

SHADOW^{OF THE} WEIRD WIZARD

QUICK PLAY

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QUICK PLAY

This Quick Play guide offers you a glimpse of *Shadow of the Weird Wizard*, my newest fantasy roleplaying to make use of the rules first introduced in *Shadow of the Demon Lord*. The two games share some things in common, but *Weird Wizard* eschews the foulness and horror of the original and enables you to play heroes charged with protecting peoples fleeing the violence and upheaval of their homelands as they search for new homes in the borderlands. Facing the monsters and magical mayhem created by the strange magician, characters have their work cut out for them.

This booklet is not a complete game. It gives you just enough to play through a quest. You'll find some pre-generated characters first, followed by an abbreviated set of rules, and the quest at the end. All this is to give you a taste of what my game offers—broad customization, short campaigns, focused quests, and streamlined rules designed for maximum accessibility.

KRUNK

You belong to the **woodwose** ancestry, a people with a history steeped in blood and violence, who, in an effort to make amends for their part in the killing of faeries, retreated into the wilds, to tend and nurture nature. You have an enormous size and stature: 8 feet tall and 400 pounds. Thick, coarse reddish-brown fur covers your body, and you have a pair of curling ram horns extending from the sides of your head. You spent many years as a **recluse**, and know how to forage for provisions and find clean water. You have since chosen to follow the **fighter** path.

Defense 9, Health 22

Strength 13 (+3), Agility 9 (-1)

Intellect 10 (+0), Will 11 (+1)

TRAITS AND TALENTS

Languages Common, Runic (a guttural language spoken by your people)

Size 1, Speed 5

Equipment You have a battle harness, great hammer, backpack, waterskin, provisions, 5 torches, a tinderbox, and a pouch containing 4 cp.

Hulking You make Strength rolls with 1 boon and impose 1 bane on rolls made against your Strength. You make Agility rolls with 1 bane and grant 1 boon on rolls made against your Agility. (This trait is included in your rules.)

Great Hammer Use an action to attack one creature or object within 3 yards. Make a Strength (+3) roll with 1 boon against the target's Defense. On a success, the target takes 3d6 damage or 4d6 damage to a target object.

Critical Success When you get a critical success, you can roll the extra damage twice and use the highest amount. If the target creature is size 2 or smaller, it also makes a Strength roll. On a failure, you can either push the target 1d6 yards from you or knock it prone.

Engage the Enemy When an enemy moves to a space within a number of yards of you equal to your speed, you can use a reaction to move up to your speed. If you can reach the enemy, you can attack it and, if the enemy takes damage from the attack, its speed drops to 0 until the start of its next turn.

ZEA

An ardent follower of the High One, you protect others against the evil that stalks the borderlands. You were a **fundamentalist** in your faith, so it was only natural for you to become a **priest**.

Defense 17, Health 14

Strength 11 (+1), Agility 10 (+0)

Intellect 10 (+0), Will 12 (+2)

TRAITS AND TALENTS

Languages Common

Size 1, Speed 5

Equipment You have mail armor, a shield, mace, backpack, waterskin, provisions, 5 torches, tinderbox, 5 sticks of incense, 1 poultice, a book containing uncommon knowledge about the High One, and a pouch containing 3 cp.

Magical Traditions Invocation, Protection

A Cut Above You make luck rolls with 1 boon.

Holy Symbol You have a symbol of your faith, spiritual beliefs, or ethical system. If you lose this symbol, you can fashion a new one after you rest. The symbol has 1 charge. You can expend the charge from the symbol to make use of the following properties. Once you expend the charge, you replenish your supply after you rest.

- **Holy Smite** When your roll to attack results in a success, you can expend 1 charge to deal an extra 3d6 damage.
- **Holy Healing** Use an action and expend 1 charge to enable yourself or one ally within 5 yards to heal 3d6 damage.
- **Holy Denunciation** Use an action and expend 1 charge to present your Holy Symbol at one creature that can see you, hear you, and is within 10 yards. Make a Will roll against the target's Will. You roll with 1 boon if you know the target is a demon, faerie, fiend, spirit, or undead. On a success, the target becomes held (luck ends).

Mace Use an action to attack one creature or object within 1 yard. Make a Strength (+1) roll against the target's Defense. On a success, the target takes 1d6 damage.

Battle Blessing You can use an action, or a reaction when you attack, to grant yourself and each ally within 5 yards 1 boon on rolls to attack for 1 minute. Until this effect ends, the targets are also immune to the frightened affliction. Once you use this talent, you lose access to it for 1 minute.

Mystic Ward You can use an action to place a mystic ward on a creature within 5 yards. The ward imposes 1 bane on rolls to attack the creature for 1 minute. If the creature takes damage, it reduces the damage taken by 1d6 (minimum 0), and the effect ends early.

Prayer You can use a reaction when you or a creature within 5 yards makes an attribute roll to magically grant 1 boon to the roll.

AYM

You belong to the **dragonet** ancestry, a people of miniature dragons found throughout the borderlands. You were considered a wise **philosopher**. To gain a better understanding of the world's workings, you set out from your homeland and have become a **mage**.

Defense 13, **Health** 12

Strength 9 (–1), **Agility** 10 (+0)

Intellect 12 (+2), **Will** 12 (+2)

Languages Arcane, Common

Size ½, **Speed** 5 (Fly)

Equipment You have a dagger.

Magical Traditions Aeromancy, Skullduggery

Magical Implement You have a ring that serves as your implement. The implement holds 2 charges.

Fragile Flier You lose the ability to Fly while you are injured.

Prehensile Tail Your tail functions as an additional limb and you can use it to grasp small objects and wield off-hand weapons.

Dagger Use an action to attack one creature or object within 1 yard or 5 yards by throwing the dagger. Make an Agility (+0) roll against the target's Defense. On a success, the target takes 1d6 damage.

Mage Sense You can use an action to expand your senses so that you can perceive the presence or absence of magic within 5 yards for 1 minute. If a creature, object, or space is under the effects of magic or created by it and is within range, you know it.

Harness Lightning You can use an action to call down a bolt of lightning to strike you, but rather than being harmed, you become energized for 1 hour or until you end this effect. The effect also ends if you become unconscious. Once you use this magical talent, you lose access to it until after you rest. The talent grants you the following benefits:

- You take no damage from lightning.
- You emit dim light.
- Any creature that touches you or deals damage to you with a weapon made of metal makes a luck roll. On a failure, the creature takes 1d6 damage.
- When you attack with natural weapons or an unarmed strike, you roll with 1 boon against metal targets and targets wearing medium or heavy armor. Your attacks with natural weapons, unarmed strikes, and metal weapons deal 1d6 damage from the lightning in addition to the normal damage.
- You can use an action to hurl lightning at one creature or object within 20 yards. Make an Intellect or Will roll against the target's Agility. You roll with 1 boon against a metal target or a target wearing medium or heavy armor. On a success, the target takes 4d6 damage. Once you use this aspect of this talent, you lose access to it for 1 minute.

Hide in Plain Sight Use an action to become hidden for 1 hour. You ignore the requirements for becoming hidden. The effect ends early if you harm another creature, run, or speak at a volume greater than whisper. You can use this talent once. You regain the use after you rest.

Use Implement You can use your implement to produce either of the following effects by expending 1 charge provided you wield or wear it.

- **Mage Shield** As an action, or a reaction when you are attacked, impose 1 bane on rolls against your Defense and Agility for 1 minute.
- **Mage Strike** As an action, launch a missile of magical energy at one creature or object within 10 yards. Make an Intellect or Will roll against the target's Agility. On a success, the target takes 2d6 damage.

Fire Breath You can use a reaction, when you attack, to spew fire at one creature or object within 5 yards. The target makes an Agility roll. On a failure, it takes 1d6 damage. Once you use this talent, you lose access to it (luck ends).

SPELLS

Unless the rules say otherwise, you can cast each of these spells once and regain the casting after you rest.

Danger Sense For 1 minute, you know the location of each creature within 15 yards, which prevents such creatures from hiding from you. In addition, when a creature succeeds on a roll to attack you, you can use a reaction to make a luck roll. On a success, you turn the success into a failure.

Flee the Scene You can use a reaction to cast this spell when you become injured. You can cast this spell three times. Until the end of your next turn, your Speed increases by 30 and you are Slippery.

