

THE PUBLIC IS MORE FAMILIAR WITH BAD DESIGN THAN GOOD DESIGN. IT IS, IN EFFECT, CONDITIONED TO PREFER BAD DESIGN, BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT IT LIVES WITH. THE NEW BECOMES THREATENING, THE OLD REASSURING.

PAUL RAND

ACKNOWLEDGE UP FRONT THAT THE PCS ARE GOING TO WIN, AND NEVER SWEAT IT. THEN USE THE DICE TO ESCALATE, ESCALATE, ESCALATE. WE ALL KNOW THE PCS ARE GOING TO WIN. WHAT WILL IT COST THEM?

LUMPLEY

A DESIGNER KNOWS THAT HE HAS ACHIEVED PERFECTION NOT WHEN THERE IS NOTHING LEFT TO ADD, BUT WHEN THERE IS NOTHING LEFT TO TAKE AWAY.

ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

DIVANDRA AND I HAVE NOW RETURNED TO FULL HEALTH, AND IT IS TIME TO GO ON: HACKING AND SLASHING, LOOTING AND ROBBING, OPENING EVERY BOX AND BARREL IN THE HOPE THAT WE MAY UNEARTH A CLUE AS TO WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT. GOD SEND THAT IT IS NOT A VAIN HOPE.

ERNEST ADAMS

CROMLYN GAMES

ESCAPE THE DUNGEON

PUBLISHER OF THIS BOOK

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*Dedicated to those who appreciate \LaTeX
and the work of Edward R. Tufte and Donald E. Knuth.
And to the horde of goblins who died
defending them.*

Introduction

In this game you are in a typical fantasy dungeon. The overlord is dead ¹. You were one of his underlings. You were a monster. You still are, but for the first time in a long time, you're able to ask "Why?" So can all the other underlings. WHAT DO YOU DO?

¹ citation needed

We're going to start with the base outline of what the GM should be doing, then the core of what the player needs to know, then some playbooks of different underlings and then all the stuff the GM needs to show you an awesome time.

GM Agenda and Principles

THE GAME MASTER or GM is the referee. Master of Ceremonies in Apocalypse World, Dungeon Master in old-school hack and slash grid crawlers, they provide the stage, the setting, most of the background characters and the physics engine. They are here to make the game fun for you. If they're not doing that, either they're not running the game right, I've written it wrong, or you should both try a different game that suits what you are seeking.²

² this is a serious point really, it's worth taking the time at the start to discuss palette and previous games or stories you've enjoyed. This will be discussed more in the GM section

Agenda

- Agenda
 - Play to find out what happens
 - Make the players' character's lives not boring
 - Subvert that which is taken from granted

The Agenda is the key thing. If you, as GM, are in doubt what to do, choose the thing that follows the agenda. It's not a bad guide for players either.

Principles

- Principles
 - don't waste your players' time
 - the dungeon pressures to conform
 - take tropes to their logical, nonsensical extreme
 - sprinkle details of everyday fantasy everywhere
 - make the dungeon seem fantastically real
 - name everyone, make everyone rational within their role

- build a bigger dungeon through play, not plot
- create interesting dilemmas not interesting traps
- address yourself to the characters not players
- make your move, but never speak its name
- ask loaded questions and build on the answers
- sometimes, reflect a question back upon the players

The Principles are what the GM should be doing if they have their mouth open. If she's chewing pizza instead, call her out on it. Exactly how they translate to the fiction will vary on the tone of the game. These rules are supposed to support a game with a strong undercurrent of pathos with the silliness. The situation is ridiculous, because a lot of fantasy is ridiculous, but a lot of the player characters should be sympathetic or relatable as they struggle in this crazy situation.³ Fundamentally, they are outside of the mainstream surface society and trying to retain a sense of identity when it'd be much easier to slide into institutionalisation. The Dungeon only wants to help, to protect them from the weird outside world where there's no roof and much less glowy rocks. The GM represents the dungeon.

³ A bit like most sitcoms

Player's core

You play as an underling, someone or something recently awoken from your role in the broader dungeon. The dungeon ain't to happy about that, by the way. You'll have a playbook with some moves unique to you, some stats to help define how good you are at different things, some DEMONS that represent the things you fear and probably some other stuff like a tribe or some mates or a hoard or a soul-sucking artifact of glowy evilness. You also have access to the basic moves. Everyone has them, and they should be pretty useful.

There are six main stats in this game.

- FIGHTER - how good you are with violence or raw strength
- THIEF - how good you are with cunning and delicate or precise skill
- WIZARD - how good you are brainpower, thinking or arcane magic stuff
- BARD - how good you are with charm and social connections
- IDENTITY - how good you are at remembering who you actually are beneath the stereotypes.
- HEALTH - how much more damage you can take, for now

They'll get set in your playbook. Different underlings have different stats. They may change over play too. Identity certainly will. Unless the move specifically says so, none of those five stats can go above +3 (or below -2, if you are a masochist). A move that uses a stat will state something like ROLL + STAT NAME. That means roll two normal six-sided dice and add the total to your stat. If you have WIZARD of -1, and you roll a 2 and a 5 the total is 6. Most rules use the format of get 6 or below total and you've messed up, get 7-9 and you succeed, but at a cost. Rolling 10+ is a success, sometimes with a bonus. Try to do that. Sometime you'll see things like a +1 forward. That means you get to add +1 to your next roll. In the case above, that'd be enough to turn the 6 into 7 and the dangerous failure into a dangerous success.

In play, don't make moves. Do stuff, and keep doing stuff until the GM calls for a move. Dice should only hit the table when the stakes are interesting and the outcome uncertain. You don't need a ROLL+THIEF to use a doorhandle. You don't even need it to pick a lock when you've got all afternoon and someone making you cups of tea. When you're trapped in a corridor with fire elementals drifting towards you from both sides and your buddy is bleeding out all over your feet, yeah, then you need to roll.

HEALTH is the sixth stat and typically starts at nine and fluctuates wildly if you are playing hard enough. You heal up 3 health in a LONG REST - which means a night⁴ in the fiction, or probably the gap between sessions in real life. Don't hoard your health, we'll cover running out under basic moves.

