place, and the background noise makes effective gaming impossible. It just takes a little planning to avoid these problems. Take that time to plan.

Snacks and Refreshments

Role-playing sessions usually last hours. Some, usually younger groups, play marathon sessions that last twelve or more hours! Having food and drink available is essential. Plan the refreshments as a group in advance of the session. Find out if anyone is allergic to certain foods or can't eat certain things for other reasons (serving only hamburgers when someone in your group is a vegetarian = EPIC FAIL). Good food and drink makes any social gathering more enjoyable and comfortable, and their absence can make an otherwise good gaming session unbearable.

The Process of Play

While the rules may seem complicated, and may actually be, playing a role-playing game is dead simple. The heart of game play is as follows:

- * A player decides his character is going to do something. The Referee responds with what happens as a result.
- * The Referee announces that something is happening. The players decide what their characters will do in response.

That's it.

The rules are added to create the semblance of order and chaos, each in their proper place. Certain procedures are standardized so everyone is on the same page as to how magic works, how to determine who wins in combat in as impartial manner as possible, things like that. This allows players to make rational decisions within the game, for they know not everything is completely arbitrary. And the rules provide avenues for uncertainty, so that even though procedures are known, excitement builds as outcomes remain in question until actions are resolved.

Description, Action, Reaction

The Referee represents the senses of the PCs. He tells the players what their characters see, what they hear, what they smell, and what they physically feel. The players never see the Referee's adventure notes or maps or any such details. It is from these descriptions that the players make their decisions, so they are vitally important.

It is only with practice that a Referee learns how much is enough, and how much is too much, and it is only with practice that players

learn how to interpret each Referee's style of presentation.

Making the Game Come Alive

Rules and rulebooks, no matter how fantastic the material they talk about, are fairly dry and unexciting in and of themselves. The books and rules are not games, they are tools to allow you to play the games.

The key to exciting games is to be exciting. A Referee should not read descriptions off a page like he's putting together a bookshelf, nor should he be calm and roll dice with the same verve as if sorting his change. This is a skill a Referee needs to learn and practice – how to make games that do not just describe the happenings of a fictional reality, but to present it in a manner which excites the players and makes them happy to return game after game.

The Referee must bring *life* to his campaign. His descriptions should be dramatic, when appropriate, and he should use every dramatic technique possible in order to make the players excited and involved. Use voices, stand up and gesture wildly. But like all things, it should be done in moderation and when appropriate, else the technique just becomes silly.

The players are likewise responsible for bringing their characters to life. Coming up with engaging (and appropriate) personalities for their characters and running the characters in a manner consistent with those personalities enhances the game for everyone.



Mapping

Unlike other types of games, in role-playing games the players can't see the location where their "pieces" (the characters) are. Since they depend on the Referee's description, it is up to the players to keep track of their location. They do this by following the Referee's instructions and mapping as they go.

Referees should not remind players about directions and locations of interest if the players haven't bothered keeping track, unless the characters actually go back to the locations in question.

Relationship Between Player and Character

This game is written with the assumption that you understand the difference between "You" as in "Your character, in the game," and "You" as in "You, the real person reading this book right now."

The most rewarding part of this game is the opportunity to create a character and watch him grow from a greater-than-the-average-man explorer into a real mythic figure. All of the successes and failures involved in playing a character over time as well as giving personality to that character (and watching as some personality quirks of the character develop almost by themselves), is an act of creativity and collaboration with your fellow players and Referee that can never be recreated. It is absolutely unique.

That said, never become too attached to a character. Characters will die uselessly in silly

situations, or become cursed, or end up in horrible circumstances and have their reputations ruined. Those are all part of the game – every bit as slaying monsters, finding treasure, and doing great deeds. Sometimes being a great player helps your character survive, and sometimes fate and the dice are just against you and there's not much you can do.

If this upsets you, you are in the wrong hobby.

It's a balancing act. You can't become too invested in characters because a bad decision or an unlucky roll could doom your character, but at the same time without a due amount of care and investment your character will never rise in level and become a successful adventurer.

Part of your job as a player is to find the right balance for you in approaching your characters.

The important thing when playing is to remember that this is not a novel or a movie. Your actions are not building to a greater climax at the end of a story. There is no plot structured to organize your actions. Not every challenge is meant to be overcome, and not every challenge meant to be overcome actually will be during the course of play. Your decisions may take an adventure in directions that nobody thought it could ever go. The story that the game is telling is discovered through play, and understood only after the game is ended. It is *never* decided ahead of time.

Also remember that while the player is not the character, the player is responsible for the character. Many real-life hurt feelings have resulted from a rude or inappropriate action justified by saying, "That is what my character would do!" It's the player who establishes the



character's personality, so acting against the enjoyment of the real-life people while using the character as an excuse is absolutely pathetic.

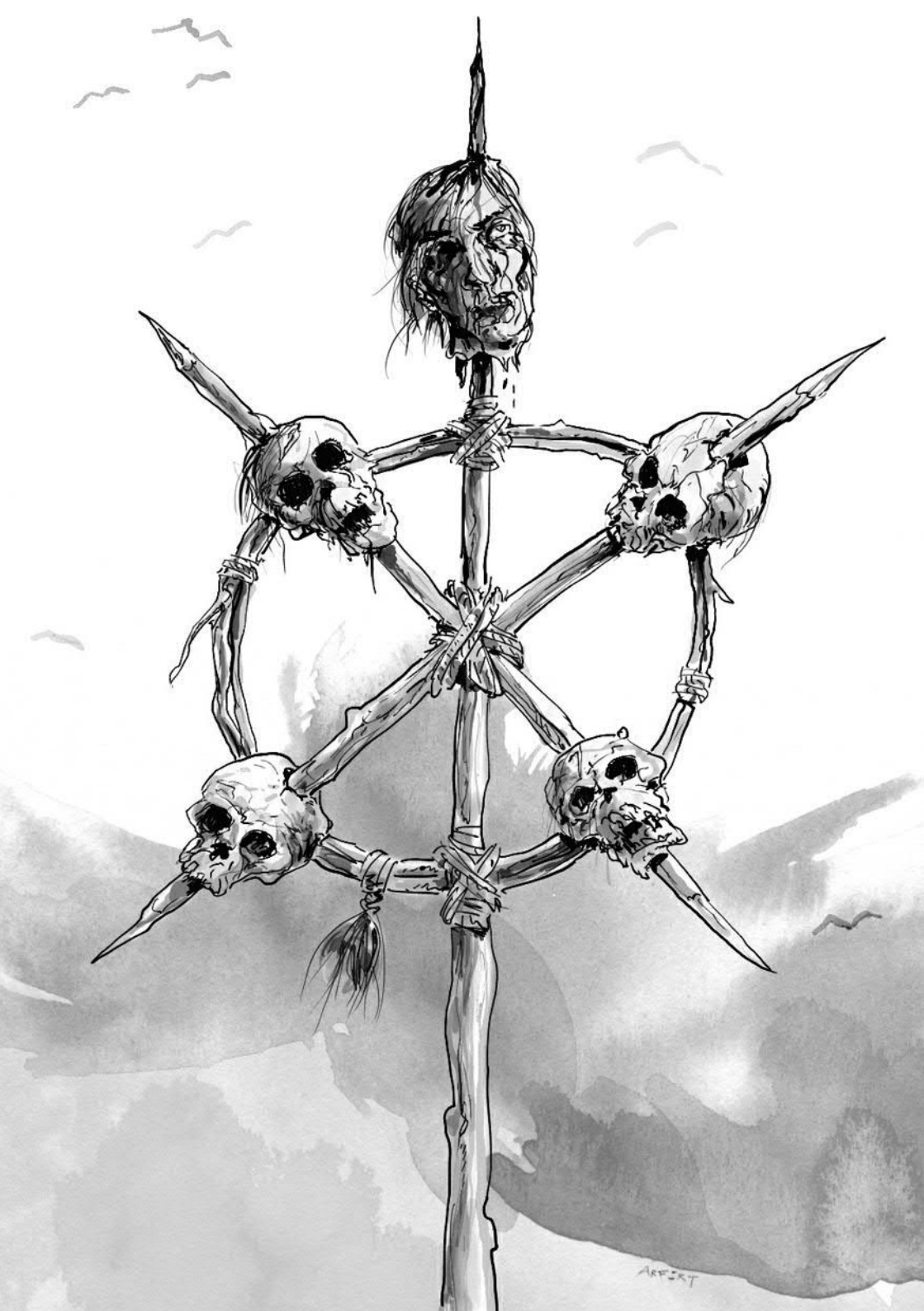
Getting Killed

Player Characters will die. It's a reality of the game, especially at low levels. The player must remember the character is not there to be the player's alter-ego or avatar, but is merely the player's "playing piece" and means to explore the game world and take action within it. Yes, you can give personality to the character and

play the part and really develop the character as a person, but this is a game of adventure and danger, and death is often on the line. Keep all this in mind, and have a sense of humor when your character bites it. Your Referee sure will.

Upon character death, a new character should be created immediately by the player, perhaps even as play continues for everyone else. The Referee must conspire with the player to insert the new character into the game as quickly as possible.





ARTIST

COMMON DUNGEON MAPPING SYMBOLS



Door



Stairs



Chests



Double Door



Spiral Stairs



Bed



Secret Door



Ladder



Curtain



One Way Door



Slide



Window



False Door



Statue



Arrow Slit



Revolving Door



Pillar



Crevasse



Concealed Door



Fountain



Rubble



Portcullis



Pool



Sinkhole



Trap Door



Dais



Water



Open Pit



Altar



Ledge



Covered Pit



Fireplace



Corpse

COMMON WILDERNESS MAPPING SYMBOLS



Plains



Swamp



Trail



Forest



Volcano



Border



Jungle



Broken Land



Castle



Desert



River



Ruins



Mountains



Water



Town



Hills



Ice Flow



City



Plateau



Road



Village

About the Rules

Rules are the framework of a role-playing game. They create the basic expectations that allow players to make rational decisions within the game. They help define the rhythm of play. While the rules don't always indicate the style or immediately reveal what actual play consists of, they will determine the scale of the game and the sorts of things that are expected to happen in it.

There Isn't a Rule For That!

Rules in RPGs do not dictate what you can do. They just illustrate how to resolve certain actions and give a basis for determining how actions not covered by the rules might be resolved.

In a game, your character can try to do *anything* that a person in that situation could do. However, you should always ask yourself, "Is this a good idea? Will this increase my character's chances of accomplishing his goals?"

Also remember that the Referee's description of particular situations and locations will be necessarily short to avoid boring players with endless exposition. "You are in a bustling marketplace," he might say, without mentioning exactly what is for sale. He might not mention how many guardsmen are about (but he'll certainly let you know after you start trouble!). A player should always ask questions about his character's environment to gain information, and then use this information to his character's advantage. If an idea seems good, use it, even if there isn't a specific rule for it.

House Rules

The rules of a role-playing game are not immutable or any sort of final authority. The Referee is welcome, some may say required, to add, remove, or alter any rules to suit his own campaign. Such rules alterations are known as "House Rules," and players should be notified of any House Rules before the start of play. House Rules override any "official" rules.

Impartiality

The Referee has an interesting dual role: to provide the challenge and to run the enemies of the PCs, and then to also administer the game in a way that neither favors nor victimizes the PCs. All participants (but especially the Referee) must always remember that even though in the game there may be monsters and characters who are against the players' characters, the Referee is not against the players.

Rule

The Referee is the final authority in *all* matters for his campaign, above the letter and the spirit of the rules.

Rule 1

The Referee shall realize that Rule 0 is for the purpose establishing the desired atmosphere for his campaign. Rule 0 is not as an excuse to abuse players or a license to be a despot at the game table. Rules should be applied consistently, and players should be advised of any permanent rules changes in a Referee's campaign.