Forked Lightning Target one or two creatures or objects within 15 yards. Lightning leaps from your hands and forks into two tines. For each target separately, make a Will roll against its Agility. You roll with 1 boon if the target is made of metal or wears medium or heavy armor. On a success, the target takes 4d6 damage. If the result of the roll is 20 or higher, the target takes an extra 1d6 damage.

Gusting Wind You can cast this spell three times. Target a size 5 space within 30 yards. For 1 minute, strong wind blows into the target space for the duration. Any creature that ends its turn in the target space makes a Strength roll. On a failure, the creature falls prone and then becomes Strength impaired until the end of its next turn.

WHISPER

You belong to the **elf** ancestry, an immortal faerie who comes from a land hidden from mortal eyes. You are a **drifter**, wandering from place to place, taking what catches your eye, and leaving once you feel the pull of the open road. You follow the **rogue** path.

Defense 15, **Health** 14

Strength 11 (+1), **Agility** 13 (+3)

Intellect 10 (+0), **Will** 9 (-1)

Senses Keen Hearing, Keen Vision

Languages Common, Goblin, Sylvan

Size 1, **Speed** 6

Equipment You have leather armor, a small sword, dagger, longbow with ammunition, waterskin, provisions, lock picks, and a pouch containing 6 cp.

Advantageous Strike When you get a success on a roll to attack and you rolled at least 1 boon, you can use this talent to deal an extra 1d6 damage.

Cunning Dodge Whenever you dodge, increase the number of boons granted to your Agility roll by 1 or the number of banes imposed on the roll made against your Defense or Agility by 1.

Trickery When you would make an attribute roll, you can use this talent to roll with 1 boon. Once you use this talent, you lose access to it until the start of your next turn.

Unearthly Grace When you make an Agility or Intellect roll, use this trait to add 10 to the result. You can use this trait once. You regain the use of it after you rest.

Small Sword Use an action to attack one creature or object within 1 yard. Make an Agility (+3) roll against the target's Defense. On a success, the target takes 1d6 damage.

Dagger Use an action to attack one creature or object within 1 yard or 5 yards by throwing the dagger. Make an Agility (+3) roll against the target's Defense. On a success, the target takes 1d6 damage.

Longbow Use an action to attack one creature or object within 30 yards. Make an Agility (+3) roll against the target's Defense. On a success, the target takes 1d6 damage.

Two Weapon Attack Use an action to attack one creature or object within 1 yard using both your small sword and dagger. Make an Agility (+3) roll against the target's Defense. On a success, the target takes 2d6 damage.

SOLDIER V

None other than the Weird Wizard himself constructed you and gave you the semblance of life. You belong to the **clockwork** ancestry. You served as a **guard** in the Forbidden City for many years, and would be there still had not your maker vanished. You have since wandered far and wide, seeking a purpose. You follow the **fighter** path.

Defense 17, **Health** 20

Strength 13 (+3), **Agility** 9 (-1)

Intellect 10 (+0), **Will** 11 (+1)

Languages Common

Immune asleep, poisoned

Size 1, **Speed** 5 (no swimming)

Equipment You have a shield, saber, and a pouch containing 4 cp.

Machine Body You derive no benefit from ingesting substances, including those of a magical nature. To regain lost Health, a creature must use spare parts to repair it.

Grind the Gears On your turn, you can use this trait to gain another use of an action. At the end of the round, make a luck roll. On a failure, you become an ordinary object until a creature uses an action to turn your key, at which point you becomes a creature once again.

Saber Use an action to attack one creature or object within 1 yard. Make a Strength (+3) roll with 1 boon against the target's Defense. On a success, the target takes 1d6 damage.

Critical Success When you get a critical success, you can roll the extra damage twice and use the highest amount.

Engage the Enemy When an enemy moves to a space within a number of yards of you equal to your speed, you can use a reaction to move up to your speed. If you can reach the enemy, you can attack it and, if the enemy takes damage from the attack, its speed drops to 0 until the start of its next turn.

HOW TO PLAY

Here you will find the basic rules for playing *Shadow of the Weird Wizard*. We've trimmed them down so you have what you need to play through the quest that comes with this set and nothing more. If you attempt something not covered here, the Sage (aka GM) can just make something up, using these rules for inspiration.

ATTRIBUTE ROLLS

You make attribute rolls, whenever the Sage decides or the rules instruct you, to determine if an effort to do something succeeds or fails.

ATTRIBUTE MODIFIER

The rules or the Sage tells you which attribute (and thus which modifier) to use for a roll.

TARGET NUMBER

The reason for making the attribute roll determines the target number. Normally, the target number is 10 if no one resists the effort that warranted making the roll. If you roll against a creature or object, the target number is the score of the attribute you are rolling against or the score of the target's Defense.

If you perform an activity resisted by multiple enemies, such as when you attack more than one target at a time, you make one attribute roll per target. In other words, if you attack two targets, you make two attribute rolls, one for each target.

DETERMINE OUTCOME

You determine the outcome by following these steps: Roll a d20, add the modifier for your attribute, and then compare the result to the target number. You get a success if the result equals or exceeds the target number or a failure if it doesn't.

ROLLS TO ATTACK ROLLS AGAINST

Whenever the rules mention a roll or rolls to attack, the rule refers to an attribute roll you make to attack a target. An attack always either involves making an unarmed attack or an attack with a weapon.

When the rules mention a roll against, the rule applies to attribute rolls made against a target's Defense or attribute score, and applies to all such rolls, whether they are attacks, spells, or something else.

BOONS AND BANES

A task you perform by making an attribute roll might be more difficult than it normally would be because of an affliction you suffer, or it might be easier than usual because you're getting aid from someone else. The influence of other factors that might apply when determining the outcome of an action is represented by additional modifiers called boons and banes.

A boon is an advantageous circumstance that improves your chance of success. For each boon that applies, you roll a boon die, which is a d6. You then add the highest number rolled on any one of the d6s to your attribute roll.

A bane is a disadvantage that reduces your chance of success. For each bane that applies, you roll a bane die, which is a d6. You then subtract the highest number rolled on any one of the d6s from your attribute roll.

Boons and banes cancel each other out on a one-for-one basis before any boon dice or bane dice are rolled. If you have 2 boons and 1 bane on the roll for the action you attempt, you roll with 1 boon. If you have 1 boon and 3 banes, you roll with 2 banes.

You count boons and banes separately only if they come from different sources. If one of your abilities grants you 1 boon and a different one grants you 1 boon, you roll with 2 boons. But if you have 1 boon from a specific spell and the same spell is cast on you a second time before the first one ends, you have 1 boon only. Similarly, you might become poisoned from an arrow that struck you and then become Strength impaired by a diabolical spell. You would therefore make Strength rolls with 2 banes, one from the poisoned affliction, and the other from the impaired affliction. See "Afflictions" for more information about how these states work.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE

If you get a success, the rules or the Sage tell you what happens as a result. Similarly, if you fail, there might also be a result. If you succeed on a roll to attack a foe, your attack deals damage. If you succeed on a roll to cast a spell on an enemy, you might deal damage, apply an affliction, or cause something else to happen. If you fail a roll, you might take damage, gain an affliction, or find that the action you attempted is, for now at least, beyond your capabilities to accomplish.

LUCK ROLLS

Sometimes, the rules or Sage calls for a luck roll to see what happens. A luck roll uses no attribute, so it's just a roll of a d20. Since you never make a luck roll against a creature or object, the target is always 10.

(Luck Ends) If you are under the effects of an effect that has the (luck ends) notation, you make a luck roll at the end of the round. If you have multiple (luck ends) effects affecting you, you make the luck roll for each effect, in any order you choose. On a success, the effect ends. On a failure, the effect persists at least until the end of the next round, at which point you repeat the luck roll to end the effect.

You can end a (luck ends) effect with a successful use of Overcome.

DEFENSE

Defense shows how reflexes, combat training, instinct, and protective equipment contribute to a creature or object's ability to escape harm from attacks. All creatures and objects have a Defense score and attackers use the score as the target number for their attribute rolls. Defense scores range from 0 to 25. A creature or object without means to protect itself from an attack has a Defense 0.

Natural Defense All creatures and objects capable of defending themselves have an natural Defense score. This score is usually 10. Your path determines your natural Defense score. Paths can increase your score, as can magic effects. If you wear armor, you replace your natural Defense score with the number granted by the armor. If you use a shield, you increase your armored Defense score or natural Defense by the indicated number.