During play, or possibly starting out, you'll pick up items of various use. The 'item' is the basic unit of currency in the dungeon, those pesky heroes keep dropping them when they die and they make handy bartering freebies down the goblin market. The playbook is also a good place to record favours, debts and stuff you want to go back to later. It's also the place to record hobbies and Xp.

HOBBIES, in this game, are important. They keep you grounded and bolster your sense of identity. Every time you take the time to act out your hobby, you mark a little tick next to it. Every three ticks means +1 to your identity stat.

XP stands for Experience and represents how far down the path to the extreme eXpression of your stereotype you've walked, lurched or slithered. Collecting XP will unlock more moves, stat bonuses, moves from other playbooks or more major character development. These advances will be shown in the playboook.

OBJECTIVES VS DAMAGE. In the basic moves below, commonly you will be told you've succeeded at your objective OR you deal damage. There are two intentions here. The first is to allow a move to be used for different problems where damage is not appropriate: "I want to climb out of the pit", "I want to pick the lock", "I want to study the runes, see if I can find a clue to the ritual." The second intention is to clarify how much damage you do if your objective is something like "I move to stab her in the back," "I exhale and shoot an arrow at that gap in his armour.". Basically, you can't state your objective is to 'behead the world-turtle' and succeed when Great A'Tuin still has a few thousand hitpoints left.⁵ As a rule, the FIGHTER should be able to deal the most damage to a single target, the THIEF can spread it around but might go through a lot of vials of poison or throwing knives and the WIZARD is an unstable powderkeg of potential.

⁴ how do underlings in your dungeon keep track of time?

⁵ And the corollary is that the GM should note that relying on hitpoints is bad challenge design. You should be building a jungle-gym not a treadmill. There's an excellent essay for Dungeon World called "The 16Hp Dragon" that provides some good rules of thumb.

Help or Interfere

If you want to help or interfere with another player's move, say what you are doing and take that as the objective for a basic move. If you succeed, you can gift them a +1 to their roll, or 'gift' them a -2, if you are hindering them. This stacks with the +1 option in the WIZARD move. If it is player character vs player character, you don't both

ROLL+FIGHTER to see who wins. The first person within the fiction to do something that triggers the move does the move, the other person hinders if they want, resolves their move, then the first player finishes the move and then the fiction continues. Why would you do this instead of doing something for yourself? Sometimes failure is not an option (They're coming, Urg, Steve the Tortoise, break the door down NOW!), or perhaps you are helping them pull off a unique playbook move. An example might be "I throw sand in hero's eyes to allow the Brute to get his "Couple of Mates" into the action. Rather them then me!"

FIGHTER: basic move

When you try to solve a problem with violence, strength or sheer athleticism ROLL + FIGHTER: ⁶

- On a 7+ you succeed at you objective OR deal two damage.
- On a 10+: that's it, you succeeded. Deal with the consequences.
- On a 7-9: the player chooses two:
 - Take damage as the situation demands
 - An ally takes damage as established
 - Something in the next room hears you
 - You drop an item in the middle of it
 - You choose to fail your objective to prevent something worse
 - Click! next move by anyone triggers a trap
- On a 6 or below: no success, but choose one from the list anyway

THIEF: basic move

When you try to solve a problem with cunning, treachery or precise and delicate application of skill ROLL+ THIEF ⁷

- on a 7+ you succeed at your objective OR deal one damage⁸
- on a 10+ choose three from below
- on a 7-9 choose one:
 - Deal one damage to some other target
 - You do it quickly
 - You can get away cleanly

⁶ This is the stat to roll for breaking down doors, taking blows on a shield or arm-wrestling in the ork canteen. There is some blurriness with THIEF. Stabbing someone in a fight is a fighter move, but stabbing them in the back is a thief. Shooting a charging hero is direct violence and typically therefore FIGHTER, but trying to pull off a trick shot that pins their dagger hand to the wall might be THIEF. The GM is encouraged to be relaxed about this, but encourage thought about the consequence of a miss. If players are pushing THIEF to try and avoid blowback damage, the GM should hit them with some very hard direct moves when a golden opportunity arrives. Players. I hope you read this.

⁷ This is the stat to roll for stealth, or dodging arrows too. When it comes to lies and blather, there is some overlap with Bard moves. The GM is encouraged to be relaxed about this, but keep an eye on the consequences of a miss.

⁸ if your objective was to deal damage, then deal damage.

- └ It can't be traced to you
 - └ You don't use up an item
- Now the GM chooses a remaining option to move against.
- On a 6- the GM may choose two options.

WIZARD: *basic move*

When you try to solve a problem with raw brainpower, knowledge or magic **ROLL+WIZARD**.

- On a 7+ you succeed at your objective OR you cast a damaging spell of raw magic.⁹
- On a 10+ you succeed at your objective. Choose two:
 - └ Deal one damage to someone
 - └ Deal one damage to all in the room
 - └ Expose a weakness, flaw or demon
 - └ You give good advice. You give an ally +1 forward.
 - └ Learn three words about the target
- On a 7-9 you succeed at your objective AND deal one damage to someone
- On a 6- you deal one damage to yourself or an ally

⁹ This represents basic, almost instinctual attacks. Detailed wizard spells are in the playbooks. The difference is like hitting someone with a ripped open electricity wire and constructing a freezer, or a drill or a light bulb that can take the electricity and make something new with it.

BARD: *basic move*

When you try to solve a problem with charm, social connections or distraction, **ROLL+BARD**:

- On a 7+ you succeed at your objective
- On a 10+: that's it, you succeeded. Deal with the consequences.
- On a 7-9 choose two:
 - └ You distracted an ally too¹⁰
 - └ The target becomes obsessed with you
 - └ You owe someone.
 - └ Someone will come after you, later
 - └ They offer you a further opportunity, with a catch
- on a 6- the GM chooses another player who chooses one for you.

¹⁰ be careful with player agency here. It can be a fun running gag, but make sure the other player is on board.

IDENTITY: *basic move*

When you draw on knowledge of the dungeon, or wake after a LONG REST, the dungeon presses in. You, as player, can say the thing you, as character, know because of your role or job in the dungeon. You get that statement free. You can ask the GM to answer it, or just say something that fits the story. The GM needs to do their best to make it true. Now ROLL + IDENTITY

- On a 10+ Describe a hobby¹¹. Add it to your playbook. Gain +1 Identity when you have acted on that hobby three different times.
- On a 7-9 you keep a sense of identity but the dungeon presses on you. Choose one:
 - └ I loved that part of my job
 - └ I hate that part of my job
 - └ I had a fierce rival in my job
- On a 6- you slip back into your role. Mindlessly do what your job demands until obstructed or you fail a roll.