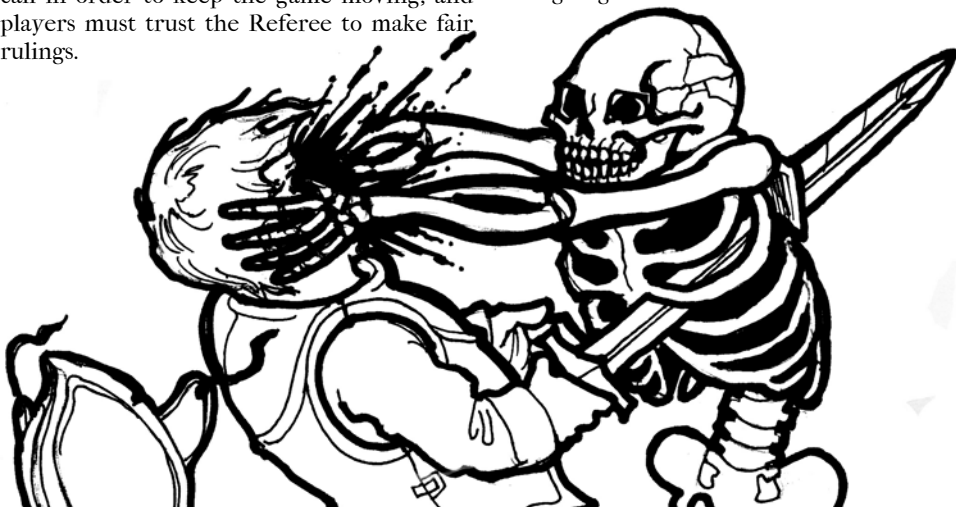
Rules Arguments and Questions

Sometimes rules, “official” or house, are not interpreted the same way by the Referee and the players. Sometimes a situation in the game pops up and there must be a ruling on a matter that really isn’t at all covered by the rules. Sometimes a Referee makes a quick call over what he considers an unimportant matter that is of great importance to his players. And sometimes the players will feel the Referee is just plain wrong in a call he makes.

Referees should always be willing to hear protests of rulings made or rules interpretations. While the Referee is the final authority over the game, the fellowship of the game’s participants, Referee and player alike, transcends the game. It is in these situations that a constant observation of Rule 1 becomes important – the Referee must have the freedom to make a firm call in order to keep the game moving, and players must trust the Referee to make fair rulings.

If the players’ point of view seems reasonable, then a Referee should change his previous decision. But be consistent! Anything that works in the PCs’ favor will also work for monsters or NPCs. If a Referee decides that the player point of view really doesn’t have a lot of merit (especially if there are factors involved which are hidden from the players), then the Referee must firmly uphold his original ruling.

If something seems complicated or difficult and both sides are adamant – for example if there is a difference of opinion on whether an in-game happening that was supposed to reflect how things happen in real life actually does, do not delay the game over it! Roll a die, flip a coin, get past the current conflict and let the game go on. After the game is over, then perhaps research could be done on the matter or a more lengthy conversation held to come to a reasoned decision on how the group will handle such situations going forward.



Winning and Losing

It must be stressed that role-playing games are not like most other games, in that they have no declared victory conditions. But just because it is a cooperative game does not mean that there are no winners or losers. Characters will die, probably quite often at low levels for new players. Each death is a “loss,” and through the development of a campaign, characters will suffer many setbacks and face many challenges that feel like a “loss.” However, in between there are triumphs that will be had as well: enemies will be vanquished, treasure will be won, and plans will come to fruition.

Winning and losing is not a result in role-playing games, but an ever-changing state of affairs that naturally occurs through the ebb and flow of normal game play.

A crucially important point:

Referees do not “win” by defeating the players’ characters. Referees have the ability to instantly slay any character, or to bestow great riches upon them, so doing either serves no purpose.

Stepping away from the results of the game, one thing can be said to be true: If you enjoy playing the game, you’re winning.



Example of Play

James is the Referee for his group, which consists of Anne (playing the third level Magic-User Mystaria), Enrico (playing the third level Fighter Gorgon), Saara (playing the third level Halfling Jacques), and Paul (playing the third level Cleric Templeton). There is fifth player, Chris, but he couldn't play that day so his Specialist, Fimble Winters, isn't with the party.

Note that this example of play assumes all the rules from the Rules book are in use.

James: So are you guys all ready to go?

Anne: I'm ready. Mystaria has bought rations for her two retainers, Karlsson and Lawrence. Lawrence will be carrying the torches and Karlsson will be carrying any treasure we find.

Saara: I've got my stuff, and I've bought leather armor and a sword for my retainer.

James: What's his name?

Saara: Uh, I don't know. Barrelman?

James: Fine. Paul?

Paul: Templeton's ready. I've bought my man-at-arms Kurtis a shield, short bow, and arrows.

James: I can't believe that guy's still alive after last time.

Paul: Me neither. Enrico, are you sure you're not hiring anybody?

Enrico: Oh hell no. I still think you guys are nuts. Why split any of the treasure?

Anne: You're also going to slow us down. Aren't you Severely Encumbered?

Enrico: You haven't played this game as long as I have! You need to be prepared. You'll be thanking me for having all this stuff if we run into trouble.

James: So you're ready? OK, so are you following that map you found?

Paul: Sure.

James: OK. On the way to the ruins...

(James delivers some exposition about the place and the trip there; he decides there won't be any trouble on the trip, so he just narrates their trip in a few sentences)

James: So you're there. The map was obviously accurate, as at the bottom of the gully you see the entrance to a tunnel. You surely would never have noticed it if you weren't expecting to find it.

Anne: Are there any distinguishing marks or features around the entrance?

James: No. It's all overgrown. The entranceway itself is built out of stone blocks, but the blocks are cracked and badly chipped. With the vegetation immediately in front of it, you guess nobody has been through here in a long, long time.

Enrico: Cool. Let's go in!

James: It's a ten foot wide passage. Marching order?

(the players discuss for a minute)

Paul: Gorgon and Templeton will be in front, and behind us Saara and my retainers. Anne's



character will be after that with her two guys, with Saara's guy taking up the rear.

(the players all nod their agreement)

James: Anybody carrying any lights besides Anne's linkboy? What does he have, anyway?

Anne: Lawrence has a lantern, so it'll last awhile.

Enrico: That should be enough. I've got torches in my pack if we need them. Let's go!

(the party advances into the tunnel, and explore some rooms and passages, until they come to...)

James: The passage opens up into a chamber, twenty feet deep and thirty feet wide. The passage is entering the room in the middle of the wall.

Saara: (drawing the room on the map she's been making)

Paul: Do we see anything in there?

James: It looks empty from your vantage point in the doorway.

Enrico: Saara, Paul, have your guys go check it out and make sure it's empty.

Saara: These guys aren't as tough as we are...

Enrico: But if there's trouble I'd rather they get attacked first! They're only NPCs!

Paul: And more useful to us alive than dead! Kurtis isn't going in alone.

Enrico: Saara?

Saara: I guess Barrelman will go in.

James: (rolls 2d6 and compares it against Barrelman's Loyalty score, and rolls over the score) Barrelman says he won't go in by himself. He also points out to Jacques that he doesn't take orders from Gorgon.

Enrico: That son of a bitch!

Anne: You guys know that these hirelings refuse to be used as cannon fodder. If we don't want to do something, they certainly won't let us order them to do it instead!

Enrico: What good are they then? Just draining our gold and XP!

Saara: And allowing us to carry more treasure out so we're getting more XP –

Enrico: If we find any...

Paul: And having an extra sword in a fight is always a good thing.

Enrico: Having one of these guys to take a hit instead of us is a good thing.

James: You realize you're having this conversation right in front of them?

Enrico: No, this is out of character. Gorgon's not actually saying this.

James: This is absolutely in character! Your guy is scared to go in the room so he's arguing to send these other guys in! They're looking at you pretty pissed.

Enrico: Oh come on! Fine. FINE. I'll go in with the both of them! Come on!



James: Saara, Barrelman looks at you for confirmation. Paul, your guy looks at Templeton as well.

Enrico: These guys are really pissing me off.

Saara: (nods)

Paul: Fine with me.

James: OK, Enrico, Gorgon and the two men-at-arms step into the room. You check around, and the place is indeed empty.

Enrico: All that for an empty room? Man...

Paul: That's it, there's nothing useful in this place. I thought there was supposed to be treasure here?

Enrico: Oh there is. We just have to find it.

Saara: Look at the map here. All the other rooms are real close to the edge of the gully wall or to each other, but this one has lots of space around it.

Anne: Right. Let's check this room for secret doors.

James: All of you?

Enrico: Anne's boys can keep watch at the doorway, the rest of us will search around.

Paul: Three to a wall, we'll check two walls at first, then the other two walls.

James: That'll take two turns.

Enrico: Fine.

James: (rolls 3d6 for the first wall and 3d6 for the second wall, even though he knows there

are no secret doors there, to keep the players off-guard). After the first search, you don't find anything.

Paul: Now the other two walls.

James: (he knows there is something on the south wall, which he decided was going to be part of the second search since none of the players specified which walls were being done during which search. He rolls 3d6 for the wall with no secret door, so the results don't matter. For the south wall, he rolls 3d6 – 5, 1, 4. The 1 means the door is found. James rolls randomly to see who found it, since again nobody specified which group they were a part of.) Paul, Templeton finds a secret door in the center of the south wall.

Paul: Alright! Guys, I found it! Can I open it?

James: Yes, this one's easy to open. It's another ten foot passage.

Enrico: Let's go!

James: As you advance down the corridor, you get ten, twenty, then thirty feet in –

Enrico: Funny that we know all the exact measurements. Do we have a tape measure or something?

James: Why do you think you're only advancing one hundred and twenty feet every ten minutes? I'm sorry, thirty feet, because you're so encumbered.

Enrico: Remind me why we can't go faster then?

James: Your map won't be accurate, so you won't know where the likely places are for



secret doors, so you'll end up checking every room and wasting a ton of time, you'll automatically set off any traps you come across, and you'll automatically be surprised by any enemies you run into. This is not a casual stroll along the beach! So do you want to go at the standard exploration speed here or increase to a normal walk?

Saara: We'll go slow!

Enrico: Fine, fine.

James: Good thing, because at the edge of your lantern light you see them –

Paul: See what?

James: Let me finish! You see two rather large creatures, looking roughly like apes but with drawn features, body hair covered in old bloodstains, and long sharp teeth and claws. They're coming at you fast! (rolls d6 to check if the party's surprised, and rolls a 3. No surprise. There is no chance of the ape things being surprised, as the party can't surprise anything in a dark dungeon hallway while carrying a lantern.) Everyone roll initiative. (rolls a d6 and gets a 4)

Anne: (rolls 5 for Mystaria, but doesn't roll for her hirelings because they won't be acting during combat unless they must)

Enrico: (rolls 3)

Saara: (rolls 4 for Jacques and 2 for Barrelman)

Paul: (rolls 1 for Templeton and 6 for Kurtis)

James: OK, anyone on six?

Paul: Kurtis is, and he moves up to the front line and holds his action, he'll attack when the apes close in.

James: Five?

Anne: Mystaria goes! She casts Magic Missile on the bigger one! (rolls 4 on a d6) Seven points of damage!

James: Got it. It lets out a loud howl of pain! Anyone going on four?

Saara: Jacques, but he's behind the line so I'll hold my action.

James: OK. The apes go on four. They charge in, and will attack. (rolls randomly to see who each attacks) One will attack Templeton, the other will attack Kurtis. (rolls d20 for the first one, gets 10, so that's a miss, and rolls 15 for the second attack, which hits due to the creature's bonus from being 3HD). The first one attempts to maul you, Paul, but misses.

Paul: Thank goodness I got that shield!

James: Indeed. Kurtis got hit though, and takes (rolls 4 on d6) four points of damage.

Paul: Oh crap. He's down to two. Saara, can your guy switch places with him in front?

James: Which one?

Paul: Either one, really!

James: Jacques is all the way in the back...!

Saara: But I was holding my action so I could get up front if I needed to...



James: Fine, but Kurtis already moved this round, so he can't retreat back. Do Templeton or Gorgon want to switch places with Barrelman instead of attacking?

Paul: No!

Enrico: Hell no!

James: Alright then. Anyone go on three?

Paul: Wait a minute, Kurtis gets his attack! He was holding his action there, remember?