HEALTH

Health describes how much damage a creature or object can take. It represents one's durability, resilience, stamina, and ability to avoid lasting injury from being attacked. You have a maximum Health score, which tells you the maximum damage a creature or object can take, with any damage taken in excess of the Health score ignored, and a current Health score, which reflects gains and losses to Health. For more information on damage, see below.

GAINING AND LOSING HEALTH

Many effects can change your Health score, which enables you to take more damage before falling down, or less, which makes you more fragile. Changes to your Health score affect your maximum damage total.

If a loss to your Health score makes your damage total greater than your Health score, immediately reduce your damage total so that it equals your Health score.

If you are incapacitated, which happens when your damage total equals your Health, and you increase your Health, your damage total also increases to match your new score, so that you remain incapacitated until you heal damage.

DAMAGE

Damage describes attrition done to your person from a harmful effect. You keep a running total of damage accumulated. Your damage total can be as low as 0 or as high as your Health score. When you take damage, you add the amount to your damage total. When you heal damage, subtract the amount from your damage total.

INJURED

You are injured if your damage total equals or exceeds half your Health score. Typically, you suffer no effects from being injured, but certain talents, spells, and other effects used against you might put you at a disadvantage because you're injured.

INCAPACITATED

When your damage total equals your Health score, you fall prone and become incapacitated. While you're incapacitated, you are unconscious. If you take any damage while incapacitated, you lose Health equal to the damage you took.

If you're incapacitated at the end of the round, lose 1d6 Health and make a luck roll. On a success, you heal 1 damage, and you are no longer incapacitated. On a failure, you remain incapacitated.

DEATH

If you die and the cause of death does not destroy your body, your remains become an object with Health 20 (small creatures become objects with Health 5, while large creatures become objects with Health 100). Remains of organic material decay, losing 1d6 Health (or more in warm, moist conditions) each day until they completely rot away. If an effect would restore you to life, any loss of Health to your corpse acts as a permanent reduction to your Health score, reflecting the ravages of decay, lost body parts, and so on. When

your health score reaches 0, you die.

HARM

The game uses harm as a shorthand for any effect that would deal damage, cause you to lose Health, bestow an affliction, or subject you to any other harmful effect. Other harmful effects include forced movement and anything that would deprive a creature of its material possessions.

AFFLICTIONS

Harmful effects bestow afflictions, which limit what you can do on your turn, make certain rolls more difficult, or both. You can gain the same affliction multiple times, provided the affliction comes from a different source, and you must remove each instance of the affliction separately. Sometimes, the gain of an affliction imposes additional effects. Those additional effects persist until you remove the affliction.

BLINDED

You cannot see and thus have line of sight to nothing. If you would attack or interact with anything, you must guess the target's location or locate the target using other senses. Finally, you halve your Speed.

CONFUSED

You become unable to make sense of what is happening around you. You cannot use reactions, you grant 1 boon on rolls against you, and you make Intellect and Will rolls with 1 bane.

CONTROLLED

You fall under control of the source of this affliction. You take your turn when your controller does and it decides what you do on your turn. If you have already taken a turn when you gain this affliction, you take a turn as described during the next round.

CURSED

You make luck rolls with 1 bane.

DEAFENED

You cannot hear.

FRIGHTENED

You fear the source of this affliction—a creature, an object, a space, or something else. While you have line of sight to the source of your fear, you make attribute rolls with 1 bane, and you grant 1 boon on attribute rolls against you.

HELD

Your Speed drops to 0 and you cannot benefit from increases to your Speed until this affliction ends.

IMPAIRED

The impaired affliction affects the attribute specified by the harmful effect, so you might be Strength impaired or Intellect impaired, for instance. You roll with 1 bane when using the specified attribute, and you grant 1 boon on rolls against the specified attribute.

ON FIRE

You catch fire. You take 1d6 damage at the end of each round until the fire is extinguished, which is normally accomplished with a successful luck roll (see Luck Rolls). You can also use an action to overcome the flames by making a successful Agility roll or by using an action to douse the flames with water or smother them with a blanket or similar object. A creature that drops prone before trying to overcome the flames makes the roll with 1 boon.

POISONED

You have been exposed to venom, poison, or some other toxin. You make attribute rolls with 1 bane, and you grant 1 boon on rolls against you. In addition, at the end of each round, you lose 1d6 Health.

PRONE

You are lying on the ground. You cannot use reactions. You grant 1 boon on rolls made to attack you with melee weapons, but impose 1 bane on rolls made to attack you with ranged weapons. You can use your move to crawl or stand up only.

STUNNED

You cannot use actions or reactions. Your Speed drops to 0 and you cannot benefit from increases to Speed until this affliction ends. You grant 2 boons on rolls against you, and you make attribute rolls with 2 banes.

UNCONSCIOUS

You cannot use actions or reactions. Your Speed drops 0 and you cannot benefit from increases to Speed until this affliction ends. You receive no information from your senses. You grant 3 boons on rolls against you, and you automatically fail all attribute rolls.

When you take damage, you first lose Health equal to the amount of damage you would take and then take the damage. For example, if you have Health 12 and take 6 damage while you are unconscious, you would reduce your Health to 6 and then take 6 damage, which would cause you to become incapacitated.

ASLEEP

If you are unconscious because you are sleeping naturally, you stop being unconscious when a creature uses an action to shake you, kick you, or do something else to waken you. A loud noise might remove the affliction if you succeed on a luck roll. Time spent

sleeping counts as resting for the purpose of healing damage (see "Rest" below). If your sleep is uninterrupted, you wake up naturally whenever you choose after you fall asleep.

WEAKENED

You make Strength and Agility rolls with 1 bane, and you grant 1 boon on rolls against your Strength and Agility. In addition, you halve your Speed, and you derive no benefit from increases to your Speed.

STACKING EFFECTS

You can be affected by an effect from a particular source once at a time. The effect persists until it ends. If you are affected by the same effect again from the same or similar source, the original effect ends and the new instance of the effect begins. For example, if someone casts a spell on you to increase your Strength for 1 hour, and, 30 minutes later, someone else casts the same spell on you, the first instance of the spell ends and new one begins, resetting the duration to 1 hour.

REST

Characters have many ways to heal damage and regain Health. They might avail themselves of poultices, elixirs, spells, talents, and other game effects. But the most reliable way to recover from injuries comes from resting.

Resting allows you to heal damage and regain expended resources. If you have uninterrupted rest for 8 consecutive hours, you heal all damage, and you regain Health equal one-tenth your normal Health score (round down). Some of your other resources might also be replenished after a rest. If you stop resting to use an action or reaction, the time you have spent continuously resting is wasted and you must start resting again to gain any benefit from doing so.

TIME: ROUNDS

Combat tracks time in rounds, each being a period of time lasting 3 to 6 seconds.

Effects with 1-round durations last until the same point in the turn order they were produced, on the next round. If a character takes the initiative and then creates an effect with a 1-round duration, the effect ends just before anyone can take the initiative during the following round. This is the case even if, during the following round, the character who produced the effect chooses not to take the initiative.

SIZE AND REACH

Creatures and objects have a score to represent their size. Size 1 indicates something of equivalent height and width to a typical adult human being. A higher size means the creature or object is that many times larger than a typical person. For example, size 3 would indicate something three times as tall and wide as a human, while size 1/2 indicates something half as tall and wide.

For objects, any object that can normally be gripped with two hands counts as size 1/2, with one hand as size 1/4, and with one's

off-hand, size 1/8.

A creature or object with appendages can reach out of its space a number of yards equal to its size (minimum 1 yard), unless it has a trait that says otherwise.

SENSES

The Sage reveals pertinent information about your surroundings. If you want more information, you need to explore. This means you need to look around, listen, sniff the air, touch things, and so on. The more you examine your surroundings, the more information the Sage reveals until there is either nothing more of interest to be revealed or you stop exploring.

SOUND AND HEARING

When you listen, the Sage tells you if you hear anything of interest. Sometimes, the Sage asks for a luck roll to see if you happen to listen at the right time to catch the sound. The louder the noise, the farther it travels. Sounds have four intensities: soft, normal, loud, and louder.

- You can hear a soft noise such as a whisper or the opening of a well-oiled door from 1 yard away.
- You can hear a normal noise such as conversation from 10 yards away.
- You can hear loud noises such as shouting from 30 yards away.
- Any louder noises specify the distance they travel.