¹¹ Ideally this should be something outside of your stereotypical job. It's something you value and think about in your spare time and makes plans for. 'Three different times' doesn't mean three cups of tea satisfies a 'tea party' hobby for a Brute. It has to cost something to mean something

DEMONS: *basic move*

When you face one of your three demons, ROLL + IDENTITY

- On a 10+: you see how the dungeon is trying to get at you. MARK XP
- On a 7-9: if you survive, take +1 IDENTITY
- On a 6-: you panic. Choose flight, fight and make an appropriate basic move.

ONE FOOT IN THE GRAVE: *Basic move*

When your health hits zero choose one:

- Die free.
- Come Back: The dungeon isn't done with you. Take -1 to your two highest stats, and wake up later with 3Hp and holes in your memory.

- Undergo a sea change: The dungeon has a new role for you. Wake up later with a new playbook as the story demands.¹² Unless the GM feels merciful assume all your items are stolen while you are dead to the world. You keep one hobby and one move but switch stats, including identity.
- 'He who kills monsters': where it makes sense, you may come back as the NPC who killed you. Choose an appropriate playbook that's not in use and get with the GM.

¹² UNDEAD or CREEP are obvious, but hideous experiments could bring you back as a HYBRID, BRUTE, BEAST ect.

Playbook Summary

What sort of game do you all want? Talk amongst yourselves.

Want to smash stuff? try the Brute

Want to hold a lot of keys and blackmail other players? try the
Creep

Want to play as a formidable threat? try the Undead

Want to play a bunch of characters with sadistic glee? Try the
Horde

Want to explore separation and back story? Try the Beast

Want to play a quieter support role? Try the Construct

Want screw with the physics of the world? Try the Magus
Want to include the surface town and be a fun villian? Try the Dregs
Want to explore issues of identity: Try the Hybrid
Want to play quietly but steer the story direction? Try the Plant
Want to play a loud and funny support role? Try the Fey
Want to bring 'other' powers into the story? Try the Host,

Still to come: Elemental Ooze

Brute

Them? They were dead when I got 'ere. Natural shape for dwarves is that, two little shoes poking out of a helmet. Sniff.

Start with two moves.

Gut Feeling

When you witness a successful FIGHTER move then you can ROLL + WIZARD:

- On a 10+ you may ask two of the GM or the player.
- On a 7-9 you may ask one:
 - What motivates this fight?
 - What would they kill for?
 - What demon hunts them?
 - What must I beware of?
 - Who trained them?
- On a 6- you join the fight instead.

Roaring Charge

When you charge into another player's fight you may destroy the weapon you are holding to get +1 Fight (to a max of +4) for the scene.

Couple of mates

You have a couple of stupid and unruly mates. Name them. Name the body part that drives them. When you need them to do anything other than join a fight¹³ then ROLL + BARD

- On a 10+ they do it just like you asked.
- On a 7-9 choose one:

Name: Thoth, Ug, Charlie, Caliban, Schtump, Stoor, Begbie

Appearance (Pick 1-3): Hunchback; horns, no neck; huge shoulders; knuckle dragger; (broken)manacles; kilt; tattoos

Statistics: Start with FIGHTER +3. +1 and -1 to any of the others.

Job (Pick 1): Guard; Gladiator; Miner; Chef

Demon (Pick 3): Weakness; Stupidity; Chains; Accidental Harm; Electricity

Hobbies (fill in during play):

□□□□

□□□□

□□□□

Experience

□□□□ add a Brute move

□□□□+1 to any stat

□□□□ add a Brute move

□□□□+1 to any stat

□□□□ add a move from another playbook

□□□□ add a Brute move

¹³ sometimes including stopping again

- └ They do it, but really badly
- └ They do it, but need bribing
- └ They do it, but will take it out on an ally later
- └ They obey like the dungeon demands. Take -1 Identity.

- On a 6- they do their own thing.

It's a Weapon!

When you have taken damage and are weaponless, ROLL + FIGHTER

- On a 7+ you find something to use as a weapon
- On a 10+ choose one:
 - └ Improvised shield - you or an ally may ignore the next damage
 - └ Improvised missile - throw it to deal one damage and take the target out of the fight until you move again.
 - └ Puny elf - you overpower one enemy and use them as a weapon to hit others.
- On a 6- you find something, but can't get to it quickly enough

Scarred

When you take damage and reach your last health (1Hp), MARK XP and resolve any new advances immediately.

Creep

Sure baby, I can make you feel better. Just let me hold you and pull up a warm and fuzzy memory. Ain't that better?

Start with two moves and a chorus

Chorus

A creep is always accompanied by a CHORUS - a collection of soul fragments sustained by energies leaking through the hole in the world that the creep represents. The chorus members are fragments patched together almost randomly - faces squished together, rats and bat spirits filling holes in skin or missing body parts. The chorus are simple minded, fixated on pet topics and without agency.

Commune

When you ask a question of the chorus ROLL + WIZARD

- On a 10+ ask two questions from the list below
- On a 7-9 ask one question.

- Who died here?
- What was the last thing they saw?
- Where is a dangerous item?
- Who is lying about their memories?
- Where is the person this body part belongs to?

- On a 6- you may still ask a question, and the chorus will reply truthfully, but the answer comes in the form of a riddle, eerie song or a crude cartoon in blood on the wall.

Brain slither

When you break somebody's skin, ROLL + WIZARD:

Name: Legionella; Peez; Latocula; Dalv;
Fork-tounge; Shade-of-Grey

Appearance (choose 1-3): Rippling
cloak; glowing eyes; bony fingers;
scissors; tendrils; smokey hair; blank
face

Statistics: WIZARD +2 THIEF +1. +1 and
-1 to any of the others.