James: Right, right. Roll to hit.

Paul: (rolls d20) Aw, crap. Rolled a five, I miss.

James: Yup. OK then, anyone go on three?

Enrico: ME! (rolls d20, gets 12) Sixteen including bonuses. What's their armor class?

James: Fourteen. You hit.

Enrico: Damn right I did! Big two-handed sword chopping up the one Anne got with the Magic Missile! (rolls d10) TEN! BOOYA!

James: Ah man, you chopped that ape thing down! It drops like a rock, gushing blood all over the place!

Enrico: Who da man? WHO DA MAN?

James: Combat's not over, there's still an undamaged ape thing left. Anyone go on two?

Saara: Barrelman, but he's in the second rank, so he'll hold.

James: One?

Paul: That's me. I mean Templeton. (rolls d20, gets 13) 14, including my attack bonus! Just barely got him! (rolls d8) Six points! Nasty chop with the axe!

James: Indeed it is! (makes a 2d6 Morale roll for the ape, but rolls below its 9 score so it will not run away on its turn). Initiative rolls again. (rolls d6, gets 2)

Anne: (rolls d6, gets 4)

Enrico: (rolls d6, gets 6) YES!

Saara: (rolls d6 for Jacques, gets 4, and a 3 for Barrelman)

Paul: (rolls d6 for Templeton, gets 3, and a 5 for Kurtis)

James: Anyone on six?

Enrico: Me! Going to take this sucker DOWN! (rolls d20, gets 9)

James: That thirteen is going to just miss.

Enrico: No, I want to do a Press attack so I get another plus two!

James: No way. You have to say that before rolling the dice!

Enrico: Maaaannn...

James: Five?

Paul: That's Kurtis. He's going to move back so somebody else can get the front row.

Enrico: Can't he hold his action and wait until the next guy's ready to move up? You just increased my chances of getting hit here!



Paul: He'll die from another hit! You've got what... seventeen hit points? Kurtis has two left! Deal with it!

Enrico: But he's just an NPC...

James: Four?

Anne: Mystaria has four, but she'll hold her action. I don't think we need another spell to take this one down.

Saara: Jacques has four, and he'll step up to the front and attack! (rolls d20, gets 15) A hit! Jacques whittles this thing down a bit with his short sword! (rolls d6) Three damage!

James: It's still up, and quite angry. Three?

Saara: Barrelman, but he'll hold.

Paul: Templeton takes a swing. (rolls d20, gets 10) Armor Class fourteen you say? Damn it, miss.

James: All of you have gone now, right? The remaining ape-thing will attack (rolls randomly) Gorgon! (rolls d20, gets 4) Miss! Initiative again everyone! (rolls 5)

Anne: (rolls d6, gets 3 for Mystaria)

Enrico: (rolls d6, gets 5 for Gorgon)

Saara: (rolls d6, gets 6 for Jacques and gets 2 for Barrelman)

Paul: (rolls d6, gets 3 for Templeton and gets 2 for Kurtis)

James: OK, anyone got six?

Saara: Jacques! (rolls d20, gets 14) Another hit! I'm gonna kill it... (rolls d6) One damage. Is that enough?

James: Sorry, it's got one point left! Next hit drops it. Anyone on five?

Enrico: Me! (rolls d20, gets 20) OH YEAH! Dead dead dead! (rolls d10) Only a four, but it's down, gone, deceased, XP in the bag!

James: Yes, but it also had a five for initiative so it still gets its turn before going down. (rolls randomly to see who is attacked) Paul, it's your guy. (rolls d20, gets 15) Eighteen hits you, right?

Paul: Yeah, Templeton's AC fifteen. What's the damage?

James: (rolls d6) Three points.

Paul: Not so bad. At least it's down.

Anne: Someone keep watch in case something heard all this noise.

Saara: Jacques and Barrelman will be lookouts down both sides of the passage.

James: Fine.

Paul: At least we know something's down there, like another way out or a stream or something.

Enrico: What?

Paul: Well if this is just a sealed up old dungeon, we'd be attacked by green slime or zombies or something, not ape creatures. They have to eat something and live somewhere!

Enrico: Dude, it's a *dungeon*. That stuff doesn't matter.

Anne: I think Paul's right. Ape creatures certainly aren't going to operate secret doors, and (looking at James) didn't you say that the



entrance was all overgrown and unused? Could someone pass by without leaving a trace if they were making the effort?

James: It's probably not impossible, but do you think ape creatures worry about that?

Anne: Hmm. No. But they'd have to either live in here or there's another way out. If there's another way out, there could be more monsters we need to worry about.

Enrico: Of course there's more stuff in here. It's a *dungeon*! It doesn't *need* another way out!

Anne: (ignoring him) If there isn't another way out, then there is still something more to find, because ape things just don't wait around in hallways for people to –

Enrico: Yes they do! This is a frickin' *dungeon*, people, not National Geographic!

Paul: Well if you're right, then we're going to fight more stuff whatever we do. If me and Anne are right, then we'll have more stuff to fight and we might be able to get an advantage by finding out how the place is set up and planning around that.

Enrico: Fine...

(the party explores some more, finds some more interesting things, finds some clues, and fights a few dungeon pests that don't inflict any damage upon them. We pick our example back up as they find a quite important room...)

James: ... and the passage opens into a large chamber. It is about fifty feet wide, but deeper than your lantern light can penetrate. Ten feet from the side walls are a series of thin columns

that disappear into the darkness. You hear crackling and dripping noises from up ahead.

Anne: I don't like this room. Not at all.

Paul: (looks at the party's map that Saara's been making all this time) We still have a couple other passages we could explore.

Saara: We're still looking for the dark flame thing we saw mentioned in that other room. Let's see how many exits there are from this room and then decide which way we go, OK?

Enrico: Fine, but don't touch anything in this room without all agreeing first, right?

(everyone agrees)

Enrico: Since this is a big room I want someone else to be carrying a torch. I give Saara's halfling a torch from my pack. You weren't carrying a shield anyway, right?

Saara: Right. Templeton's just got the short sword right now. But I can't hide if I'm holding a torch.

Enrico: You won't need to hide. The idea is that if this is a really big room, we don't lose each other. I think Me and Saara and Anne and... which one of the NPCs is hurt?

Paul: My guy, Kurtis.

Enrico: Then Saara's Barrel dude will come with us. Kurtis, Paul's cleric, and the other two guys, are they yours, Anne?

Anne: Karlsson and Lawrence?

Enrico: Whatever, the guys that don't fight, right?



Anne: Right. They'll all hang back and watch our backs. Paul can play guard back there.

Paul: Are you sure that you don't want Templeton to heal Kurtis?

Enrico: You're not wasting a healing spell on a damn NPC!

Paul: Fine, fine...

James: OK. So it'll be Mystaria, Gorgon, Jacques, and Barrelman advancing into the room, and the rest staying near the entrance to the room?

(everyone confirms)

James: OK, you four advance. You discover that the room is about eighty feet long. The columns continue down the length of the room, and there are two doorways on the far wall in the corners leaving the room. In the center of the far wall is a large stone statue, an idol of some sort perhaps, looking froggy and demonic and generally unpleasant. Before it is a small chest, closed. Before the statue, four or five feet away from it, is some sort of platform or altar. On this altar is a flame – but not an ordinary one. It gives off no light at all, but once your light shines upon it, it looks like a normal fire. This is the source of the crackling noise.

Saara: It's the dark flame!

James: There is also a circular pit directly in front of the altar.

Enrico: Between the statue and the altar?

James: No, the statue is against the wall, then the altar, then the pit.

Enrico: So the pit is the closest thing to us?

James: Yeah.

Enrico: And where are we now?

James: You're about thirty feet from the statue, it's right at the edge of your lantern light.

Saara: So we're about fifty feet away from the guys in the doorway now?

James: Yes.

Anne: I wish Chris was here. His character is good at finding traps. And I bet there is a trap.

Paul: Can't we just say Fimble is here with us?

James: Nope. Player's not here, so neither is his character, or his character's stuff.

Enrico: We each still have a one in six chance to find something if it's there.

James: You read the rules. How clever.

Enrico: Damn right. Saara, send your guy to check it out.

Saara: Jacques? He's wearing leather armor and has less hit points than even the magic-user!

Enrico: No, not you, your guy. The NPC!

Saara: Barrelman?

James: Barrelman looks at Jacques and shakes his head no.

Enrico: We're not saying this out loud!

James: You are too! If you're telling Saara to send the retainer, that's Gorgon telling Jacques to send Barrelman on ahead! And not even



referring to his name, either. That doesn't win you any points with him, you know. (Looks at Saara.) And he wouldn't take kindly to you acquiescing to Gorgon's demands when he orders everyone around like that either. This is an adventuring expedition, not a military operation, after all.

Saara: I know, I know...

Enrico: (glowers)

James: So what are you guys going to do? The NPCs are followers and support, not bait and mindless redshirts.

Enrico: Fine, fine! I'll go and check things out. Can you guys cover me?

Saara: Jacques has a sling. Barrelman doesn't have anything.

Anne: I still have a Sleep spell, but for second level I took Knock. I guess I could throw daggers...

Enrico: Didn't anyone have a bow?

Saara: You have a bow.

Enrico: I can't cover myself!

Paul: Kurtis has one, but we'll be eighty feet away from you, with Anne and Saara's guys between us and you if there's trouble.

Enrico: You guys are useless...

Saara: And not weighed down like an anchor like some people...

Enrico: (snorts) Get the people in back up here. And watch the hall we came in through so nothing sneaks up on us!

James: Paul?

Paul: Yeah, Templeton and Kurtis will advance.

Anne: My guys certainly aren't going to stay back there by themselves, so they follow.

James: OK. You're all together in the room, thirty feet from the statue.

Enrico: Paul, your guy with the bow will cover me, and I'll go see if it's all clear.

Paul: Got it.

Enrico: So what do I see? And I'm paying attention to the pit to make sure nothing jumps out at me!

James: OK. You get to the pit. Where exactly are you going?

Enrico: I want to check out that chest. But I'm keeping an eye on the pit. I think something's in there. And I want to pay special attention so you don't screw me and say that I slip and fall in or anything.

James: (broad grin)

Enrico: Yeah, I thought so. So I go around the pit, behind the altar thing with the fire, and approach the chest near the statue.

James: OK, as you slide around the altar... a giant spider drops from the ceiling on top of you!

Enrico: Oh man!



Paul: Can Kurtis shoot it before it drops without risking hitting Gorgon?

Enrico: (rolls d6) Four for initiative!

James: Hold on, hold on! I'm going to rule that the spider gets a surprise round, so no Paul, you can't shoot, and Enrico, you have to wait until the spider attacks before we do initiative.

Enrico: What? You didn't even roll anything! People aren't automatically surprised! There's only a two in six chance! Roll!

James: No! You made it a point to look in the pit, downward, not up! I would assume people are looking at you, or the doorways, someone at least is looking backwards the way you came. Nobody, not one of you, said anything about looking upwards. You didn't even ask how high the ceiling was when I mentioned columns. Even if we assume everyone did a full scan including upwards when you first came into the room, this end wasn't visible from there, and everyone's been focused on something else. You are surprised.

Enrico: This is a snowjob. Fine, kill me then!

James: (rolls d20, gets 16). What's your AC?

Enrico: Eighteen.

James: With its bonus from hit dice, it gets exactly what it needs to hit!

Enrico: Yeah, I bet.

James: Look at the die! Sixteen! Right there! Are you saying you don't believe a giant spider is at least two hit dice?

Enrico: Whatever.

James: (rolls d6, gets 1) Only one point of damage though. Roll your poison save...

Enrico: Oh here we go... (rolls d20, gets 19) There! Haha! I beat your stupid little death trap!

James: Mmm hmm. Initiative, everyone! (rolls d6, gets 3)

Anne: (rolls d6, gets 4)

Saara: (rolls d6, gets 2 for Jacques and gets 6 for Barrelman)

Paul: (rolls d6, gets 4 for Templeton and 5 for Kurtis)

James: Enrico?

Enrico: I already rolled before, I got a four.

James: It wasn't time for initiative yet. Roll.