Obstacles mute noises, reducing the distance from which they can be heard. Each obstacle reduces the intensity of the sound by one step, such that normal noise, through an obstacle, sounds like soft noise, while a loud noise through an obstacle would sound like a normal noise. So, if two people talk in a room beyond an open door, you'd be able to hear what they say provided they are within 10 yards of you. If there is a closed door between you and them, you would have to be within 1 yard of the closed door to catch what they are saying.

LIGHT AND VISION

You need light to see. On a bright, clear day, with no obstructions, you can see out to a distance of about 3 miles. Obstacles, haze, rain, fog, and the like reduce this distance by half or more. The light of a full moon lets you see out to a distance of about 1 mile, though, again, clouds, atmospheric conditions, and obstacles similarly reduce this distance by half or more. You can see a source of light at almost any distance from you provided you have line of sight to it.

SUNLIGHT

Some creatures suffer harmful effects when in direct sunlight or sunlight cast by a reflective surface. For a creature to be affected by direct sunlight, the creature must be in a space to which light from the sun has an unobstructed path. The intensity of the light does not matter. Some magical effects create light that counts as being sunlight for the purpose of resolving effects related to sunlight.

ARTIFICIAL LIGHT

Candles, torches, spells, and the like all produce artificial light out to a range based on the intensity of the light. Artificial light has three intensities: bright, dim, and faint.

- Bright light, such as that cast by a lantern, lights the area around it out to a range of 30 yards.
- Dim light, such as that cast by a torch, lights the area around it out to a range of 10 yards.
- Faint light, such as that cast by a candle, lights the area around it out to a range of 1 yard.

OBSCUREMENT

Fog, rain, snow, mist, magical shadows all limit how far a creature can see. Obscurement can be light, moderate, heavy, or total with the effects of each described below.

- Light obscurement such as mist or light rain reduces the range of vision inside it or into it to 10 yards.
- Moderate obscurement such as fog, light snow, or heavy rain reduces the range of vision in it and into it to 5 yards.
- Heavy obscurement such as heavy snow reduces the range of vision inside it and into it to 1 yard.
- Total obscurement such as the absence of any light reduces the range of vision inside it and into it to 0 yards.

STACKING OBSCUREMENT: If there are two instances of obscurement affecting an area, increase the degree of greater obscurement by one step. Thus light rain and mist, both of which create light obscurement in their area, become moderate obscurement.

DARKNESS

In total darkness, a creature is blinded (see afflictions, above) unless it has some special sense that enables sight.

WIND

Wind is either light or strong. A light wind causes flames to flicker, loose, lightweight objects to flutter, and clears away light smoke and foul odors, but generally has no other game effect.

Strong winds include those moving at 20 miles per hour or faster and produce the following effects at the end of each round the wind blows through an area:

- Causes protected flames, such as those inside lanterns or behind some sort of cover, to flicker and dance.
- Extinguishes small, unprotected flames, and spreads size 2 or larger unprotected flames to nearby flammable objects.
- Clears away smoke, vapor, mist, gas, and similar atmospheric effects from the area through which the wind blows.
- Clears dust and small, lightweight objects from surfaces in the area in which the wind is blowing.
- Imposes 1 bane on rolls made to attack targets more than 1 yard away.
- Creatures flying against the wind count as if moving through challenging terrain.
- Counts as an obstacle for the purpose of hearing.
- A small creature makes a Strength roll and, on a failure, falls prone.

Deadly winds, such as those produced by hurricanes and tornadoes, have additional effects as the Sage decides.

SPECIAL SENSES

Many creatures possess special senses. The most common sensory traits appear below.

AWARENESS #: The creature always perceives everything around it out to the listed number in yards. This perception ignores the effects of obscurement.

KEEN HEARING: The creature doubles the distances a creature can normally hear.

KEEN SCENT: The creature knows where to find each creature or dead creature within 10 yards.

KEEN VISION: The creature can see twice as far as other creatures do in natural light and treats artificial light as if it had double its range. Finally, the creature reduces the degree of obscurement by one step, to a minimum of no obscurement.

DARK VISION: The creature can see out to a range of 3 yards when in no light at all.

TRUE VISION: The creature needs no light to see and treats everything within its line of sight as being illuminated. The creature perceives outlines around invisible creatures and objects in its line of sight. It also sees through mundane and magical disguises, sees transformed creatures in their normal forms, and perceives visual illusions for what they are.

SEARCHING

When you search for a hidden creature or object, you must be specific about where you look. Merely passing in front of a door hidden by a tapestry will not reveal the door; you must pull aside the tapestry. A door disguised to look like a section of wall might require extensive searching of the area and a successful Intellect roll.

BEING HIDDEN

A creature or object is hidden from all creatures that do not know its exact location, whether they suspect its presence or not. Once hidden, the creature or object remains so until found. A hidden creature or object cannot be targeted with effects originating from any source from which it is hidden. A hidden creature or object might be affected by other effects so long as those effects do not require specific targets. A creature hidden from a caster but inside a chamber filled with fire from an exploding Fireball spell takes damage from the spell since the spell spreads through an area and does not specifically target any creature or object.

Once hidden, the creature remains hidden until found, or something happens to end the state. A hidden creature stops being hidden after it attacks, shouts, casts a spell, or does anything else to draw attention to itself.

KNOWLEDGE

All people know how to do certain things and can agree that some things count as facts. As a person living in this world, you know the following things. This list isn't meant to be exhaustive; it sketches out the parameters for what a typical person ought to know.

- How to build and maintain a fire.
- How to forage for food.
- How to dress and prepare meat from animals you kill.
- How to identify water that's safe to drink.
- How to make use of all common and uncommon equipment.
- How to maintain your equipment.
- The basic features of the land you inhabit and what's around these lands.
- That magic exists. You also know the gods sometimes walk the lands and bestow powers onto their servants.
- A bit about the major religions, their doctrines, and their dogma.
- How to care for and feed an animal.
- How to conduct commerce.
- How to feed, clothe, bathe yourself, and tend to your other physical needs.
- How to read and write.
- The seasons and their passage, weather, the major constellations, and other phenomena related to living in a world.
- Identify common creatures you see.
- Anything else that a person would know who lives in a pre-industrial society.

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE

In addition to knowledge held in common with most other people, you also have knowledge related to your profession, as well as to the paths you have chosen.

STORIES AND LEGENDS: You can recall details about legendary members of your profession, as well as famous and infamous members of your profession from in and around the lands in which you live. If you are a blacksmith and have worked as a blacksmith in a particular town, you know if there's a famous blacksmith the next town over.

TASKS AND ACTIVITIES: You know how to perform tasks and activities directly related to your profession. If you're a scribe, you know how to illuminate a manuscript. If you're a poet, you can produce poetry. If you are a criminal, you can probably unlock a lock using lockpicks.

For difficult tasks directly related to your profession, you and you alone can perform the task. A person who is not a forger could not produce a believable forgery, for example. In addition, when performing such tasks, the Sage might grant an automatic success or 1 boon or more to your attribute roll.

COMPETENCE: You count as being competent in any work you perform related to your profession. Between quests, if you can find work, you know how to perform in your profession with the ability to provide for yourself at a quality of life typical for a member of your profession.

EYE FOR QUALITY: You can identify the quality of any good or service produced by a member of your profession. You can identify good writing if a writer, good or bad cooking as a cook, fine or terrible service if a servant.

TANGENTIAL BENEFITS: Your profession might also grant benefits on tasks not directly related to your work at the Sage's discretion. The benefit might make an impossible task possible for you, or make difficult tasks easier. The Sage might also reveal additional information in descriptions based on your expertise.

DISCOVERIES

You can know something, not know something, or think you know something. If you think you might know something, you can ask the Sage to make an Intellect roll on your behalf. If the roll results in a success, the Sage tells you if you know about the topic or not, and what about it that you can recall. If the roll results in a failure, the Sage can tell you anything and leave it to you to decide if what you learn is true or not. Further rolls to chase down the same information fail until you have access to new information.

If you're confronted with information that you don't know much about, often this is because gaining this information represents a significant advancement of the plot and ought to take a bit more effort than a single roll. Rather than pester the Sage with questions, look for ways in the story that your character can find the information, such as by searching through a library, consulting an expert, eavesdropping on a private conversation, or doing any such thing that would grant you this knowledge.

COMMUNICATION

Communication describes any in-character interaction between your character and other characters, whether they are played by other players or the Sage. Out-of-character communication—talk that does not relate to interacting with characters in the game—is not subject to the following rules.