Job(Pick 1): Jester; Informant; Messen-
ger; Power Source

Demon(Pick 3): Forgetting; Being
Forgotten; Guilt; Hunger; Light

Hobbies (fill in during play):

□□□

□□□

□□□

Experience

□□□ add a Creep move

□□□ +1 to any stat

□□□ add a Creep move

□□□ +1 to any stat

□□□ add a move from another
playbook

□□□ add a Creep move

- On a 10+ you steal their shadow and hold it indefinitely. You can release that shadow at any time to summon one of their demons. You decide which demon.
- On a 7-9 as for the 10+, but the GM will decide which of their demons is released.
- On a 6- their demon comes looking for you both

Black Leech

When a memory is killed or lost to the world and you add them to the chorus ROLL+WIZARD.

- On a 10+ choose three from the list below
- On a 7-9 choose two:
 - You can teleport between shadow
 - You can create a pool of darkness
 - You can fill a room with silence
 - You don't lose an identity point (-1 to Identity otherwise)
- these powers last until you next lose health
- On a 6- the fragment tears free and flies off into the dungeon as a seedling rival creep. Take one damage

Grey Matter

When you wrap around someone ROLL + THIEF:

- On a 10+ choose three from the list below
- On a 7-9 choose two:
 - Temporarily increase their WIZARD by +1
 - You can enter their dreams and memories
 - They can use your powers from BLACK LEECH
 - You don't heal them one health at the cost of two damage to yourself.

Greek Chorus

At the end of a session where you entertained the table by playing the chorus voices too MARK XP

Undead

I've waited a long time. The only way to power in this place is a dead man's shoes.

Start with two moves and two artifacts

Artifacts

At the start of the game choose two different artifacts. Add a descriptive tag (or get with the GM for to customise further) As long as the artifact is in your possession you gain that statistic bonus. If the artifact is out of your possession you have a sense of roughly where it is.:

- Choose two different rows:

- Shield (+1 Fighter)
- Spear (+1 Fighter)
- Staff/Crown/Necklace (+1 Wizard)
- Instrument (+1 Bard)
- Undead Pet (+1 Thief)

- Choose a tag from each row

- Religious; Bone; Compact; Fine; Bronze
- Cursed; Golden; Large; Ancient; Delicate

Reservoir of Power

In a high stakes situation where the artifact's tag may help, you may double that artifact's stat bonus and choose one:

- Someone recognises the artifact, and wants it
- The reservoir is exhausted. You can't do this again until the next long rest
- The dungeon presses in

Name: Azalgot; Sssinter; Kn'kle; Leech; Vertebran

Appearance (choose 1-3): Skeletal; rotting corpse; wrappings; glowing runes; armoured; pierced; crawling with maggots

Statistics: WIZARD +2 FIGHTER +1.

Job(Pick 1): Honour Guard; Sentinel; Smith; Channeler

Demon(Pick 3): Chaos; Being Human; Logical paradoxes; Growth; Theft

Hobbies (fill in during play):

□□□
□□□
□□□

Experience

□□□ add an Undead move
□□□ +1 to any stat
□□□ add an Undead move
□□□ +1 to any stat
□□□ add a move from another playbook
□□□ add an Undead move

Necromancy

When you utilise necromancy ROLL + BODIES RITUALLY PREPARED:

- On a 10+ Get three hold
- On a 7-9 Get two hold. Spend hold one for one to:
 - heal 1 damage to yourself
 - Raise a short lived minion (lasts until next long rest)
 - Blind someone with terrifying visions
 - Hold a room fast with rotting limbs for a scene
- On a 6 one of the bodies rises again as an enemy

Rise Again

When you draw on dark magic to ignore damage ROLL+WIZARD

- On a 10+ Get three hold
- On a 7-9 Get two hold. Spend hold one for one to:
 - reduce damage received by one
 - take the damage now, but you can piece yourself back together afterwards
 - they'll mistake you for dead if you lie still
 - you don't desperately crave blood, brains or flesh. Otherwise you must satisfy this hunger before you can make this move again.
- On a 6 take the damage and the hunger

Armoury

When you lend another player an artifact they don't get the same bonus but may reroll a failed roll that uses the appropriate stat. You can't reroll a reroll.

All is Dust

When you use a player character or a friendly NPC's dead body in a necromantic ritual mark Xp.

Horde

Hey Grog! You owe me a favour. I bet Skibl three squid he couldn't run across the backs of those clockwork alligators faster than Mibl, I bet Mibl the same and they both got eaten. I told Gnolly you were the best clockwork alligator repair gremlin in the business, and I reckon that now you've got that contract, you owe me a favour. Now I need to get into Gnolly's safe....

Start with two moves and the Bickering Swarm

The Bickering Swarm

Members of the Horde are rarely alone. At any one time there's a member of the horde present for every two health points you have (rounding up). When you take two damage, someone just died, hopefully both gruesomely and entertainingly. When you heal two health points, make a note and have a cousin or niece of the current Face of the Horde turn up out of a chimney, toilet, locked box or similar when convenient. You aren't the leader of the entire horde, but whichever member you are currently focusing on as the the face for your character is probably quite well respected. By Horde standards anyway.

Maslov's Challenge

At the start of the session ROLL+THIEF on behalf of the wider horde to see what they are dealing with. Whatever the challenge, if you help MARK XP:

- On a 10+, gain a reroll in your pocket for this session and choose one challenge:

- └ a wedding
- └ a trade war
- └ a lost child

Name: Scumpit; Noerag; Hurly; Dai
Drawpaw; Gnolly

Appearance (choose 1-3): Scaly; slimy;
hairy; well-dressed; hat-wearing; long
fingered

Statistics: THIEF +3. +1 and -1 to any of
the others

Job(Pick 1): Tinker; Herder; Hawker;
Dung-farmer

Demon(Pick 3): Loneliness; Cannibal-
ism; Mother-in-Law; Predators; Disease

Hobbies (fill in during play):

□□□□

□□□□

□□□□

Experience

□□□□ add a Horde move

□□□□ +1 to any stat

□□□□ add a Horde move

□□□□ +1 to any stat

□□□□ add a move from another
playbook

□□□□ add a Horde move

- On a 7-9 gain a reroll in your pocket for this session and choose one problem:

- a predator
- bandits
- a flood

- On a 6- choose one desperate need:

- food
- safe rooms
- medicine

Yes Boss

When you call on the entire horde to help with something **ROLL+BARD**

- On a 10+ choose two bonuses:

- They turn up in big numbers
- They are well equipped for the task
- They'll stick around for a bit, even if there's trouble

- On a 7-9 choose a bonus from above and complication from below

- You owe a massive favour
- They bring trouble with them
- They are undisciplined kleptomaniacs

- On a 6- choose one bonus but the GM chooses the complication

It's a trap!