Enrico: This is seriously starting to piss me off... (rolls d6, gets 2) Damn it!

James: OK then. Six?

Saara: Barrelman runs up and is going to take a parry stance.

Enrico: Charge in and attack the damn thing!

Saara: It can kill him in one hit, even without the poison! I'm not taking an AC penalty!

James: Five?

Paul: Kurtis definitely can't shoot now. He'll change weapons to the sword and advance as well.

James: Four?



Paul: Templeton will advance, but not close enough to actually be in combat.

Anne: Mystaria will do the same. Can my guys come up on the same initiative since they won't be doing anything really anyway?

James: Sure. Three? Nobody else? The spider attacks. Three possible targets now. (rolls randomly to determine the target) It's Gorgon.

Enrico: You really have it in for me today, don't you?

James: Look at the damn die! I didn't do it! (rolls d20, gets 5) It doesn't come close to damaging you this round, but I can overrule that and say he hits if you're really intent on challenging my die rolls?

Enrico: (says nothing)

James: Thought so. Two?

Saara: Jacques will charge in and attack. Is there room to go into combat?

James: Sure.

Saara: (rolls d20, gets 15) Sixteen total. What's its AC?

James: Fifteen, you hit. Damage?

Saara: (rolls d6, gets 6) YES! Six points!

James: You stick it, but it's still moving. Anyone else on two?

Enrico: Me! Do I have your permission to roll my to-hit, oh lord oh master?

James: I suppose. If you must.

Enrico: (rolls d20, gets 12). That's a hit including my bonus. (rolls d10, gets 6) Six points with the two-hander!

James: And that'll be just enough to take it to zero Hit Points. It's still twitching –

Enrico: I stab it!

James: Fine, it's dead.

Enrico: Now can I look at the chest?

James: Not yet. You hear a scream and pouring out of the two doorways are a number of men in robes, wielding daggers. Some are also popping out from behind some of the columns, which you never bothered to check. They're all yelling, things like, "Death to the unbelievers!" and "Destroy the defoulers!"

Saara: Damn it! Cultists!

Paul: There is *definitely* another way out of here.

Enrico: So what is this? A different combat? How many are there?

James: Yes it is, and there are eighteen of them. Initiative, everyone. Anne, roll for your hirelings as well. (rolls d6, gets 4)

Anne: (rolls d6, gets 5 for Mystaria, gets 2 for Karlsson and 6 for Lawrence)

Enrico: (rolls d6, gets 3)

Saara: (rolls d6, gets 4 for Jacques and 3 for Barrelman)

Paul: (rolls d6, gets 1 for Templeton and 1 for Kurtis as well)

James: Anyone got six?



Anne: Lawrence, but he's going to hold action. And the lantern.

James: Five?

Anne: Mystaria goes. You said the room was fifty feet wide, right?

James: Yes.

Anne: So if we're in the middle it's twenty-five feet to either side. You said there are eighteen of them, so we've seen all of them that are coming through the door right now? Or else we wouldn't be able to count them?

James: I guess so, yeah.

Anne: I cast Sleep, centered on us.

Enrico: Woah! Woah! You'll put us to sleep!

Anne: No I won't. It only affects the targets I decide.

Enrico: Does not!

Anne: (gets the Magic book out)

Enrico: You can't look up spell details in the middle of combat!

James: Actually, if her character has to transcribe spells into her spellbook, and then study that spell before every use of it, she'd probably have a pretty good idea how it works. If it was just a magic scroll, that would be something else though. Look up the details.

Anne: (pages through, reads the description) It doesn't specify.

James: I'll say that you can choose. This isn't a fireball or some other physical effect.

Anne: Good! (rolls 2d8) Twelve hit dice worth of them fall asleep!

James: They're just normal cultists, no class or level or anything, so twelve of them instantly drop. (rolls 2d6 but gets lower than their Morale score; they will not surrender or flee) Who goes on four?

Saara: I do! Jacques will take a swing at one with his sword. (rolls d20, gets 11) Only a twelve.

James: They're unarmored, so that's enough.

Saara: Rock on! (rolls d6, gets 3) Three points.

James: That'll drop him.

Enrico: These guys are wimps!

James: They also go on four, and will attack. Six of them left – the guy Jacques took down still gets to act on this round, and then will fall. How about one attacks each of you carrying a weapon?

Paul: Kurtis will parry!

James: Anyone else? No? OK. The one attacking you, Anne, will (rolls d20, gets 14) get a fourteen. Your AC?

Anne: Fourteen. He hits.

James: (rolls d4, gets 3) Three points of damage. Enrico, the one on Gorgon (rolls d20, gets 4) slices wide with his dagger. The one of Jacques (rolls d20, gets 15) will just miss I guess, you have AC sixteen Saara?

Saara: Yeah.



James: Your halfling wiles prevented that hit! Barrelman's attacker gets (rolls d20, gets 18) a hit! He's stabbed for (rolls d4, gets 1) one point.

Saara: He's still fine, no problems yet, but another hit could knock him out.

James: Paul, your cleric is attacked (rolls d20, gets a 12) but that's a miss. The one attacking Kurtis (rolls d20, gets 18) hits!

Paul: Including the parry?

James: Oh, no, sorry, OK then, Kurtis' defensive moves saved his bacon there, he's almost out of Hit Points, right?

Paul: Yeah.

James: So that's all their attacks. The one cultist dude falls down, incapacitated from his wounds. Who's on three?

Enrico: Me!

Saara: And Barrelman! (rolls d20, gets 15) Hit! (rolls d8, gets 5), five damage! He cuts that guy's head off, right!

James: I don't know if it was that brutal, but he puts the guy out of action right away for sure. Gorgon?

Enrico: (rolls d20, gets 19) On fire tonight! (rolls d10, gets 3) Ahh, crap damage, only three points.

James: That's enough to put one down. Three are still up. Anyone else on three? Two?

Anne: Karlsson, but he's not doing anything this round.

James: One?

Paul: Both my guys. Templeton will swing his axe at one of them... (rolls d20, gets 13) That's a hit for (rolls d8, gets 4) four points. He killed him, right?

James: Yeah.

Paul: And Kurtis –

James: Kurtis parried, so he doesn't do anything.

Paul: oh, yeah.

James: New round. Initiative! (rolls d6, gets 3)

Anne: (rolls d6, gets 4 for Mystaria, 3 for Karlsson, and 1 for Lawrence)

Enrico: (rolls d6, gets 6) Haha!

Saara: (rolls d6, gets 6 for Jacques and 4 for Barrelman)

Paul: (rolls d6, gets 4 for Templeton and 4 for Kurtis)

James: OK, six?

Enrico: Me! (rolls d20, gets 12) Sixteen! Hit! (rolls d10, gets 9) Nine points! Cut in HALF!

James: I guess he is. One left. Anyone else on six?

Enrico: Saara?

Saara: Yeah?

Enrico: Your initiative?

Saara: OH CRAP. Yeah. Jacques is on six! (rolls d20, gets 13) Hit here! (rolls d6, gets 3) Three is enough to put these scrubs down, right?



James: Yes. Remember your initiative. I can't keep track of all that! And that's all of them.

Enrico: Easy!

Anne: You're welcome!

James: So what do you guys do now?

Paul: We should get rid of the bodies. If anyone else comes through here they'll know we're here.

Enrico: Yeah, and I suppose we should mop the floor too?

Paul: We should at least try not to be obvious. This pit's here, let's put the bodies in the pit.

Enrico: Wait, no, STOP!

Paul: What?

Enrico: First we have to kill all the guys Anne put to sleep! They're going to wake up before too long!

Anne: Oh. Yeah, there's that.

Saara: Can we just tie them up? I don't think it's a good idea to kill helpless opponents.

(everyone looks at her slackjawed)

Saara: Just kidding guys!

(everyone laughs)

Paul: So we do that.

James: OK, that just takes a minute as you go around stabbing defenseless sleeping human beings.

Enrico: Don't pull that guilt trip on us. "Death to the unbelievers!" remember? And this big demon statue here? What are we supposed to do, call the cops?

Paul: So after we kill them, we dump them in the pit.

Enrico: Woah, woah, hold up there, Tex!

Paul: What now?

Enrico: Loot the frickin bodies first!

Anne and Saara and Paul: oooohhhhh yeec-aaahhh

Enrico: OK. I think Anne and Saara and Paul's guys should loot the bodies. Don't let the NPCs in a position to steal our loot, right? All those guys can keep lookout.

Anne: Sounds good.

Saara: Can you stop acting like these guys are thieves?

Paul: What is Gorgon going to be doing?

Enrico: I'm going to open that chest.

Saara: Shouldn't you check it for traps?

Enrico: I'm not a Specialist. I'm so crap at it I'd probably set any trap off while trying to find it anyway. If I'm going to set it off I might as well get the damn thing open. It's not like the NPCs will open it for us, right?

James: Quite correct.

Enrico: So is that a plan?

(everyone agrees)



James: It'll take a minute for you all to rifle through all those robes, so we'll deal with you first Enrico. You just open the thing?

Enrico: Why not? You'll find a way to screw me on it no matter what plan I come up with. So yeah, I just open it.

James: It opens easily. Inside you see a fancy carved torch stick. The head of it is a bit blackened and charred but otherwise it's in fine condition.

Enrico: What's it made out of?

James: It's white, you guess ivory?

Enrico: Righteous! Poor elephant, dying for our loot. I take it. Hmm. I stick it in this unlit flame thingy.

Anne: Wait, what?

Paul: Uh, dude?

Saara: Shouldn't we take care of these guys first...?

James: OK, as the ivory torch touches the flame on the altar, there is a big flash of light! The entire room lights up as if the very walls glow! The eyes of the statue start to burn with a low, green light...

Anne: Dammit Enrico!

Enrico: What? Is anything attacking us? Any damage? Do we have to make any saving throws?

James: No. Just light.

Enrico: So no problem. Are they done looting the bodies?

James: Yeah. You now have eighteen daggers and twenty-five silver and eighty-three copper pieces total.

Enrico: Definitely worthless. OK, dump the bodies.

Saara: OK, we get all the bodies around the pit and we all push them in to get this done quick so we can move on.

James: Everyone?

Enrico: Since I've got the magic torch, I'll play lookout...

(everyone else agrees to help)

James: (big, big grin)

Paul: oh hell...

James: By lighting the mystic torch and then dropping bodies into the pit, you have made a blood sacrifice to the demon god! Dark eldritch mist rises from the pit as the demon traps the essence of the souls of the deceased that have been dropped in there! You see the spirits silhouetted in this fog as they try to escape, but the demon grabs them, and eats them, and becomes a little more solid with each soul it devours...!

Anne: Run... run... we need to run!

Paul: Which way, which way?

Enrico: Oh come on guys, it's one thing, we can take it!

Anne: I'm running out the way we came! So are my hirelings!



Saara: (at the same time) I'm going through one of the doorways, these cultists had to have a sanctuary!

Paul: (same time again) Me and Kurtis will go through one of the doorways!

Anne: Wait, we should coordinate...!

James: So are you going to stand and talk or run!

Anne: Well, run, but...

James: Then you aren't coordinating and you just all ran to different escape routes. I'll get to each of you in turn, in a minute. Gorgon...

Enrico: Dammit, you cowards, now I'm screwed! I start running out the way I came in. Maybe he'll chase one of the other guys.

James: You are, by far, the slowest one running. You're still at Severe Encumbrance, right?

Enrico: uh... yeah...

James: So are moving thirty feet a round even at a full sprint. This thing is floating through the air faster than an unencumbered man...

Enrico: Oh hell. Fine. I turn and face the thing. I'll go down fighting!

Anne: Well then...

James: You guys ran in panic. You and your hirelings are completely unencumbered, yes?

Anne: Yeah, so...

James: So you cleared the room and more besides in just one round. You're gone already. Enrico, initiative time. (rolls d6, gets 3)

Enrico: (rolls d6, gets 5) I am going to jam my two handed sword so far up this thing's...

James: Aren't you carrying the ivory torch?

Enrico: No, I'm switching to...

James: So you're dropping the torch?