Most communication counts as conversation, simple exchanges of information that reflect the normal discourse in which people engage all the time. Conversation might involve gossip, telling stories, idle talk about the weather, and the free exchange of information, such as the price of this thing or where to find that place. Under most circumstances, such conversations happen without needing rules. You, the Sage, and other players say in character or describe what your characters say to each other and then react accordingly. Sometimes, though, complications make even simple conversation a challenge.

DISPOSITION

How a person sees you, whether they like you or not, can go a long way toward deciding whether they are willing to help you. A friendly person is more likely to do you a favor than will an indifferent one. Creatures you meet have a disposition toward you, other characters in your group, and other people as well. The dispositions follow:

FRIENDLY: The person likes you and helps you if they can.

INDIFFERENT: The person has no opinion toward you, one way or the other.

UNFRIENDLY: The person dislikes you and helps you only if they have no choice.

READING DISPOSITIONS

Unless a person has some reason to hide their disposition, how they see you should be evident in what they say and how they act around you. If a person hides their true feelings from you, the Sage might make Will rolls for the person to see if they can keep their true feelings to themselves. Rather than ask to make a roll, spend time with the character in question, observe them, and talk to them. The truth will come out eventually. Magic might also reveal a person's true feelings.

CHANGING DISPOSITIONS

You can lose a friendship over an insult, but have to move mountains to win over someone who despises you. Maintaining friendly dispositions requires investment of time and energy in those characters, but, in return, these people value you and help you when and how they can. Such effort should not be too difficult, but does assume you spend time with people friendly to you between quests and help them in return for their aid.

Unfriendly people have decided they don't like you. You might have done nothing that you know of to earn their enmity and no matter what gifts you offer, what aid you provide, they remain very much outside of your friendship circle. Often, such dispositions have a cause. The person might be bigoted against members of your ancestry, the person could be in love with you, but too afraid to reveal their feelings, or you might have insulted them, overlooked them, snubbed them, or did some thoughtless thing to erode trust and make them avoid you. It might be possible to win over unfriendly people if you can discern the cause for their animosity. If it's something you can correct, you might make a friend for life.

Indifferent people have yet to form an opinion, so you might make friends of these people by doing them small favors, expressing interest in their lives, remembering their names, and making them feel important. It's just as easy to lose them, though, by doing the opposite of the things that would make them friendly.

A change in disposition lasts until something happens to alter it. A friendly character might become indifferent if you go years without talking with them or unfriendly if you harm them, someone they love, their property, or their standing in the community. Old grudges can also soften in time (though never with this author!), causing people to overlook past slights and conflicts in the hopes of starting again.

SHARED LANGUAGE

Communication of basic to complex ideas can happen easily if you and the creature with whom you would communicate share a common language. In such cases, understanding of the most basic ideas occurs. If communicating with someone who speaks a different dialect or one fraught with idiomatic expressions, the Sage might call for you to make an Intellect roll to determine if you can get your ideas across and parse what is said back to you. Similarly, such rolls might happen if you communicate with someone who has an extremely limited vocabulary or knows only a pidgin form of the language.

SELECTED LANGUAGES OF THE BORDERLANDS

When you choose additional languages, select them from the following options.

COMMON: The Common tongue originated with a seafaring people and became an important tongue for facilitating trade. It became the dominate language in the Great Kingdom and it has spread to the New Lands from the lips of the refugees pouring across the borderlands. A dialect of Common—Seafarer—comes freighted with nautical jargon and odd digressions in which the speaker offers mild oaths to the sea god.

SYLVAN: The tongue of the fair folk, the faeries are, obviously, the people most likely to know and use this language in

preference over others. Sylvan, sometimes called Elvish, Fair Speech, the Old Tongue, creeps into Common, especially in the wild places where common folk bargain with the faeries to keep them appeased. One sings Sylvan; speaking it strips away much of its meaning. In script form, the language lacks punctuation so that one thought flows into another.

ARCANE: The need for magical script arose when wizards sought to guard access to the knowledge they had amassed. At various times, the wizards sought to control access to magic so they could hoard power and wealth for themselves. Only when confronted by angry mobs and zealous priests did they relent and pull back a bit more of the curtain so that others could see and understand the inner mechanisms of magic.

Arcane represents one of the few attempts to secure magic against willy-nilly usage and has become a crucial component in the casting of spells. To cast almost any spell, one must speak aloud the incantation in the Arcane speech. To learn about most magical traditions, one must be able to read the Arcane script, one whose characters seem to wriggle and writhe on the page.

COMBAT

Combat happens when you or others use violence to overcome a challenge. The combat lasts until one side defeats the other. A side becomes defeated when they succumb to their injuries, surrender, or flee.

BATTLEFIELD

A combat takes place on a battlefield, a place large enough to encompass all the combatants. The battlefield might grow and shrink as the combat unfolds, with combatants moving off in different directions or coming together to trade blows with their weapons. The Sage describes the battlefield before the combat begins and notes any obvious features and threats present.

For some battles, the imagination suffices to keep track of the various combatants, but the Sage might decide to sketch out the battlefield into discrete zones to give you a visual representation. The Sage can use miniatures, terrain, and other props to make the combat feel more tactical.

COMBATANTS

A combat features two or more sides opposed to one another. A side consists of creatures that work together for a common cause. Any combatant actively fighting on your side counts as an ally, while any combat fighting against your side counts as an enemy. This determination is independent of the creature's normal disposition toward you, and vice versa. One of your allies might be indifferent or even unfriendly toward you in everyday life, but when battle is joined, you overlook your differences and act as allies.

If an effect causes someone else to treat you as an ally, that character or creature will fight on your side for as long as the effect lasts even if it's not normally friendly toward you.

POSITIONING

At the start of the combat, the Sage determines the positions of all combatants based on what was happening before the combat began. Combatants can then change their positions on their turns.

TURNS

Each round, all the combatants under the Sage's control take their turns first, acting in any order the Sage chooses. Each combatant must complete its turn before another can take its turn. The Sage can change the order in which these combatants resolve their turn each round.

Once all combatants under the Sage's control have taken their turns, the players take their turns. Players can declare they are taking their turns in any order they like each round. Once a player declares they are taking their turn, the other players must wait until the acting player finishes their turn. If two players want to act at the same time and cannot decide who goes first, the Sage decides for them.

On each of its turns, a combatant can move and use an action before, after, or during its move.

Some effects begin or end at the end of a turn. If multiple effects begin or end at the end of your turn, you resolve any harmful effects first, in the order you choose, and then other effects, again, in the order you choose.

Some effects and activities allow you to act out of turn. See Reactions and Take the Initiative activity.

REACTIONS

Each combatant can act out of turn just once each round by using a reaction. See **Reactions** on page 16 for details.

END OF THE ROUND

The round ends when all combatants have taken a turn. Certain effects occur or are resolved at the end of the round (sometimes expressed as "the end of each round"). First, the Sage tends to all combatants not controlled by the players. Each combatant resolves all harmful effects first, in any order, and then any remaining effects, again in any order. Then, the players do the same for their characters, after which the combat continues with the start of another round.

AMBUSHES

An ambush occurs when one side takes the other by surprise. The Sage decides when an ambush is possible and if it occurs by gauging the awareness of the two sides. If an ambush happens, the ambushed skip their first turns.

MOVES

You can move a number of yards equal to your Speed score using your primary mode of locomotion—walking, rolling, slithering, or fluttering.

You can spend yards of movement to move in special ways. If you have a Speed 5, you could walk 1 yard over to a wall and then start climbing, advancing 1 yard for every 2 yards of movement

spent. Similarly, if you are swimming, you could spend 4 yards of movement to swim 2 yards to the shore, and then move 1 yard onto solid ground.

Some effects let you expend yards of movement or your move to do other things. You can perform the activity only if you have yards of movement to spend. If an activity requires you to expend or use your move, you do the activity instead of expending yards of movement.

SPECIAL FORMS OF MOVEMENT

In addition to walking and its equivalent, you might move in any of the following ways. Each requires you to expend yards of your normal movement. If you use a form of special movement that requires you to expend 2 yards of your movement when you have a Speed 5, you would have 3 yards of movement remaining.

CLIMB

You can climb surfaces that have handholds and footholds, or when you have a rope. For every 2 yards of movement you expend, you can climb up, down, or across a distance of 1 yard. If you descend and use a rope, you can descend 2 yards for every yard of movement you expend.

You grant 1 boon on rolls against your Defense and Agility while you climb.