When you spend time working to make or understand a trap **ROLL+THIEF**

- On a 10+ choose three:

- the trigger is reliable and in your control
- the trap is well hidden
- the trap resets automatically
- the pit/ropes stops people escaping
- the gas/darts has a room wide effect
- the trap does not inflict permanent damage
- the trap can be dismantled for a useful part

- On a 7-9 choose two

- On a 6- it goes hilariously wrong. Take two damage.

Gossipmonger

When another player character asks you about an NPC ROLL+THIEF

- On a 10+ ask the GM three:
 - What was the NPC asking around for at the market?
 - What did they last buy?
 - What do they think is secret?
 - Who are they connected to?
 - What do they have of value?
- On a 7-9 ask one
- On a 6- ask one but be prepared for the worst

Filofax

You know the Horde, and the Horde knows everyone. When you want to hire someone, name them, describe them and ROLL+ITEMS
IN PAYMENT

- On a 10+ choose three:
 - They are scary powerful
 - They won't ask for extra payment
 - They are available immediately
 - They don't have a grudge against a player character
- On a 7-9 choose two
- On a 6- the message gets confused. The GM will say who you get instead.

Beast

Big and old and alone. For ages past. For now.

Start with two moves:

Lifecycle

You have a countdown stat. It starts at 35. You can reroll a failed roll but the total of the new roll is subtracted from the countdown. When the countdown hits zero you will (choose two):

- die of old age
- give birth
- need to return to the spawning pool
- crave a mate
- enter a mindless hunger frenzy
- change into a radically different form
- change sex

Unleash instincts

When you are in fear of your life WIZARD +1

Arcane Bridle

You have a movement skill suited to your environment (choose one when you create your character)

- └ flyer
- └ climber
- └ swimmer and diver
- └ burrower

Name: Aaargh; the great clawed beast; smell-in-the-dark; white-wyrm-o-the-well; Gulp; Bessie; Danke

Appearance (choose 1-3): extra legs, albino, bedraggled, too many eyes; prehistoric; warty; sleek; corpulent

Statistics: FIGHTER +2, THIEF +1, HEALTH+3. Your max health is 12

Job(Pick 1): Trophy pet; Native; Fresh Meat; Haulage

Demon(Pick 3): Fire; suffocation; open spaces; master's displeasure; bells

Hobbies (fill in during play):

□□□
□□□
□□□

Experience

□□□ add a Beast move

□□□ +1 to any stat

□□□ add a Beast move

□□□ +1 to any stat

□□□ add a move from another playbook

□□□ add a beast move

think tadpole to frog, caterpillar to butterfly or the way a flatfish turns sideways and their eyes migrate to the same side of their head. It's natural and important and maybe scary for you, but should really change how your companions interact with you
optional: How do you communicate?
Pick two

- with noises
- with body language
- with limited speech
- with telepathy
- with magic auras
- with a tap code

└ leaper

Someone trained you as a mount (who?). If a player character orders you to carry them, treat as an automatic 7-9 result. Otherwise
ROLL+IDENTITY:

- On a 10+ you move well together. The rider can carry out actions while riding you and can only be hit by ranged attacks
- On a 7-9 they are safe while on you. They can only be hit by ranged attacks
- On a 6- you remember the beatings. Your rider will fall off at the worst possible time.

Cat and Mouse

You remember being hunted before (by who?). Whether you are the cat or the mouse now, ROLL + THIEF:

- On a 10+ get all three
 - └ You can choose the moment of ambush
 - └ Another player character won't get hurt
 - └ You will be the cat this time
- On a 7-9 choose one
- On a 6- choose one, but you are left very vulnerable to a new threat

optional: How do you feed? Pick one

- stalking prey
- lure and trapping
- chase and kill
- carrion eater
- scavenging bully
- rubbish picker
- wandering grazer
- gather and store
- ambient flow filter

Around and About

At the beginning of the session ROLL+THIEF

- On a 10+ hold one+1
- On a 7-9 hold one
- At any time you or the GM can spend your hold to have you already be there, with or without clear explanation. If your hold was one+1, take +1 to your next move now. Mark Xp when the hold is used.
- On a 6- the GM holds one and can spend it to have you there already but somehow pinned, caught or trapped.

Construct

Dolem is. Dolem does. Dolem thinks. Dolem isn't.

Astral Projection

When you deal with an exciting unknown ROLL+WISDOM:

- On a 10+ you may state three things about the unknown's future
- On a 7-9 you can state a single thing.
- The GM must make a good faith effort to have those things come true
- On a 6- you may state one thing. The GM will later reveal why it is true and bad for you.

Transformation

When you want to mimic some everyday fantasy dungeon object
ROLL + THIEF:

- On a 10+ choose two:
 - └ You cannot be spotted (otherwise you leave a telltale)
 - └ You can transform in the blink of an eye (otherwise it takes some time)
 - └ You can go up or down a size when you transform (otherwise you remain the same size and weight)
- On a 7-9 choose one.
- On a 6- your disguise is poor, but you can do something before you are spotted if you move quickly.

Name: Stone; Furnit; Dresser; Crank;
Mallard

Appearance (choose 1-3): polished;
china; clockwork; runic panels;
stonework; rubble;

Statistics: THIEF +2, FIGHTER +1. +1
and -1 to any of the others

Job(Pick 1): Savant; Servant; Hunter;
Quartermaster

Demon(Pick 3): Replacement; Corro-
sion; Lies; Mirrors; Innocence destroyed

Hobbies (fill in during play):

□□□
□□□
□□□

Experience

□□□ add a Construct move
□□□ +1 to any stat
□□□ add a Construct move
□□□ +1 to any stat
□□□ add a move from another
playbook
□□□ add a Construct move

Elemental Engine

When you consume a large quantity of an appropriate fuel, ROLL + THIEF

- On a 10+ hold 3
- On a 7-9+ hold 1
- On a 6- hold 1 but suffer appropriate symptoms of indigestion at the worst possible time.
- spend hold 1 for 1 as required for a scene
 - └ +1 FIGHTER Consume flammable fuel or metal items
 - └ +1 THIEF Consume fabrics, inks or poisons
 - └ +1 WIZARD Consume unstable magical or radioactive items

Simulacrum

When you pretend to be an NPC you know well enough to simulate ROLL+THIEF

- On a 10+ you get all three:
 - └ Another player character can ask what the the NPC wants and you can give an detailed answer ¹⁴
 - └ You can stop the simulation at will (otherwise it takes a bit of time or might come back)
 - └ The simulation doesn't act on it's own desires
- On a 7-9 choose 1
- On a 6- You get the simulation up and running, but something else happens before you can use it, or turn it off.