Enrico: Might as well...

James: OK, minus two for you to hit this round for switching to your weapon, and when you drop the torch, it extinguishes and all the lights in the room go out as well. That's another minus four to hit.

Enrico: You have got to be shitting me. You're just making this up as you go along just to kill us now, aren't you?

James: You saw that I haven't written anything since noting that the last cultist was killed, right? (picks up his game notes, folds the paper so only the details of the statue and treasure chest are visible, shows it to Enrico) See? "The light effects end when the torch is no longer held."

Enrico: DAMMIT. DAMMIT. DAMMIT.

Paul: Our guys maybe can –

James: You're not there.

Enrico: I don't want help from cowards anyway! ATTACK! PRESS! (rolls d20, gets 20) HAHA! Automatic hit! (rolls d10, gets 7) EAT STEEL, YOU FIEND!

James: And its turn... It's attacking of course. (rolls d20 three times, gets 16, 12, 5)



Enrico: Three attacks?

James: Claw/claw/bite.

Enrico: (throws his pencil down)

James: That's going to be two hits.

Enrico: A hit on a twelve? Against AC eighteen? In the dark?

James: You pressed, so your AC is only fourteen this round, and this thing can see in the dark.

Enrico: I suppose you wrote that down in your notes too.

James: It's a demon summoned by blood sacrifice! I don't have to write that down! (rolls d6 twice, gets 5 and 4). Nine points of damage total for the two claws.

Enrico: I'm still up. I hope you assholes are at least getting away if I've got to sacrifice myself here. You better share the treasure with my next character or I'm going to –

James: You're going to roll initiative for the next round. (rolls d6, gets 2)

Enrico: (rolls d6, gets 3) OK. Another press then. (rolls d20, gets 13) Damn!

James: Not even close. (rolls d20 three times, gets 3, 18, 14) That'll be a claw and bite hit. (rolls d6, gets 3, rolls d10, gets 5) Eight total.

Enrico: I'm down. THANKS GUYS.

Paul: At least we got away.

James: Excuse me? You all ran out different doors, with the only way of meeting up back

through the room with the demon. You haven't gotten anywhere yet. We'll start with your guys, Paul. That will be the quickest.

Paul: Quickest?

James: Yeah. Lawrence has the lantern, and he went out the way he came. Jacques has a torch, and he ran through one of the doorways. You and Kurtis ran through the other doorway. No lights, which you realized when Enrico's torch went out.

Paul: But, wait, what? How did you determine that we didn't run through the same door as Saara's guys?

James: Because in a blind panic you don't decide those things, and I figure in the panic you guys were in...

Paul: We weren't in a panic!

Saara: Yeah! We're experienced adventurers, third level, not some fresh off the farm commoners!

James: Did you listen to how freaked out you were when I was describing the demon? You guys were freaked and ran blindly!

Saara: Just because we freaked out doesn't mean our characters were!

James: Save it. You're all sitting here comfortably around a kitchen table eating my wife's fresh-baked cake. If you guys panic when I tell you about the demon, you're going to tell me that your characters, actually there and watching this happen, are going to keep their cool? No way!



Paul: Crap. Crap. Crap.

Anne: This isn't happening. How did this happen?

Saara: We're all going to die.

James: (smiles broadly) Anyway, Paul...

Paul: Yes?

James: You guys run straight into a wall when you realize you can't see anymore. You both stumble, disoriented, so you're not sure which way you came. You hear some rending sounds and what you think is Gorgon screaming, but due to the echoey nature of dungeon walls, you're not sure which way you came from.

Paul: I whisper to Kurtis to grab the back of my shirt and follow me. I feel the wall wherever I am and just start going left.

James: (rolls randomly to see which way he's going) OK, you go some distance and then the passage turns right. After some other distance

Paul: How far?

James: Who knows? Not you, in the dark. Anyway, you come to a dead end, but it feels different. It's made of wood and has a knob. It's a door.

Paul: Not much choice. I open the door and go in.

James: OK. You open the door and stumble inside. (rolls d20, gets 14, rolls d8, gets 5) Take five points of damage as something hits you *really hard*.

Paul: Wait, what? What was that? I hit it with my axe!

James: You don't know what it is! You can't see it! But whatever it is, it sees you! Initiative! (rolls d6, gets 5)

Paul: (rolls d6, gets 3 for Templeton, and gets 2 for Kurtis) Uh oh...

James: (rolls d20, gets 13) That will be enough to hit you. (rolls d6, gets 6) Six damage from another crushing blow.

Paul: I'm down! Kurtis only has two points left! Crap! Man... This dungeon is unfair!

James: It'll teach you not to make sacrifices to evil gods, at any rate. That's it, you're both dead...

Paul: But Kurtis...

James: Has two hit points and is facing an enemy he can't see and is an NPC so I don't really have to care. Dead, dead, dead.

Anne: Our turn then...

James: No, I save you for last. You might actually get out.

Saara: Oh for crying out loud...

James: Running further into the evil temple? In panic? You're going to tell me that's in any way, shape, or form, a good idea?

Saara: They'd have sanctuary from this thing...!

James: They'd be better prepared in the first place. And there's still stuff back here.

Saara: At least we've got a light. We can beat you still.



James: Bring it. The passage you run down branches left and right with a door in front of you. Which way?

Saara: How far...

James: You were running in fear, you don't know. Which way?

Saara: Left.

James: You pass a door, the passage ahead splits left and right. Which way?

Saara: Through the door to hide!

James: ... and this will be automatic surprise since you were running.

Saara: What?

James: You found the ape pens.

Saara: ohh...

James: There are three chained to the wall, but you two have blundered right into them. (rolls randomly to see who each ape attacks) Two on Jacques, one on Barrelman. I'll roll against him first. (rolls d20, gets 12) That'll be enough. (rolls d6, gets 4)

Saara: DAMN IT. He's down...

James: (rolls d20 twice more, gets 15 and 7) I think that's one hit?

Saara: Yeah.

James: (rolls d6, gets 3) Three damage as one of the ape creatures rends and tears at you with its claws!

Saara: If I win initiative I can still get out of here! (rolls d6, gets 4) Beat that!

James: (rolls d6, gets 4) Don't have to.

Saara: oh... uhh... oh. I'm running.

James: And I'll give you a break and say because you're so small, only two of these great big things get a chance to attack you. (rolls d20 twice, gets 20 and 16) (begins laughing hysterically)

(Enrico and Paul join in the laughter)

Saara: Real funny. Great. Just awesome. (throws her pencil down)

James: (rolls d6 twice, gets 2 and 6) Eight total. How are you?

Saara: To exactly zero. (frowning rather unpleasantly) I liked Jacques!

James: The apes are well-fed tonight!

(more laughter from Enrico and Paul)

James: So then. Anne?

Anne: Huh? What? We escaped. Went out the way we came.

James: And which way is that?

Anne: It's on the map (points to the map).

James: Saara was making the map, so it's either in Jacques' or Barrelman's hands. You don't have access. Saara, turn it over. The passage away from the big room has two doorways on either side and ahead the passage splits into a four-way intersection. Anne, which way are you going?



Anne: I, uh... Mystaria is really smart! And we just came from this way!

James: And you are scared out of your mind and running and in a dark underground maze with only a little lantern that's behind you to light your way. Which way?

Anne: We turned from one of these, left, or was it *from* the left not *to* the left and...

Enrico: It was –

James: You're dead. You don't exist anymore. So hush up, no helping!

Enrico: Why I oughta...

James: Anne?

Anne: We duck right at the first branch.

James: The passage goes down a bit, and then dead ends. There are doors on either side of the passage at the end though.

Anne: Oh crap, this isn't the right way... what's behind us?

James: You want to stop and check?

Anne: No, no. Down the hall into the right door!

James: OK. You're in a square room, twenty feet by twenty feet. You hear the sounds of dogs barking through the wall to the right.

Anne: Through the wall? Hmm. Did we search for secret doors in this room? Did we? We'll search now. Karlsson's a porter, so he should be fairly strong. I tell him to hold the door shut as best he can. Me and Lawrence will search for

secret doors along the wall where we hear the barking.

James: You want to find the dogs?

Anne: I don't want to go back out the way we came. I just know you're going to have that demon thing following me just because I'm still alive. We're searching.

James: (rolls d6s, and disregards the results since he knows there are no secret doors in this room) You find nothing.

Anne: Damn it!

James: The sound of the dogs fades.

Anne: OK. Lawrence is going to kill the lamp and then add more oil to the lantern so we don't find ourselves in the dark for our last sprint. He'll have it set up to relight in a jiffy, before he does that of course.

James: Mmhmm. (checks his notes and some things on his map and makes some notes and counts squares on his map)

Anne: We need to wait a bit. If we're wandering the halls we'll be seen for sure. This room is bare, right?

James: Right.

Anne: So nobody ever comes in here. We'll wait for about an hour.

James: Alright. What then? (checks his notes, rolls a few dice)

Anne: I guess we're going to go back out into the passage. We're going to take the first right,



and then the right after that. I think that's the way out. So... light the lantern, and let's go!

James: OK. You pop into the hallway. At the intersection down the hall you see a number of cultists, and one of them has two ape things on a chain. Seeing you come out the door, they release the chain.

Anne: They were waiting for us?

James: Yup. They use the apes as trackers.

Anne: And the dogs I heard?

James: Can't tell you that. You might come in here with different characters. So you have no more offensive spells, right?

Anne: Right.

James: None of you three there have any armor heavier than leather or a weapon bigger than a dagger, right?

Anne: Right. I figured if it came down to us fighting hand to hand, we were already sunk.

James: So do you want to play this out or just fade to black and save the gory details?

Anne: No, that's it. We're done.

Enrico: Total Party Kill. Damn!

Paul: What happened to the demon? Why didn't it kill these cultist guys?

Saara: What killed Templeton and Kurtis?

James: You know I can't tell you guys that. Anyway, we've been at this a long time. How about we wrap this up, and next week you'll roll up new characters and you can come back into this dungeon – and try not to summon any demons this time – or go on another adventure?

Enrico: Screw you, man! I don't have to go for a couple more hours. How about you guys?

Saara: I've still got time.

Paul: Me too.

Anne: As long as we don't go *too* late.

Enrico: Then we're making new characters right now and we're going to march back into that place and ram that damn ivory torch right up the cult leader's rear end!

Anne, Paul, Saara: YEAH!



The Next Step!



Now that you've been introduced to the basic concepts of the game, you can explore the finer details. The Rules book has a full explanation of the rules of the game and the effect of magic, and the Referee book goes into more detail about the methods of creating and running games.

After that, it's just a matter of playing and practicing the game until you've got the hang of it.

Weird Adventure Awaits!

Recommended Reading





Role-playing is an imaginative hobby, where through discussion and sometimes negotiation an imaginary world is created and explored. No wonder that literature forms the basis of inspiration for the entire hobby.

It is important to remember that many of these authors have had their work adapted to film. In every case the film greatly changes the story, and thoroughly destroys the essence of the original as often as not. Do not miss the opportunity to read a story just because you've seen the film. An expert filmmaker with a budget of hundreds of millions of dollars can equal neither the spectacle nor the depth of what the humble writer accomplishes with mere words.

Many of the authors on this list have appeared on many other such lists. It can be easy to assume that if you hear so many people talking about a thing, you come to know that thing yourself. This is not so. If you have not yet personally investigated the works of these oft-championed authors, whatever are you waiting for?

(This is not a rhetorical question. What *are* you waiting for?)

You will notice that most of the authors recommended here are quite old. This is no accident. Modern authors, even when writing of other times, tend to use modern thinking and modern language in their work, which makes everything seem so mundane. While the authors noted here surely did the same in their time, reading these stories after so much time brings the double wonder of the ideas as well as the expression of those ideas. The unfamiliar, and

perhaps antiquated, language enhances the atmosphere of the whole.

Surely the fact that many of these authors were originators and the shining lights of their time helps, whereas history has not yet dimmed the lights on today's imitators and faddish authors who won't be remembered tomorrow. Exploring yesterday's treasures is an endless, and endlessly satisfying, task. Sorting through today's published work is tedium. Surely the same was true in 1850, 1900, and 1950, and surely it will still be true in 2050 and 2100.