DIFFICULT SURFACES: If you attempt to climb a surface made more difficult by having to avoid attacks, contending with a greased surface, or needing to make your own handholds, the Sage might require you to make a Strength roll. On a failure, you make no progress. If the result of your roll is 0 or less, you lose your grip and fall.

HARM WHILE CLIMBING: Once per round, when you suffer any form of harm while you are climbing, make a Strength roll. You roll with 1 bane if you are injured. On a failure, you lose your grip and fall.

CRAWL

You crawl while prone. For every 2 yards of movement, you crawl 1 yard across a surface on which you lay prone.

DROP PRONE

You can expend 1 yard of movement to drop to the surface on which you are standing. You become prone.

FLY

If you can fly, thanks to a trait, magical talent, or spell, you can fly 2 yards for every 1 yard of movement you expend. Once airborne, you remain so until you land, the effect enabling your ability to fly ends, or something causes you to land.

If you become held or prone while flying (or prevented from flying in any other way), you fall.

If you would fall because you are knocked prone, you can make an Agility roll at the end of the round if you have not landed yet, and you are not held, stunned, or unconscious. On a success, you end the prone affliction and can continue flying. Otherwise, you continue falling. Repeat this process until either you succeed on an Agility roll or you hit something and suffer the consequences (see "Falls," below).

If you can hover, you are only at risk of falling when flying when you become unconscious. You remain airborne even if you are held or stunned.

JUMP AND LEAP

You can expend 2 yards of movement to jump or leap. You jump when you try to reach something overhead or down to something below you. You leap when you would hop over an obstacle. You can jump up a number of inches equal to your height in feet or twice this number if you are running. If you're 6 feet tall, you could jump up six inches or 12 inches if you get a running start. You can safely jump down a distance equal to your height. Beyond that, you fall.

You can leap a distance equal to half your height or your full height if you are running.

You can double your jumping and leaping distances by making an Agility roll to jump or a Strength roll to leap. If you would jump or leap even farther, the Sage might impose 1 or more banes on your roll.

MOUNT AND DISMOUNT

You can expend 3 yards of movement to mount a friendly Mount within reach or dismount a Mount you are riding. When you mount, you move into that creature's space and you share a space until you are no longer riding the creature. When you dismount, you move from the creature's space into an empty space of your choice within 1 yard of the mount.

RETREAT

When you are in the reach of an enemy, you can retreat to safely move out of its reach. For each yard you would move, expend 1 additional yard of movement, preventing the enemy from making a free attack against you.

SNEAK

You attempt to move without making much, if any, sound. For every 2 yards of movement you spend, you sneak 1 yard across the surface on which you are standing.

If you wear heavy armor or attempt to sneak across a particularly loud surface, such as broken glass, gravel, and the like, the Sage might call for you to make an Agility roll. On a success, you make no more sound than a whisper during your movement, but you make normal sound from moving on a failure. A result of 20 or higher indicates you make no sound at all, while a result of 0 or lower indicates you make a particularly loud noise.

STAND UP

If you are prone, you can expend 4 yards of movement to stand up, thus ending the prone affliction.

SWIM

You can swim in just about any liquid, though immersing yourself in acid or toxic goo is never a good idea. For every 2 yards of movement you expend, you swim 1 yard in any direction inside the liquid.

While swimming, you make rolls to attack with 1 bane and you grant 1 boon on rolls to attack you.

In rough conditions, when you wear medium or heavy armor, have your hands bound, or you are hindered in some other way, you might have to make a Strength roll, possibly with 1 bane or more. On a failure, you make no progress, and on a result of 0 or lower you sink beneath the surface and risk suffocating.

OBSTACLES

Obstacles slow or prevent movement. A pit in the center of a passageway, a scattering of caltrops on the floor, a cramped passage, or a steep slope can all make movement difficult, even perilous. Unless an obstacle poses a risk of harm and you have plenty of time to navigate the obstacle, you can overcome the obstacle and continue moving. If an obstacle is dangerous or you're under pressure, the Sage might call for an attribute roll to bypass the obstacle. A failed roll indicates no progress and might result in damage or the loss of Health, depending on the nature of the obstacle.

CHALLENGING TERRAIN

Any terrain difficult to traverse counts as challenging. Rubble, ice, oil, caltrops, deep water, and other factors make movement perilous. Normally, challenging terrain covers the walls and ground, but strong winds and turbulent waters might count as challenging terrain to fliers and swimmers, respectively.

For each yard you would move across challenging terrain, you must expend 1 extra yard of movement.

If you run across challenging terrain, you make an Agility roll, possibly with 1 or more banes. On a failure, you fall prone on the challenging terrain and your move ends.

CLEARING AWAY CHALLENGING TERRAIN

It takes 1 hour using a heavy tool kit to clear a surface, within a square, up to 3-yards on a side, of challenging terrain. If multiple creatures work on clearing the terrain and have their own heavy tool kits, divide the total amount of time by the number of creatures contributing to the effort to see how long the work takes.

FALLS

You fall when you drop a distance greater than your height. At the end of the first round you fall, you descend 50 yards. You descend another 150 yards at the end of the second round, 250 yards at the end of the third round, 350 yards at the end of the fourth round, and so on until you encounter a solid surface that can bear your weight.

On landing, you lose 1 Health for every yard you fell. You can roll luck, though, and you lose half as much Health on a success, or no Health if the result is 20 or higher. If you roll a 0 or lower, you lose all your Health and die.

If you lose any Health from the fall, you also land prone.

If you fall onto a liquid surface, you halve the amount of Health you would lose. If you dive, you can make an Agility roll in place of a luck roll.

SQUEEZING

You can squeeze through tight spaces by crawling. You can typically squeeze through a space of half your size (round down to minimum 1/2). So, a typical person can squeeze through a size 1/2 space, while a size 3 creature could squeeze through a size 1 space. Certain spaces are too small for squeezing, as the Sage decides,

while the Sage might require a successful Agility roll in order to squeeze through the space.

While you are squeezed in a space, you cannot use reactions and you grant 1 boon on rolls against your Defense and Agility and you make Agility rolls with 1 bane.

MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES

You can spend movement to perform minor activities chosen from the following options by expending 2 yards of movement for each activity:

- Open an unlocked door, open a chest, or some other container in your reach.
- Retrieve an item from your backpack or some other container you carry.
- Pick something up off the ground.
- Pull a lever or interact with an object in reach.
- Any other physical activity that involves movement and does not require an attribute roll either to perform it or resist it.

INTERACT

You interact with an object you can reach—you pick something up off the ground, kick in a locked door, lift a chest's lid, pull a lever, or do something else. The Sage or the rules determine if an attribute roll is required to determine if you succeed in your effort or not.

SPECIAL MOVEMENT TRAITS

Many creatures have special movement traits that enable them to move in ways not normally available or eliminate risks from moving. The following traits are as follows.

BURROWER: The creature burrows 1 yard into a solid surface of earth or stone for every 2 yards of movement it expends. It leaves behind a tunnel with a diameter equal to its size - 1.

CLIMBER: The creature climbs 1 yard for each yard of movement it expends; it can climb across ceilings and overhangs; it grants no boons on rolls to attack it; and it rolls to climb with 1 boon.

FLY: The creature can fly when it moves.

HOVER: The creature ignores any effect that would cause it to fall while flying.

INSUBSTANTIAL: The creature can move through or end its movement inside a solid object. While it is inside a solid object, the creature cannot be harmed until the object is destroyed. The creature ignores the effects of wind and other kinds of challenging terrain that can ordinarily affect flying creatures.

MOUNT: The creature enables other creature's to ride upon it.

SILENT: The creature sneaks 1 yard for each yard of movement it expends and it rolls to sneak with 1 boon.

SLIPPERY: The creature's moves do not enable other creatures to make free attacks against it.

SQUEEZE (# INCHES): The creature can squeeze through openings of the indicated size.

STRIDER: The creature reduces the number of yards of movement it costs to move each yard across challenging terrain.

SWIMMER: The creature swims 1 yard for each yard of movement it expends; it ignores the effects of swimming on its attribute rolls and on rolls against its Defense; and it makes rolls to swim with 1 boon.

TELEPORT #: This creature can use all of its movement to teleport to an empty space that it can see within the indicated number of yards.

WATER WALK: The creature can move across liquid surfaces as if they were solid and treats them as challenging terrain.