¹⁴ Collaborate with the GM, but the answer should be accurate

A million monkeys

When you have time, safety and your weight in paper and ink, you may write continuously for a day and night. For this feat of endurance, ROLL+FIGHTER:

- On a 10+ you have discovered a new valuable spell
- On a 7-9 treat the result as a 10+ WIZARD BASIC MOVE.
- On a 6- you discover a new spell, but the results have not become apparent yet

Magus

"They said I was a madman! A fool! Well, who's the fool now?"
start with two moves.

Grand Ritual

At the start of the session describe your new grand ritual planned effects to the GM. They will say "sure, but first..." They pick three, stringing them together with an and:

- It'll take many attempts
- It needs wild ingredients
- It needs travel to
- It needs help from
- It'll be weak or unreliable
- It'll put you all in serious danger
- You'll need to make first

When you accomplish two thirds of the requirements MARK XP.
When you hit all three, you can accomplish it as agreed.

Henchlings

You have a bunch of creepy and loyal henchlings. When you order them to watch another player character or NPC ROLL+BARD:

- On a 10+ they report back in time for you to interfere
- On a 7-9 choose one:
 - things get messy
 - you are clearly to blame
 - it is too late by the time you know
- On a 6- the target of the watchers chooses one for you

Name: Curly; Ralla; Davos; Thuy; Wavv
Title: magnificent; wise; summoner;
astral; runelord; calligrapher; weft

Appearance (choose 1-3): skinny;
bulging eyes; things tied in hair; tat-
tered cloak; pointy shoes; grand hat

Statistics: WIZARD +3. +1 and -1 to any
of the others

Job(Pick 1): Bureaucrat; Hermit; Al-
chemist; Rival to the old master

Demon(Pick 3)Old age; ambition; blood;
homelessness; betrayal

Hobbies (fill in during play):

□□□
□□□
□□□

Experience

□□□ add a Magus move
□□□ +1 to any stat
□□□ add a Magus move
□□□ +1 to any stat
□□□ add a move from another
playbook
□□□ add a Magus move

Magus poke around the basic rules of reality, so a grand ritual might be about reversing gravity, making everyone young again, brain swapping, making something come alive, awakening a dark god, transfusing experience ect. The player of the Magus takes on some of the responsibility that is normally the GM's to meet the social contract, to ensure the people around the table are all having a good time, even as their characters are all shrunk to rat size.

Meddler's curse

When you curse someone from the depths of your soul ROLL + WIZARD:

- On a 10+ the curse sticks, hindering them in an ironic reflection of what they desire most. (GM's or owning player's call)
- On a 7-9 the curse happens but is short lived
- On a 6- the curse twists. It attacks what they desire directly.

Familiar

You have a familiar. Name them, describe them, say what body part drives them. When you let them loose to satisfy their impulse, MARK XP. When you send them on a mission, ROLL+WIZARD

- On a 10+ hold three Spend hold one for one for the familiar to use basic moves (their statistics are zero, but they can receive help elsewhere)
- On a 7-9 hold one
- On a 6- hold one but take 1 damage as you invest them with more power than intended.

Sanctum

You have a sanctum, a workshop, library or pocket universe. Choose four good things and two bad. These are all about fictional positioning, magical equivalents of announcing you climb the wall using crampons and a rope compared to just climbing it. In your sanctum, the things you should try to pull off should be big and dramatic and force the attention of the rest of the dungeon. Otherwise, what's the point?

- Good things

- guardian spirit
- extensive library
- warded prison
- scrying tools
- gold seams
- herb/fungus garden
- exotic collection

- comfortable bed
 - totems
 - small forge
 - alchemical glasswork
 - deep freeze storage
- Bad things
 - Cramped for space
 - hard for you to access
 - dangerous neighbours
 - too well known
 - infested
 - coveted
 - power surges

Dregs

"think this place is bad? you should see the town."
start with two moves and an unruly gang

Smugglers

When you return from secretly selling items to a contact in town (who?) **ROLL+ITEMS SOLD**:

- On a 10+ get three hold. Spend hold one for one to drink your cut of the goods and get +1 **WIZARD** OR +1 **BARD** for the scene.
- On a 7-9 get one hold
- On a 6- get one hold but a greedy party of adventurers is tracking you.

Bandits

When you and your gang launch an ambush on the road **ROLL+THIEF**

- On a 10+ your preparations are clever. Take +1 **THIEF** into the scene.
- On a 7-9 your preparations are crude. Take +1 **FIGHTER** into the scene
- On a 6- it turns out one of your gang is a traitor

Drunks

You have a vice, a reason you are not welcome in surface society. Choose one and answer what the GM asks you about it:

- intoxicating drugs
- gambling with body parts
- socially unacceptable food ¹⁵

Name: Black; Bator; Don; Felix; Esper
Appearance (choose 1-3): eyepatch; whipmarks; brandings; rich clothes; curled hair; riding cloak

Statistics: **THIEF**+2, **BARD**+1 . +1 and -1 to any of the others

Job(Pick 1): Doorkeeper; Ambassador; Smuggler; Scout

Demon(Pick 3) Winter; religion; parasites; addiction; the noose

Hobbies (fill in during play):

□□□□
□□□□
□□□□

Experience

□□□□ add a Dregs move
□□□□ +1 to any stat
□□□□ add a Dregs move
□□□□ +1 to any stat
□□□□ add a move from another playbook
□□□□ add a Dregs move

¹⁵ this is socially unacceptable to the surface society. It could range from cannibalism to opening your boiled egg at the big end. This is set as much by the tone of the game and the stomach of your table. Be aware of the social contract and don't trample on people's phobias. Refer to ?? for more guidance.