The experience of reading a good story surpasses most others in life. All you have in life is time. Spend it wisely and under sufficient lighting.

Clive Barker

Clive Barker is a British-born, California-resident author and artist. His fantasy-horror stories are strongly informed by his openly homosexual orientation and rich visual imagination.

Alienation is perhaps the classic Barkerian theme, recurring often enough to act almost as an identifying hallmark. In a Barker story the protagonist typically feels dislocated from the workaday world even prior to the intrusion of the supernatural into their life. This alienation may stem from unhappy personal or working relationships (*Sex, Death and Starshine*), physical or mental health issues (*The Life of Death, Cabal*), ennui and a hunger for ever-greater sensation (*Down, Satan!, Coldheart Canyon, The Hellbound Heart*), or simply a nagging discon-



tent with the world they know (*The Forbidden*, *Midnight Meat Train*).

Fundamental to many tales is an active and positive amorality, perhaps best presented by the recurrent theme of the deliberate transgression of taboos cultural, social, or biological, as path to revelation and self-realisation. The changes subsequently experienced may be dislocating, disorienting, and horrific in form, but are ultimately painted as both fact of life and personal necessity. Even in manifestly horrific stories, changed circumstances are often regarded as liberating or redemptive in nature. Restoration of a cozy, mundane *status quo ante* is neither expected, nor necessarily desirable.

Recurring motifs in Barker's stories include the celebration of classic Americana (*Coldheart Canyon*, *The Great and Secret Show*, *Son of Celluloid*, *Revelation*), talismanic objects with hallucinogenic or hypnotic characteristics which act as portals between worlds (*The Hellbound Heart*, *Weaveworld*, *Coldheart Canyon*), baroque bodily transformation allied to an almost pagan reverence for the carnal (*The Madonna*, *The Body Politic*, *In the Hills, the Cities*, *The Life of Death*), and the sense that there is no strong delineation between the mundane and the supernatural (*omnia opera*).

The situations and subject matter used to explore these recurring themes and iconic motifs vary widely, ranging from intimate and macabre vignettes in many short stories, through affectionate literary homages (as in the horrific *Pig Blood Blues* and *Scape Goats*, or the darkly comic *The Yattering and Jack*), to an American Gothic family saga involving squab-

bling old world godlings (*Galilee*) or a semi-satirical reworking of Tinseltown mythology and haunted house clichés (*Coldheart Canyon*), up to secret mystical wars and world-hopping odysseys (*Imajica*, *The Great and Secret Show*, *Weaveworld*).

Mr Barker's works for younger readers (notably the *Abarat* series) skirt the more carnal elements of his adult horror fantasies while retaining in full the characteristic Barker combination of wonder, menace and phantasmagoric visual invention.

Start with: the short story collections *Books of Blood* (6 vols), or *Abarat*

Follow with: any longer work. *The Great and Secret Show*, *Weaveworld*, etc.

Robert E Howard

Robert Ervin Howard (1906-1936) is a giant of sword and sorcery, heroic fantasy, and pulp adventure. His greatest and best known creation, Conan the Barbarian, is practically a household name. Conan has been immortalized in short stories by Howard himself, several other writers since, and in varied other media such as cinema, comic books, and games. Several of Howard's other creations, such as the grim puritan Solomon Kane, King Kull of Atlantis, and the Pictish king Bran Mak Morn, are also widely known. It is safe to say that Howard's huge body of work is one of the foundations upon which a whole literary genre rests.

Howard was born and raised in a small town in Texas. His father, Isaac Howard, was a country doctor, a profession that entailed frequent lengthy absences from home. His mother,







Hester, had tuberculosis and was ill of health for most of Howard's life. Howard was a very bookish and intelligent child, but also (perhaps surprisingly) a fan of boxing, even taking up amateur boxing. He had dreamed of becoming a writer since childhood, but didn't have any real success until the age of twenty-three. In his time he was published in a wide selection of magazines, journals and newspapers, but his main outlet was the pulp magazine *Weird Tales*.

Howard was successful in several literary genres and was on the verge of publishing his first novel when he committed suicide at the young age of thirty. When he learned that his terminally ill mother had entered a coma from which she was not expected to wake, he, for reasons unknown, walked out to his car and shot himself. The suicide and the circumstances surrounding it have led to varied speculation about Howard's mental health. The truth of the matter remains undiscovered.

Of Howard's creations there are a few which merit special mention.

Conan the Cimmerian, the dark-browed, mighty-thewed barbarian, is the epitome of the sword-wielding fighting-man, and yet he is also so much more. During his long and illustrious career he becomes a mercenary, thief, pirate, warlord, general, and eventually the King of Aquilonia, the mightiest empire of the Hyborian age. Far from being just the muscle-bound brute he's sometimes portrayed as, Conan is the quintessential adventurer, a man who makes his own fortune by blade, guile, will, and pure might. Every adventuring character since has at least some of Conan in him. The Hyborian Age, the fictional pre-historic era Howard

created for his characters, has also had a huge influence on fantasy settings, and especially role-playing settings since. It is a hybrid of varied influences, borrowing from history and myth, thrown into a melting pot. Foremost, the Hyborian Age is created specifically to be a playground for fantastic storytelling, with enough familiar elements for anyone to relate to, enabling the reader (or in the case of role-playing games, the player) to relate to the protagonist.

The rapier and pistol wielding puritan Solomon Kane also deserves mentioning. Like Conan, Kane is a man who lives his life sword in hand, facing danger at every turn, and besting insurmountable odds. Kane is characterized by his drive to protect those he sees as innocent and good. He is a civilized man living in an age that has turned its back to the light. The Kane stories are set in our own history, with a supernatural twist. Delve deeper and you will discover a world shrouded in darkness, populated by secrets, and infested by evil in all its forms. If you're looking for literary equivalents of the Lamentations of the Flame Princess' definition of weird as something out of place in an otherwise familiar seeming setting, then look no further than Robert E. Howard's Solomon Kane.

In a career that spanned barely twelve years, Howard wrote well over a hundred stories for the pulp magazines of his day. He created thrilling, vividly realized adventures populated by larger-than-life characters. So enduring is the appeal of his work that over seven decades later he continues to gain new fans and inspire subsequent generations of fantasy writers. He has been compared to such American masters as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and



Jack London. The dynamism of his writing, and the strength of his characters have been compared to Ernest Hemingway and Raymond Chandler. Among writers of heroic fantasy, Howard has no equal.

Fritz Leiber

Born in Chicago in 1910 to professional stage and screen actor parents, Fritz Leiber's half-century writing career covered horror, fantasy, science fiction and nonfiction. His first book, the horror novel *Conjure Wife*, has been adapted for the screen three times, and a fourth version is in the works. *Our Lady of Darkness*, however, was his last and probably greatest horror novel, and the one that has garnered the greatest acclaim. Leiber's science fiction novels include *The Big Time*, *A Spectre is Haunting Texas*, *The Wanderer*, and the humorous *The Silver Eggheads*. Leiber often wrote about apocalyptic and alternate timeline settings.

Leiber was a multiple Hugo, Nebula, Derleth, Lovecraft, and World Fantasy Award winner. He is credited with coining the term 'Sword & Sorcery' and for creating two of the genre's most recognizable and enjoyable characters: Fafhrd the barbarian and his nimble companion, the Gray Mouser. The two appeared in Leiber's first published story, *Two Sought Adventure*, in the August 1939 issue of *Unknown*. The last Fafhrd and Gray Mouser tale, *The Knight and Knave of Swords*, was published in 1988. These stories and these characters have had an enduring influence on fantasy role-playing, and for good reason.

Leiber's Fafhrd and Gray Mouser tales are almost prototypical Sword and Sorcery—

stories in which magic works and gods are real, and where stalwart warriors find themselves in direct conflict with supernatural evil. Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser are constantly confronting or being confronted by malign supernatural forces, be they murderous practitioners of the black arts (*Ill Met in Lankhmar*), vile cults (*The Cloud of Hate*), malevolent, sentient towers (*The Jewels in the Forest*), or incomprehensible beings from outside space and time (*Bazaar of the Bizarre*). In each of these stories and many others, it is a combination of skill, daring, luck and determination that sees the pair through.

As a genre writer, Leiber stands midway between two of his own literary icons: Robert E. Howard and H. P. Lovecraft. Leiber's detached, wry writing style is considered polished compared to some of the writings of Howard and Lovecraft, which can at times be stylistically over the top, but the main difference between the three lies in the fact that Howard always wrote from the gut, Lovecraft from the head, while Leiber tended to write from the heart. Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser are heroes, warriors and adventurers, but they are also thieves, womanizers and drunkards. They are human, complex, fallible and humorous—and extremely likeable because of it.

Fritz Leiber's Fafhrd and Gray Mouser stories have been collected into a two volume set in the Fantasy Masterworks series published by Gollancz. Look for The First Book of Lankhmar and The Second Book of Lankhmar.



HP Lovecraft

Howard Phillip Lovecraft (1890-1937), the gentleman from Providence, is one of the most influential writers of speculative fiction of the 20th century. Though his stories are relatively little-known and have not directly given birth to any Hollywood blockbusters (though not, horribly, for lack of trying), his influence is today nearly everywhere, from literature to music to movies to role-playing games. Stephen King credits him as a primary influence, Neil Gaiman, Clive Barker and Alan Moore have all tipped him their hats, and his extensive correspondence with other writers of weird fiction in his time ensured that his legacy not only lived on but was built upon and developed by those who survived him. The name of Cthulhu has entered the popular lexicon, and references to Lovecraft's work are practically everywhere, if one knows what to look for.

The Man

He was born in Providence, Rhode Island, and spent most of his life there, with the exception of some two years in the mid-1920s that he lived in New York City during his ill-fated marriage. He was an eccentric personality, perhaps even neurotic, and spent long periods of his life practically as a hermit. Though Lovecraft never went to university, he was well-read, keenly intelligent and possessed an exceptional memory. He also never learned a trade, making money by selling his stories to pulp magazines and revising the work of other writers. He died of colon cancer at the age of 46.

H.P. Lovecraft was a prolific writer. During his life, he wrote over sixty short stories and novel-

las, a few hundred poems, another few hundred articles on science, literary criticism and other miscellaneous topics, and, according to the Lovecraft scholar S.T. Joshi, nearly 100,000 letters – and he was not given to sending short notes, either.

While the Cthulhu Mythos that nowadays suffuses popular culture so thoroughly originated with Lovecraft, its modern form is the result of adding, lifting and collaboration between many writers from the 1920s to this day. The original Lovecraft Circle, writers who corresponded with Lovecraft, includes names such as Robert E. Howard (the creator of Conan the Barbarian and Solomon Kane), Robert Bloch (*Psycho*), Fritz Leiber (the “Lankhmar” tales) and less well known but still significant writers such as Frank Belknap Long, August Derleth (largely responsible for keeping Lovecraft in print after his death), Clark Ashton Smith and Henry Kuttner.

Later critics have often attacked Lovecraft for being racist, and not entirely without justification. Certainly, a kind of passive racism was quite prevalent among the white middle class of the age, but Lovecraft, at times, went above and beyond the norm. During his two years in New York City, he consistently failed to find work and blamed this on the immigrant populations in a classic case of “darned foreigners coming here and taking our jobs”. This is especially visible in his short story “The Horror at Red Hook,” written during his stay. Then again, he also married a Jew. The topic of Lovecraft's racism is a complex one, and a deeper examination is beyond the scope of this essay.



The Tales

H.P. Lovecraft's reputation primarily rests on his horror stories, and of those, on a core of some two dozen tales of the weird. Lovecraft worked almost exclusively in short fiction and most of his weird tales are short stories, with a handful of novellas and one novel-length work, *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, which did not see print until after Lovecraft's death. His most famous tale, however, is "The Call of Cthulhu", which later lent its name to the roleplaying game *Call of Cthulhu* in 1981, itself a classic that is still popular today.