MOVEMENT COMPLICATIONS

Various complications, coming from effects that target you or from the nature of your environment, might restrict your movement.

BEING MOVED

An effect that forces you to move propels you in the direction and to the distance indicated unless you encounter an obstacle that prevents you from continuing to move. If being moved would expose you to peril, such as pushing you over the edge of a cliff or into a fire, you can make a luck roll and, on a success, you drop prone at the edge of the danger. Being moved in this way does not enable enemies to make free attacks against you.

MOVING OUT OF REACH

If you move out of the reach of one or more enemies, you trigger a free attack from each enemy whose reach you leave. See “Free Attacks,” below.

CLIMBING OR JUMPING ON CREATURES

You attempt to climb on or jump onto a creature or object whose overall size score is higher than your own. You must be able to reach the target to climb onto it or the target must be somewhere you can jump onto it. Typically, you make a Strength or Agility roll to climb or jump onto the target, though if the target resists the effort, you roll against the target’s Agility. Once on the creature or object, you move with it when it moves and moving across its body or form counts as challenging terrain.

At the end of the round, if you are in a position on the target that the Sage deems precarious—the creature tries to knock you off or a vehicle is out of control and careening in a wild fashion—you make a Strength roll to maintain your hold. On a success, you stay put. On a failure, you fall off, with the consequences for doing so determined by the Sage—you take damage from a fall, for instance.

ACTIONS

You use an action to perform a task that accounts for most of your time and attention in the round. The most common kinds of tasks that require the use of actions are presented below. Often, the rules mention these tasks in conversational ways, such as I’m hindering or I’m defending. When you see or say such expressions, the implication is that you are using an action to hinder or defend.

ATTACK

You use a weapon or an unarmed strike to attack a target. See Attacks, below, for more details.

CAST A SPELL

You cast a spell you have learned, read from an inscription, or from an object that contains the spell. Some spells have special rules for their casting and might let you cast them using a reaction instead of an action. See Casting Spells, below, for details.

DEFEND

Until the end of your next turn, the first time any creature succeeds on a roll to attack you, make a luck roll. On a success, you turn the creature’s success into a failure.

END A MAGICAL EFFECT

You end one magical effect you created with a magical talent, spell, or object, provided you can see the creature, object, or space affected by your magic.

FIND

You search the area within 5 yards of you for a hidden creature, object, or some other feature. If it’s there and you can perceive it, you find it. Otherwise, you don’t. The Sage might decide also that you must get a success on an Intellect roll to find the creature or object.

HELP

Choose one creature within 5 yards. The creature has 1 boon on its next attribute roll before the start of your next turn.

HIDE

You attempt to hide from creatures that lack line of sight to you. Anything that blocks line of sight enables your attempt—shadows, darkness, or some covering object. Make an Agility roll. On a success, you become hidden until you are found or you do something that would reveal yourself to other creatures. On a failure, you do not become hidden.

HINDER

Choose one creature within 5 yards. The creature has 1 bane on its next attribute roll before the start of your next turn.

OVERCOME

If you have an affliction or suffer from some other persistent effect that does not have a permanent duration, you can make an attribute roll to rid yourself of it. The effect tells you what attribute to use (or, if not, the Sage decides). If the effect has a luck ends duration, you make a luck roll instead.

RUN

Triple your speed score until the end of your turn.

STABILIZE

You tend to one incapacitated creature in your reach. The target heals 1d6 damage.

STEAL

If you have one hand free, you can attempt to take something from one creature within your reach that carries on its person one object you can see, but is not carried in the creature's hands. Make an Agility roll against the target's Agility. If you are hidden from the target, you roll with 1 boon. On a success, you take the object from the target.

THROW

You throw something you hold. If you hold the object to be thrown in one hand, you can throw it up to 10 yards from you. If you must hold the object in two hands, you can throw it up to 5 yards. Aerodynamic objects intended for throwing, such as balls, travel up to three times as far. Generally, the object lands within 1d6 feet of where you intended it to land.

THROWN ATTACKS

When you throw a weapon that has the thrown property, you resolve the effort as a ranged attack. You can also throw objects that are neither weapons nor are weapons with the thrown property, in which case the range is as described above, and you treat the attack as if you had made it using an improvised weapon.

Toss

You can also toss an object to another creature within the ranges mentioned above so that another creature might catch it. Make an Agility roll. On a success, the target can attempt to catch the object (see Catch). On a failure, the object falls to the ground in a space of the Sage's choosing within a few yards of where you intended the target to land.

USE A TALENT OR TRAIT

You perform an activity granted by one of your talents or traits. Note that some talents and traits require the use of a reaction instead of an action.

USE AN ITEM

You use an item that you wield such as a gadget, trinket, or piece of gear. The item tells you what happens as a result. Note that some items require the use of a reaction instead of an action.

DO SOMETHING ELSE

The activities described above represent the most common performed in combat, but they are not exhaustive. You could taunt an enemy into attacking you or issue a nasty threat to demoralize your foes or yank down a tapestry to cover your opponents. It falls to the Sage to interpret how to resolve these activities, but they involve, typically, an attribute roll or enabling targets to make an attribute or luck roll.

EXTRA

Some tasks require more time or energy to accomplish than what can be done by using an action. When you try to do something that requires more time or effort than what can be accomplished on your turn, the rules will tell you how long it takes. For instance, some spells require you to spend 1 minute to complete the casting of them. The Sage might also decide that something you attempt takes longer than usual.

While you are spending this extra time, you focus entirely on the task at hand, and thus you cannot use an action or a reaction to do anything else. If you decide to stop to perform some other activity, or you are forced to do so, all the progress you have made toward completing the task is lost unless the rules or the Sage says otherwise.

REACTIONS

You can use a reaction once each round to perform one of the following special activities. Each activity describes the event that has to occur in order to use the reaction. In addition to the options presented below, you might use talents and cast spells using reactions as noted in their descriptions.

Unless the circumstance enabling the use of the reaction says otherwise, you resolve the use of the reaction before any dice are rolled.

CATCH

When a tossed object moves into your reach, you can use a reaction to make an Agility roll. If the object is a weapon, roll with 1 bane. On a success, you catch the object. On a failure, you miss it and the object lands somewhere nearby.

COVER ALLY

When an enemy attacks a target within your reach, you can use a reaction to switch the enemy's target from the one the enemy chose to yourself.

DODGE

When a creature attacks you or you make an Agility roll to avoid or mitigate a harmful effect, you can use a reaction to either impose 1 bane on the roll or make your roll with 1 boon.

FREE ATTACK

An enemy that willingly moves out of your reach enables you to use a reaction to attack it using a melee weapon, natural weapon, improvised weapon, or unarmed attack.

TAKE THE INITIATIVE

If you're aware of your enemies when a new round starts, you can use a reaction to take the initiative, which lets you take a turn immediately before your enemies take their turns. If you and other allies take the initiative, you decide among yourself who goes first as normal, or the Sage does if no one can decide.

WITHSTAND

When you make a Strength roll to avoid an effect or mitigate a harmful effect, you can use a reaction before the dice are rolled to either impose 1 bane on the roll or make your roll with 1 boon.

ATTACKING

You attack when you use a weapon, natural weapon, improvised weapon, or an unarmed attack to harm a creature or object. Details on unarmed attacks appear in their own section.

WEAPONS

A weapon is an object constructed for the purpose of harming others and includes swords, axes, and the like. A weapon is either melee, for use in hand-to-hand combat, or ranged. Many weapons have properties that can affect how you use them. Weapon properties are described in Chapter 3.

NATURAL WEAPONS

A natural weapon is part of the creature's body that can harm others. Examples include horns, spiked tails, claws, and teeth. A creature with a natural weapon is always wielding a melee weapon and cannot be disarmed. For the purpose of attacking with two weapons, natural weapons count as off-hand weapons.

IMPROVISED WEAPONS

An improvised weapon is an object constructed for a function other than harm but nevertheless can cause injury. Examples include frying pans and broken bottles. When you use an improvised weapon to attack, you roll with 1 bane. If the result of the roll is 0 or less or 20 or higher, the improvised weapon breaks. An improvised weapon deals 1d6 damage and deals just 1d6 extra damage for every three bonus damage dice.

RESOLVING ATTACKS

You resolve any attack you make by following the steps presented here

STEP 1: CHOOSE A TARGET

Pick a target within reach for a melee attack or within the range of your weapon for a ranged attack. If you attack a target completely behind a covering object, you target the object instead.