- socially unacceptable relationships
- a need to speak truth to the powerful

When you have indulged in your chosen vice heavily and you fail a roll, accept the effects of the fail, but you can try to succeed on the roll one more time before the story moves on. This means you can have a 10+ result and a 6- result at the same time.

Gambler's tarot

When your gang play dice, cards or bingo and you have them wondering aloud about things, ROLL + THIEF

- On a 10+ ask three questions. The GM will answer but ask what it looks like in the cards, dice results ect.:

- |— How close is my enemy?
- |— Where's my path forward?
- |— Am I safe right now?
- |— What should I be on the lookout for?
- |— Where is a tempting target?

- On a 7-9 ask one
- On a 6- ask one anyway but you might not like the answer

Mischief

You have a wild talent, mutation or racial trait. Choose one:

- People can't break eye contact with you
- When you are making music, they want to give you gifts
- When you shake hands, something of theirs appears in your bag

needs testing, and possibly switching for a more traditional move. It breaks the conversation pattern (but does mimic a drunks's conversation pattern... Playability is more important than meta-jokes though

Plant

"You little warm hairy things, always running, always in a hurry. Oh sorry, I was talking to the rat."

Green Fingers

You are the guardian of the mystic pool/golden tree/ holy compost heap or similar. When another player character bathes in the pool and you channel the magic $ROLL + WIZARD$

- On a 10+ they regrow a missing limb, gain something for their hobby or achieve total calm
- On a 7-9 they gain something for their hobby or regrow superficial damage like fingers or hair
- On a 6- they gain an obsession with plants as a new hobby, or a green mutation.

Secret Garden

When you look for the secrete garden, open a door and $ROLL+WIZARD$

- On a 10+ choose two:
 - The garden is peaceful and deserted
 - A threat does not follow you in
 - When you leave the gate opens somewhere new and safe
- On a 7-9 choose one
- On a 6- The GM makes a move on any or all of them.

Herbaceous

Your leaves, spores, pods or other minor body parts have an intense experience on others. If they ingest them they'll have a very trippy vision supplied by the GM. Knowledge is knowledge, right?

Name: Gren; Mush; Sporth; Dryer;
Cactus Jack

Appearance (choose 1-3): tree stump;
toadstool; colourful pot; long shoots;
lopsided face; mossy hair; bright fruits

Statistics: $WIZARD+2$, $BARD+1$. $+1$ and -1 to any of the others

Job(Pick 1): Herbalist; Farmer; Librarian; Assassin

Demon(Pick 3) drought; vegetarians;
landslide; butterflies; blades

Hobbies (fill in during play):

□□□
□□□
□□□

Experience

□□□ add a Plant move
□□□ $+1$ to any stat
□□□ add a Pant move
□□□ $+1$ to any stat
□□□ add a move from another
playbook
□□□ add a Plant move

Dryad Dust

When you use your perfume, spores or pheromones to influence a group ROLL+BARD.

- On a 10+ the group is swayed by your words. Player characters get a +1 in their pocket to follow your suggestion
- On a 7-9 the group is swayed by words but also agitated, passions inflamed or spoiling for a fight (GM to detail)
- On a 6- the group is agitated, spoiling for a fight. Player characters get +1 to attacks on you.

One with the Leaf

You have a countdown stat. It starts at 35. You can reroll a failed roll but the total of the new roll is subtracted from the countdown. When the countdown hits zero you will (choose two now):

- flower, then die
- implant children in others
- die back to a tiny version of yourself ¹⁶
- find somewhere to hibernate
- eat, spread and grow voraciously
- grow extra sexual organs
- change into a radically different form

¹⁶ like a plant cutting or a twig. One Hp

Fey

"May the road not rise up and hit you in the face: Ancient fey blessing"

Oracle

At the start of the session ROLL+NUMBER OF PLAYER CHARACTERS YOU ARE TOUCHING

- On a 10+ you may ask "What will happen to ..." for each character you are touching
- On a 7-9+ you can only ask for one character
- On a 6- The omens are bleak. Everyone involved takes -1 ongoing until a demon is faced.

Rumours

You have a sideline at a late night tavern. Name three regulars and your best drink. When other player character buy drinks at your place and ask for rumours regarding someone/something ; choose two and let the GM fill in the details:

- └ "I know ... bought it"
- └ "They've been hanging around with ..."
- └ "I hear ... is selling, under the counter like."
- └ "Ach, they did ... a terrible wrong."
- └ "They are pulling a stunt at ...'s place"

Bindings

When someone breaks a promise to you, name them and two other NPCs and ROLL+BARD

Name: Barley; Driski; Grappa; Kalvas; Potchy; Sarky

Appearance (choose 1-3): slender frame; pot-bellied; extended fingers; huge beard;

Statistics: BARD+3 . +1 and -1 to any of the others

Job(Pick 1): Judge; Innkeeper; Food-stall; Fisherman

Demon(Pick 3) broken promises; iron; cats; drowning; poverty

Hobbies (fill in during play):

□□□□

□□□□

□□□□

Experience

□□□□ add a Fey move

□□□□ +1 to any stat

□□□□ add a Fey move

□□□□ +1 to any stat

□□□□ add a move from another playbook

□□□□ add a Fey move

- On a 10+ choose two:
 - They'll get involved in a fight
 - The target will be stolen from
 - Magic will keep pushing them together
- On a 7-9 Choose one:
- On a 6- Choose one, but the bindings go both ways. The Target may choose 1 with you as the target.

Epic Tales

When you narrate your thoughts and actions as though you were the star of an epic tale, you can distract reality by your words. Any roll totalling less than 5 may be rerolled., although reality sticks the second time.

Special Reserve

When you serve something special from your supplies ROLL+WIZARD:

- On a 10+ they are immune to one thing for the next scene. Specify it.
- On a 7-9: as 10+ but also choose a side effect:
 - rapidly growing hair
 - uncontrollable flatulence
 - slurring drunk
 - tongue temporarily three feet long
- On a 6-: As 7-9 and you are fresh out of that special.

Host

"Little man. I have lived inside a dying star and ridden a meteorite to your planet. Put that sword away before you embarrass us both."

You are an otherworldly being, angel, djinn, devil or other, possessing a mundane worshiper. Try not to get them killed, you'd need a new Host body.