The premise of Lovecraft's horror is that of an uncaring universe where humanity is insignificant and ultimately doomed. It is populated by unknowable and monstrous creatures and their even stranger gods, all alien in every sense of the word. When they exhibit any interest toward mankind at all, it is malicious. To gaze upon them is to court madness, and brushes with the supernatural usually end badly for mere mortals. However, while Lovecraft's fiction has a reputation of being nihilistic and hopeless, it is somewhat exaggerated. While the fate of many of his protagonists is to die gruesomely or lose their mind, in several of his stories the darkness is not only held back for another day but decisively defeated. Victories, though, never come without sacrifices.

Lovecraft's most common setting is his native New England and the fictional towns he set therein – Arkham, Kingsport, Dunwich and Innsmouth, though he is not confined to these locales. His settings play a great role in his stories, brought alive by his vivid and lavish prose. In Lovecraft's New England, evil lurks in

the deep forests and in the uncharted rolling hills, and reaches forth its hand from the history of the region, from the Salem witch trials and from ancient times beyond the reckoning of man.

The archetypal Lovecraft protagonist is an academic, perhaps a professor at Miskatonic University in Arkham, whose studies lead him to uncover things that should have been left alone. Archeology and history are especially dangerous areas of study, though higher mathematics is not without its hazards. In Lovecraft's stories, learning is dangerous and ignorance is bliss – this from a scholarly author who himself quite valued learning and whose writing rewards the educated reader.

One recurring theme in his stories is ancient books of mystic knowledge that may cost the reader their sanity or soul. The most iconic tome of forbidden lore in his works is the *Necronomicon*, written by the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred. Though wholly a creation of a Providence pulp writer, there exist a number of actual published works by that name, at least two of them hoaxes claiming to be actual spell-books, a pair of art books by H.R. Giger, and novelty items. It is also the name of at least one Lovecraft anthology.

As with many writers of the pulp era, Lovecraft's writing is partially in the public domain and partially owned by who-the-hell-knows. The copyrights of many of his stories are uncertain, and a large portion of his work, especially the important stories, can be legally found online, on websites such as Wikisource (<http://en.wikisource.org>) or the Australian Project Gutenberg (<http://gutenberg.net.au>).



H.P. Lovecraft's works are also being constantly reprinted and are easy to find.

For a good introduction to Lovecraft, a reader could do worse than begin with the short stories "The Call of Cthulhu", "The Colour out of Space", "The Dunwich Horror" and "The Rats in the Walls", the novellas *At the Mountains of Madness*, *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, and the novel *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. Other popular works are the novellas *The Shadow out of Time* and *The Whisperer in Darkness*, and the short stories "The Dreams in the Witch House", "The Hunter of the Dark", "The Music of Erich Zann", "Pickman's Model", "The Shunned House", "The Statement of Randolph Carter", "The Temple" and "The Thing on the Doorstep". He also wrote a number of more fantastical stories, strongly inspired by Lord Dunsany, set in the Dreamlands. By far the best of these are "The Doom That Came to Sarnath" and "The Cats of Ulthar" and the novella *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*. Finally, he is the author of the essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature."

Edgar Allan Poe

Called 'the first truly American writer' by William Carlos Williams, Edgar Allen Poe was a poet, fiction writer and essayist of special genius. He was a master of literary structure and tone. Credited with the creation of the detective story and with being a strong influence on early science fiction writers such as Jules Verne and H. G. Wells, Poe is best known for his horror stories and dark poetry. It is generally agreed that he single-handedly redefined the American Gothic genre with his tales of mystery and macabre.

Though he also occasionally wrote satires, 'fantasies' and humorous tales, it would be difficult to overstate Poe's influence on the horror genre. Whether writing stories of psychological horror and madness (*The Pit and the Pendulum*, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Cask of Amontillado*), supernatural horror (*The Masque of the Red Death*, *The Fall of the House of Usher*) or superficially 'straight' detective fiction (*The Murders in the Rue Morgue*), Poe imbued his stories with an eerie, compelling and utterly controlled atmosphere of weirdness and doom that has lost none of its power over time.

Poe's personal life was a difficult and a poor one, marked by tragedy and failure. His actor father abandoned the family when Poe was a year old, and his mother died of tuberculosis a year later. His (much) younger wife also died of tuberculosis. The disease and death of his wife had a deep effect on Poe, who turned to drink. Her loss marked his poetry and prose, already rather dark to begin with.

Poe's death might have been a mystery he himself wrote. On September 27, 1849, Poe left Richmond, Virginia for New York. He disappeared for a week. On October 3 he was found delirious on the streets of Baltimore, wearing clothes that were not his own. He died in a drunk ward of Washington College Hospital on October 7, never having gained enough lucidity to explain what had happened to him. The cause of death is still debated.

Robert Louis Stevenson said of Poe's work that it had 'a certain jarring note, a taint of something we do not care to dwell on or even find a name for.' While that may or may not have been true when Stevenson wrote it, not too many





more decades would pass before H. P. Lovecraft would find a name for Poe's macabre story type—the weird tale. And as the success of pulp magazines of the time proved, people not only cared to dwell on such stories, they had a near-insatiable appetite for it. They—we—still do, as the multi-billion dollar horror film and book industry proves.

From a role-playing perspective, the works of Edgar Allen Poe offer a master class in the creation of a macabre, oppressive tone and atmosphere. For readers new to Poe, at a minimum they should read the short stories *The Masque of the Red Death*, *The Cask of Amontillado*, *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*. The poems *The Bells*, *The Raven*, *A Dream Within a Dream* and *Annabel Lee* should also be considered required reading. For those intrigued by Poe's end, the 2006 independent film *The Death of Poe* may be of interest.

Clark Ashton Smith

In 1893, the year that Clark Ashton Smith was born, railroad chronometers went into common use, and the 1893 Chicago World's Fair featured electric lights. The mystery of the frontiers was being standardized, and technology was firing the first shots in humanity's war against the darkness of night.

Into this world of change, Smith was born into California cabin life and had only eight years of formal grammar school education. His precocious and astute mind allowed him to become his own teacher, learning other languages and continuing to absorb epic amounts of reading. Writing his own stories at an early age, Smith's

imagination was influenced by classic fantasy, adventure, and horror stories, and his first published work was pieces of poetry. Although known primarily as a writer, he was gifted in several visual arts, including painting and sculpture. His ability to conceptualize visual narratives was instrumental in bringing the otherworldly and exotic into believable and readable written stories. This kind of writing, focusing on the strange, fantastic, and otherworldly was shared with fellow writers H. P. Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard. The three wrote for *Weird Tales* and served as Furies waging a war of vengeance against the dry conservatism of fiction writing at a time when frontiers were vanishing, the adventure of global colonialism was ending, and even the fear of darkness was under siege by advances in technology. *Weird Tales* gave Smith a stage upon which he could renew a readers fear of the dark, remind them of the wildness of the exotic, and rekindle their lust for adventures to the far away.

His contributions to role-playing games are invaluable just in terms of imaginative storytelling; bringing the spanning vistas of the alien and heroic to the masses, showing that light isn't enough to fight darkness, introducing readers to worlds and strange entities that are beyond comprehension, describing characters confronting evils that are beyond negotiation, and more. Beyond these literary elements, Smith put forth a visual lexicon and descriptive method of handling text that have not just inspired role playing game development, but created a method of textual description and visual storytelling that is currently used today. His influence extends beyond stories into not





just role-playing, but also graphic novels, comics and computer games. The symbolic language of fantasy, horror, and adventure owes a great debt to the efforts of Smith and his contemporaries.

A large part of Smith's appeal is his treatment of characters, even ancient, evil beings of godlike presence. The relentless worm Rlim Shaikorth, and the elk goddess Yhoundeh hunting the sorcerer Eibon. The arachnid Atlach-Nacha, astride a web linked to the Dreamlands of H. P. Lovecraft. The heroic valor of Gaspard Du Nord, wielding alchemic mastery against Colossus of Nathaire the necromancer. The simple and stark narrative of the explorer Satampra Zeiros, adventuring in the temple of the grotesque Tsathoggua, and the questing of the luckless Ralibar Vooz.

The people and places in the works of Smith have heavy influence over role-playing game development, in particular the *Averoigne* Series and the *Zothique Cycle* story *The Dark Eidolon*. The wonder, horror, mystery, and revelation in Smith's stories has inspired a generation of game masters and players of numerous role-playing games to create similar worlds of dying decadence, expansive unknowns, ancient evils, and exotic madness. The *Hyperborean*, *Averoigne*, and *Zothique* cycles together seem to form an answer to the question of the Sphinx, describing worlds crawling in innocent terror like the newly born, standing wise and strong against ancient evil, and lurching, corrupt and exhausted, towards the void.

Smith's fantasy writing ended after the death of his friend H. P. Lovecraft in 1937, and his

focus turned towards sculpture and other artistic pursuits. By the time of his death in 1961, heroism and frontiers had changed. It was the year a man from Earth plunged into the sea in a Mercury space capsule, and an era of comic books was started by four characters who were astronauts exposed to radiation who would become elemental themed superheroes. The darkness surrounding the cabins of California was kept at bay by electric lights, the exotic colonies were becoming nations, frontiers were standardized by clocks and maps, and Smith's extensive works rested gracefully in attics and on bookshelves, quietly whispering an adventurer's call to another generation.

JRR Tolkien

JRR Tolkien is a writer so famous, his work so well known, that it almost seems wasteful to use space to list him as an influence. Undoubtedly the most influential fantasy writer of modern times, Tolkien's work presents the definitive version of a great many fantasy standards: Dwarfs, elves, halflings, the "big quest," the adventuring party, dungeons, wizard towers, evil humanoids, and a dozen other things I'm overlooking because they are so prevalent it's hard to imagine that one person was responsible for the creation of the archetype.

But you know this already. Tolkien's ideas are so pervasive, so assumed, that using elements of Tolkien's rich work, being directly inspired by his unending imagination, is so commonplace, that a Tolkienesque fantasy world is considered "vanilla" by many commentators.



But read *The Lord of the Rings* again, and put away any thoughts of how “epic” it is, and don’t view it as an adventure story.

Think of Frodo’s journey, from the flight from Hobbiton, dealing with malign trees, nearly captured by ringwraiths, stalked by a mutant psychopath, taken by a giant spider, and the final push through Mordor and the final temptation of the Ring. This is a horror story full of many dark things.

The Fellowship was guided by Gandalf and aided by many. But what if a random traveler, without previous connections or an epic quest, happened upon Bombadil, or Beorn, or stumbled into Rivendell? Perhaps there would be no friendly reception.

And there is no happy ending to *The Lord of the Rings*. It is a bittersweet tale, and even as victory is achieved, all that everyone had fought to save had already been lost just from the fact that it had to be fought for.

Not just simple adventure, then.

Many stumble by looking to Tolkien’s *Silmarilion* as a how-to for role-playing world-building. The history of Middle-Earth is entrenched in every description and location that the Fellowship visits. There are lessons to be learned here, but where the stumbling occurs is that Referees attempt to front-load all of that information. A richly detailed world with an extensive history is the result of a long campaign, not its beginning.

Jack Vance

Jack Vance may be the most famous name in RPGs not attached to an artist or designer. Born in 1916, his early adult life was a series of misadventures and near-escapes. He worked for a time in numerous odd jobs before attending UC Berkley where he bounced from major to major for six years. Necessity sent him to Pearl Harbor, working as an electrician, only to leave a mere month before the Japanese bombed it in 1941. Poor eyesight kept him out of the military, and attempts to learn Japanese in an Army Intelligence program were met with failure. He finally published his first professional story in 1946 while living in the bohemian community of San Francisco. Like Robert Howard, he wrote what he knew, and so his books are full of characters down on their luck, scoundrels and odd sorts lost but thriving (after a fashion) between society’s cracks.

Society, biology and culture loom large in his novels. Even his science fiction tends to focus more on anthropology and less on anti-matter reactors. In *The Languages of Pao*, where a sorcerer, an usurper, and a tyrant-in-training vie for the soul of a world through manipulating the languages of its people, the line between sorcery and technology is blurry. Things are even more so in his Dying Earth novels, set in the distant future where our sun has shrunk to an angry red orb, and the promise of our future has been squandered into a bitter inheritance for a doomed humanity. Onto this stage prance, creep, and crawl a motley collection of scoundrels, broken souls, and sorcerers.