Third Eye

When you are challenged by someone also possessed, under magical influence or similarly strange aura TAKE +1 TO WIZARD rolls regarding them. If you are not sure if this triggers, ask the GM "what does my third eye see?"

Fleshbound

When you draw on more power from your patron, take 1-3 damage, MARK XP then ROLL+DAMAGE TAKEN.

- On a 10+ choose three:
 - You sprout wings
 - You can pull your favoured weapon from the air
 - You impress or terrify beholders
 - You don't permanently damage your host
- On a 7-9 choose two
- On a 6- the energies wrack your host warping them. Ask the Gm what this means.

Fanatical fans

You were summoned by a cult within the dungeon. When you lead them in worship TAKE +1 BARD for that scene. Choose why you distrust the cult that summoned you:

Name: Aspinal; Hammerflist; Shire; Izfr; Glockenspiel

Appearance (choose 1-3): hunchbacked; oversized jaw; unearthly beauty; piercing gaze; ritual tattoos

Statistics: FIGHTER+2 BARD+1 . +1 hobby inherited from your host

Mission(Pick 1): Reverse status quo; Judge and execute; Spread the word; Protect the favoured

Demon(Pick 3) the competition; mirrors; stone; nudity; judgmental believers

Hobbies (fill in during play):

□□□
□□□
□□□

Experience

□□□ add a Host move
□□□ +1 to any stat
□□□ add a Host move
□□□ +1 to any stat
□□□ add a move from another playbook
□□□ add a Host move

- they have an ambitious leader
- your host was unwilling
- they worship other things too
- they don't respect your agency.

Choose why the cult remains important

- large number of followers
- well armed and dangerous
- master of secrete passageways and stealth
- control a key area or choke point

Belief injection

When someone swears an oath to you, even at sword point, MARK XP and ROLL+OATHS RECEIVED :

- On a 10+ choose 2:
 - mark the oath givers as yours visibly and permanently
 - utterly destroy something with a touch
 - Sanctify the room as yours, painful to the servants of other powers.
- On a 7-9 choose 1
- On a 6- your action attracts the attention of the higher powers

Vene, Vidi

When you invade somebody's mind ROLL+FIGHTER

- On a 10+ you take control of the body, doing as you will with your old host. Update your health stat to match your new body.
- On a 7-9 you take control of their body but they take control of your former host. Both of you update health as required.
- On a 6- they throw you back out, leaving you weak and vulnerable.

Elemental Ooze

Hybrid

On Magic

In the world of *Escape the Dungeon*, brave heroes explore the forgotten corners of the world, slaying creatures and collecting treasure. They often try to kill the player characters for 'loot and experience'. How on earth does this work?

The world is steeped in magic. Magic is energy, throbbing potential for things to happen. It is unstable and tends to decay into something else quite quickly. Gold is the pure element that happens to be what a lot of magic turns into. This explains why town magic is so expensive, as the wizard is literally turning the gold back into raw magic to be infused into the spell. This process works in reverse too, and anywhere there is a large amount of magic you will have gold crystallizing out of the air. Since the dungeon largely runs on magic, you can see why heroes are attracted.

The second part of the surface dwellers' metaphysics of gold is that it can be transmuted into Levelup and back. A quantity of gold can be turned into new and terrible powers as the magic makes the target more than they were before. Traditionally, this type of personal growth up is achieved by killing, pushing things through the doorway from life to death. The bigger the door they need, the more Levelup you get. Levelup is the same thing as gold, gold is the same thing as magic, and magic changes the world.

The third part is the balance. The world has not ended in a runaway explosion of extinctions, tidal waves of gold boiling off into abstract gibbering shapes and fireballs. Magic is conserved. An increase of the amount of gold in the world must mean that the amount of free magic has decreased or that some things have died to keep the magic level the same. Or, local imbalance is corrected more directly.

In this world, large concentrations of magic create drama and gold. Large concentrations of gold leak magic, but also Levelup, normally in the form of tough, angry creatures. A rat that sleeps on a gold coin might be a giant rat next week. Sewers under rich cities are dangerous places. Owning a bank vault or being a tax collector is a scary proposition. Monsters don't carry gold, some of their life force crystallises into it when some idiot hero stabs them. Dragons sleep

on piles of gold to absorb the magic they need to exist. Summoning a major spell can cause nearby gold to vanish, and if there's not enough gold, for life force to get sucked out of the wizard or someone nearby. A hero levelling up is drinking up magic that the dungeon needs to survive. Gold stolen and spent in the town is magic lost to the dungeon. A powerful monster is a significant investment of resources by the dungeon, but worth it if it stops some handsome thief crashing the local economy.

Game Master Playbook

The agenda and principles again:

Agenda

- Agenda
 - Play to find out what happens
 - Make the players' character's lives not boring
 - Subvert that which is taken from granted

The Agenda is the key thing. If you, as GM, are in doubt what to do, choose the thing that follows the agenda. It's not a bad guide for players either.

Principles

- Principles
 - don't waste your players' time
 - the dungeon pressures to conform
 - take tropes to their logical, nonsensical extreme
 - sprinkle details of everyday fantasy everywhere
 - make the dungeon seem fantastically real
 - name everyone, make everyone rational within their role
 - build a bigger dungeon through play, not plot
 - create interesting dilemmas not interesting traps
 - address yourself to the characters not players
 - make your move, but never speak its name
 - ask loaded questions and build on the answers
 - sometimes, reflect a question back upon the players

Designer Notes

Rule 1 - No Exceptions Rule 2 - Needs to work for a one shot with strangers at a conference Rule 3 - Evoke, not mimic, old school fighting fantasy Rule 4 - Support the GM Rule 5 - Every mechanical part needs to justify its existence Rule 6 - Every move needs to relate back to theme or the mechanics Rule 7 - No stat substitution moves

on Playbooks a) Does this playbook have a niche. Is it overshadowed? b) Is the playbook fun and coherent? c) Does the playbook offer levers for the GM to pull? d) Does the playbook offer a second, different way to play that character?

On Moves i) Is the trigger only going to trigger when it is important? ii) does a miss move the story forward with something interesting? iii) Does a success? iv)

Formatting: Only stats use digits. Hold is spent in one or twos not 1 or 2. Add explanation for hold or choice from list under the first option that uses it. All moves to use the same format of trigger, 10+, 7-9 then 6-

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