The sorcerers are especially noteworthy for RPGs. The system for magic used in the Dying Earth novels was adapted for use in Dungeons & Dragons. Vancian magic, as it's called, involves memorizing spells which are then "forgotten" as they are cast and remains a popular choice in RPGs.

Of equal importance to gaming is the style of his stories, which tend to combine the picaresque with caper-like hijinks. The quest for new spells, the backstabbing and treachery, the sardonic humor and moody locations that give Vance's worlds their style and flavor are now well known to gamers who have never read his works. His characters are not superheroes, but flawed, sometimes tragically so, some with "vacuums" in their minds and others utterly incapable of experiencing pleasure. Where science and technology mingle, where certain doom is faced with a wry quip, and where "heroes" are known for their greed and duplicity, the tone was set by Vance.

The richest flavor is probably found in his Dying Earth novels: *The Dying Earth*, *The Eyes of the Overworld*, *Cugel's Saga*, and *Rhialto the Marvellous*. For a slightly more Science Fantasy style, try his novels of the Demon Princes: *The Star King*, *The Killing Machine*, *The Palace of Love*, *The Face*, and *The Book of Dreams*.

Jules Verne

The French counterpart to HG Wells, Verne is credited, along with Wells, with inventing the modern genre of science fiction. More than that, he is probably the steampunk novelist par excellence. His novels, written during the 19th century, include such modern conveniences as

air conditioning, television, tasers, and, of course, submarines, all described with a Victorian flair. Every clockwork golem, electrified trap, or steam-powered doomsday device found in the annals of fantasy RPGs owes a tip of the hat to Verne.

Verne was born on February 8th of 1828, a full 38 years before Wells and less than ten years before Victoria was crowned. His father wanted him to be a lawyer, but from a young age Verne was drawn to words. He wrote poems, songs, and stories in his youth, but didn't have his first novel published until he was 35, and one of his novels, *Paris in the Twentieth Century*, didn't see print until 130 years after it was written.

Verne was inspired by the dark, macabre writings of Edgar Allen Poe. He even penned a fan-fic sequel to Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*. Like Poe, Verne was fascinated by the darkness in human souls and minds and his novels are laced with the more sinister aspects of human nature.

Unfortunately for Verne, his publisher insisted readers wanted lighter fare and happy endings. For the most part, Verne accommodated these demands and his popularity certainly didn't suffer from this. Still, some works (like *Paris in the Twentieth Century*) were apparently beyond anyone's ability to "fix" and Verne's grim pessimism remained on the page of even his most celebrated novels. In Verne's stories, technology doesn't bridge gaps so much as bring them into clear focus. The heroes in *Around the World in Eighty Days* struggle with the odd and often barbaric customs of those they meet, thwarting human sacrifices and narrowly escaping enraged natives. Captain Nemo doesn't use



his wondrous submarine to regale the world with Jacques-Cousteau-like images of undersea animals and ecologies, but to wage a war of vengeance upon the British Empire. When scientists undertake *A Journey to the Center of the Earth*, in spite of encounters with ravening dinosaurs and errant orbs of electrical phenomena, they are most unsettled by an encounter that throws a warped, fun-house mirror reflection upon their own concept of what it means to be human.

This then is Verne's universe; a place of infinite mystery that even science cannot render utterly tame or knowable. While his vision is not nearly as bleak or horrific as Lovecraft's, it's no less darkly alluring or explicable in its mystery.

To get a taste of Verne's dark travelogue style, the best place to start is *A Journey to the Center of the Earth*. *The Mysterious Island* offers classic mystery and suspense to the usual tale of castaways making the best of things on a tropical island. For a bleak dystopian "future" where the arts exist only as government-sponsored swill for the masses, try his *Paris in the Twentieth Century*.

HG Wells

H.G. (Herbert George) Wells was born in Bromley, Kent, England in 1866. Growing up in a family that was constantly teetering on the brink of financial ruin, Wells turned to reading at a young age as a means of escape. Wells published *The Time Machine* in 1895. The book was an overnight sensation and firmly established Wells as one of England's leading authors. Although his literary career went on

to span five decades, he is chiefly remembered today for his early works, a series of "scientific romances" that, along with the novels of Jules Verne, laid the groundwork for modern-day science fiction.

Unlike Verne, and despite his educational background in the sciences, Wells often hand-waived the technical explanations underlying his tales of gentleman inventors and mad scientists. Verne himself, while maintaining that he had "the highest respect for [Wells'] imaginative genius," opined that Wells' fiction "belong[s] unreservedly to an age and degree of scientific knowledge far removed from the present, though I will not say entirely beyond the limits of the possible." It is in this willingness to look beyond the simply plausible and to imagine what is merely *possible* that Wells distinguished himself as a writer of great influence over the next generation of weird fiction authors.

Wells often used his fiction as a vehicle for his beliefs about human nature, evolution, and politics, and most of his classic works are distinguished by meditations on social class and mankind's fate. Although he was a committed believer in Utopian societies, works like *The Time Machine* and *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) refuted the contemporary Victorian optimism, faith in technology, and belief in the primacy of mankind.

The Time Machine follows the narrator as he visits a future ruled by two degenerate strains of humans, descendants of the upper and lower classes. The narrator then travels to a time far in Earth's future and witnesses the last inhabitants of the planet, red crab-like creatures, die



off as the Earth hurtles towards a dimming Sun, thus making *The Time Machine* one of the first "dying Earth" novels. *The Island of Dr. Moreau* is an even darker tale of dark science run amok and the bestial nature of man. Although it was part of an emerging genre of "invasion novels," *War of the Worlds* (1898) was the first such work to cast the invaders as extraterrestrials, establishing an enduring sub-genre of science fiction.

From invasions of grotesque aliens to savage hybrid mutants to battles against degenerate subterraneans to tales of the dying Earth, Wells has passed down an entire lexicon of ideas germane to weird/horror gaming. Lastly, no gaming-centered biography of Wells would be complete without mentioning *Little Wars* (1913), a set of recreational wargame rules considered the first "modern" miniatures game rules; their significance for the development of RPGs can be appreciated by the fact that Gary Gygax saw fit to pen a foreword to the 2004 reprinting.

Others

Anderson, Poul (*The Broken Sword*, etc)
 Bierce, Ambrose (everything!)
 Blackwood, Algernon (*The Willows*, etc)
 Bradbury, Ray (*Something Wicked This Way Comes*)
 Carroll, Lewis (*Alice in Wonderland*, *Through the Looking Glass*)
 Chambers, Robert W. (*The King in Yellow*)
 Doyle, Arthur Conan (*The Lost World*, etc)
 Dumas, Alexandre (*The Three Musketeers*, etc)

Hodgson, William Hope (*House on the Borderlands*, *The Night Lands*, etc)
 Homer (*The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*)
 Joshi, ST (*The Weird Tale*, *The Evolution of the Weird Tale*)
 King, Stephen (*Eyes of the Dragon*, *Cycle of the Werewolf*, the Dark Tower series)
 Lord Dunsany (most everything)
 Malory, Sir Thomas (*Le Morte d'Arthur*)
 Merritt, A. (*The Moon Pool*, *The Ship of Ishtar*, etc)
 Moorcock, Michael (Elric stories, Von Bek stories, Corum stories, many, many others)
 Orwell, George (1984, *Animal Farm*)
 Shakespeare, William (*MacBeth*, *Hamlet*, etc)
 Shelley, Mary (*Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, *The Last Man*)
 Stephenson, Robert Louis (*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Treasure Island*)
 Stoker, Bram (*Dracula*, *Lair of the White Worm*, etc)
 Swift, Jonathan (*Gulliver's Travels*)
 Wilde, Oscar (*The Picture of Dorian Grey*)

HP Lovecraft's Supernatural Horror in Literature remains the greatest reading resource for those interested in Weird tales.

Credits: Introduction, Tolkien, and Others by James Edward Raggi IV, Fritz Leiber and Edgar Allan Poe by Michael McClung, HP Lovecraft by Jukka Särkijärvi, Clark Ashton Smith by Scott S., HG Wells by David Larkins, Jack Vance and Jules Verne by James Murphy, Clive Barker by Chris Hogan, Robert E. Howard by Juhani Seppälä.



*The
Game Master,*

Glossary

- * **Ability Scores** The basic characteristics that define a character. They are Charisma, Constitution, Dexterity, Intelligence, Strength, and Wisdom.
- * **AC Armor Class**, a value that represents how difficult a character is to damage in combat, representing a combination of actual armor and ability to dodge blows.
- * **Adventure** Any self-contained smaller portion of a larger campaign, or alternately, an overall term for the happenings during any particular session whether part of a larger campaign or not.
- * **Alignment** Lawful, Chaotic, or Neutral; a description of which (if any) cosmic powers claim the character's allegiance. Generally only used to determine the effects of some spells.
- * **Campaign** The sum total of all sessions and adventures within a milieu, as well as out-of-game preparation and organization for that milieu done by a Referee.
- * **CHA or Cha** A common abbreviation for Charisma.
- * **Class** The basic character type that defines a character's abilities.
- * **CON or Con** A common abbreviation for Constitution.
- * **cp Copper Piece(s)**, the smallest unit of money.
- * **d# (d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, d20, d%)** The various dice used, based on how many sides those dice have.
- * **Damage** A measure of how effective an attack is. Also, the difference between a character's current and maximum Hit Points.
- * **Demi-Human** Dwarfs, elves, and halflings; the usually friendly human-like races.
- * **DEX or Dex** A common abbreviation for Dexterity.
- * **Dungeon** A generic term for any contained adventuring area, especially one where movement, exit, or access to outside resources is restricted, as in a maze. Most often, but not necessarily, underground.
- * **Duration** The length of game time a particular effect lasts, usually concerning light sources or spells.
- * **Encounter** Any (potential) confrontation between PCs and NPCs or monsters.
- * **Encumbrance** A measure of how much equipment a character is carrying and how much it slows him down.
- * **Experience Points** A measure for determining a character's advancement; the game's "score."
- * **gp Gold Piece(s)**, the most valuable unit of money.
- * **HD Hit Dice**
- * **Hit Dice** The measure of how powerful a non-human creature is; also, the number of d8s used to determine their Hit Points.
- * **Hit Points** A measure of how much damage a character or creature can withstand before dying or being knocked out.
- * **hp Hit Points**
- * **Initiative** The process of determining who acts first in combat.
- * **INT or Int** A common abbreviation for Intelligence.
- * **Level A-** The measure of power of a character, **B-** The measure of power of a spell, **C-** The relative depth and/or difficulty of areas within a dungeon.
- * **Mêlée** Any hand-to-hand combat, with arms or not. Non-mêlée combat is called Ranged combat.
- * **Morale** A score for NPCs representing their bravery in battle, and for Retainers their willingness to put themselves in danger on behalf of their Patron.
- * **NPC Non Player Character**, any character or creature in the game played by the Referee instead of one of the Players.
- * **Party** The Player Characters and any Retainers they have.
- * **PC Player Character**, any character being played by a Player.
- * **Player** All real-life participants in a game who are not the Referee.
- * **Referee** The real-life participant who runs the campaign, presents the adventure, and administers the rules.
- * **Retainer** Any follower or employee of a character.
- * **Round** Six seconds of time in-game, and the basic division of time during combat.
- * **Saving Throw** A roll granted to characters in certain situations to avoid or mitigate a negative result.
- * **Segment** One-second measures of time within a mêlée round, when a character actually acts.
- * **Session** A single gathering of Players and Referee to play the game.
- * **shp Ship Hit Points**
- * **sp Silver Piece(s)**, the standard unit of money in the game. More valuable than copper but less valuable than gold.
- * **STR or Str** A common abbreviation for Strength.
- * **Turn** 10 minutes of in-game time.
- * **Turn Undead** A common Cleric spell that forces the living dead to flee.
- * **WIS or Wis** A common abbreviation for Wisdom.
- * **XP Experience Points**