STEP 2: ATTRIBUTE ROLL

Make an attribute roll against the target's Defense. You use Strength for melee weapons and Agility for ranged weapons.

STEP 3: APPLY RESULT

If the result of your roll was a success, you roll damage and the target adds it to its damage total. If the result of your roll was a failure, you fail to deal damage to the target.

CRITICAL SUCCESS

When the result of your roll to attack is 20 or higher and exceeds the target number by at least 5, your attack deals an extra 1d6 damage.

COMBAT CIRCUMSTANCES

Certain circumstances can make attacking harder or easier. The following situations represent those most commonly encountered in a fight.

SURROUNDED TARGET: When you make a melee attack against a target that has been attacked by an ally using a melee weapon in the same round, you roll with 1 boon.

LONG RANGE SHOOTING: When you make a ranged attack you can target a creature beyond your weapon's range, but no more than twice its range. You roll to attack with 1 bane.

HIGH GROUND: When you occupy a space higher than that occupied by the target of your attack, you roll with 1 boon.

WITHIN REACH OF AN ENEMY: If you make a ranged attack while in the reach of at least one enemy, you roll with 1 bane.

OBSCUREMENT: You roll to attack with 1 bane while you are in an area affected by obscurement of any kind.

INVISIBLE: If you can't see the target, but have a general idea about the target's location, you roll with 3 banes.

COVER: A target positioned behind an obstacle of its size or larger (which can be a creature or an object) has partial cover from enemies that can see any part of its body, but not all of it. Partial cover imposes 1 bane on rolls against the covered target's Defense and Agility, and grants the target 1 boon on Agility rolls made to resist harmful effects originating from beyond cover.

A target has total cover from enemies if there is no line of sight to it because the target is behind an obstacle and cannot be seen by an enemy. Such a target cannot be directly attacked or affected by an effect unless the rules say otherwise. Instead, attacks against the target strike the obstacle. If the obstacle is destroyed as a result, any additional damage dealt by that attack or effect is applied to whatever was behind the obstacle.

Note that these rules apply in situations when an attacker cannot position itself to get a clear shot against a target.

BONUS DAMAGE

If you chose a path that grants bonus damage, you can apply the bonus damage as extra damage once per round when you succeed on a roll to attack and use a weapon or a natural weapon (though not improvised weapons or unarmed attacks). Simply roll the dice from the bonus damage and add it to the damage dealt by the attack. Some weapon properties limit how much bonus damage you can apply to an attack. For more details, see Chapter 3.

For example, a warrior is level 3 and has +2d6 bonus damage. The warrior succeeds on a roll to attack with a sword, which normally deals 1d6 damage. The player opts to roll the extra damage for this attack, so the attack now deals 3d6 damage.

SPECIAL ATTACKS

You might avail yourself of the special attacks commonly available to most creatures.

ATTACKING WITH TWO WEAPONS: If you wield two weapons, one in each hand, you can attack with both weapons at the same time. When you do so, only the properties from the weapon you wield in your main hand apply. If the attack results in a success, add the damage from the weapon you wield in your off-hand as extra damage to the attack.

If you can wield more than two weapons at a time, you can, at most, attack with two weapons and choose which weapons with which you attack when you attack.

CALLED SHOT: You make a called shot when you target a particular location on a target's body or something the target wears or carries. You roll with 1 bane when you make a called shot for your attack. On a success and if you targeted a spot on the target's body, the target becomes impaired in an attribute of your choice until the end of your next turn. If you targeted something the target wears or carries, the object takes the damage instead.

CHARGE: Use an action to charge one creature or object you can see. Double your Speed score until the end of your turn. If you move toward the target and can reach it before the end of your turn, you can attack it with a weapon or an unarmed attack, but you roll with 1 bane.

DISARM: Use an action to attempt to disarm a creature of your size or smaller when you attack it. You roll with 1 bane if you use a melee weapon, 2 banes if you use an improvised weapon, or 3 banes if you use a ranged weapon. On a success, the target takes no damage (bonus damage does not apply), but makes an Agility roll and drops one object it holds in its hands on the failure. If you can reach the target, you can use a reaction to catch the object.

UNARMED ATTACKS

There are several ways to make an unarmed attack, each of which are described below.

UNARMED STRIKE

You punch, kick, elbow, or headbutt. Choose one creature in reach. Make a Strength roll with 1 bane against the target's Defense. On a success, the target takes 1d6 damage. If the target is larger than you, it instead takes 1 damage.

SHOVE

You attempt to shove a creature away from you. Choose one creature in reach whose size is no more than 2 higher than yours. Make a Strength roll against the target's Strength. You roll with 1 boon if you are using a shield and 1 boon if you move at least 5 yards before you make the attempt. On a success, you push the target a number of yards away from you equal to your Strength modifier (minimum 1). If the target is larger than you, it moves half the distance (minimum 0) instead. If the result of your roll is 20 or higher, the target falls prone.

TRIP

You attempt to knock a creature to the ground. Choose one creature in your reach whose size is no more than 2 higher than yours. Make an Agility roll against the target's choice of Strength or Agility. If you are using a shield, you roll with 1 boon. On a success, the target falls prone. If the result of your roll is 20 or higher, the target's Speed drops to 0 until the start of your next turn.

GRAB

You try to grab a creature. Choose one creature in your reach whose size is no more than 1 higher than yours. Make a Strength or Agility roll against the target's Agility. You succeed automatically against a held creature. On a success, the target becomes held until the end of your next turn. The affliction ends early if you release the target, which you can do freely. The effect also ends if you move away from the target without dragging it (see Drag) or you become confused, controlled, stunned, or unconscious.

If you have a target grabbed, you can use an action to extend the duration until the end of your next turn.

DRAW

You attempt to pull a creature you have held with you. Make a Strength roll against the Strength of a creature held by your successful grab. On a success, you move as normal and the creature moves with you.

WRESTLE

You attempt to wrestle down a creature you have grabbed. Make a Strength or Agility roll against the target's choice of Strength or Agility. On a success, you can choose one of the following effects:

- The target falls prone and the grab effect ends.
- You and the target fall prone.
- The target takes 1d6 damage.
- If you and the target are both prone, you pin the target. A pinned creature is confused, held, weakened, and cannot stand up until the effect ends. The target remains until you release it, which you can do at any time, you stand up or you use an action to do anything other than wrestle the target. Also, you release a target automatically if you become confused, impaired, stunned, or weakened.

ESCAPE

If you are held from being grabbed or pinned, you can attempt to escape by making a Strength or Agility roll against the Strength or Agility of the creature that has you held. On a success, you end

the held affliction. If the result of your roll is 20 or higher, you can also use a reaction to attempt to grab the creature that grabbed you provided that creature is a legitimate target.

CASTING SPELLS

You cast a spell you have learned from a tradition, contained in an object you are wielding, or you have as an inscription. You can cast any spell you have learned once provided you can speak aloud its mystical words at a volume equivalent to normal conversation or louder. Some spells enable you to cast them more often. Once you cast a spell, you regain the ability to cast the spell after you rest.

TARGETING

Unless the spell says otherwise, you must be able to see a target and seem to be able to draw a line between yourself and it. In other words, there needs to be an open and visual path between you and the target. Spell effects tend not to move around corners and other obstacles unless they say otherwise. Note that an invisible wall or some other unseen obstacle might block the path and reveal itself only after you cast the spell.

CREATURES AND/OR OBJECTS: Some spells affect each creature and object within a particular range, in which case the spell affects each regardless of whether they are allies, enemies, or bystanders. For the purpose of determining if cover would provide some ameliorating benefit, the origin point of any effect that affects everything in an area appears at the center of the area.

Some spells target up to the listed number of creatures, objects, or creatures and objects. When a spell offers a specific number, you can choose fewer targets than the spell allows. Also, if a spell would target a creature and you are a creature, you can target yourself with the spell.

A spell might specify allies or enemies, in which case the spell can affect only your allies or your enemies. You count as your own ally.

SPACES: The spell targets a space or causes something to happen inside a specific space. The spell tells you the maximum size of the space to be affected, though you can always reduce the space's size as needed.

Sometimes a spell creates a space from a particular point of origin. As with targeting creatures and objects, you must have line of sight and line of effect to the target point of origin.

DURATIONS

A spell can have an instantaneous duration, in which case its effects end immediately after you cast it. Some last for specific periods of time. In such cases, the spell effect persists for the indicated time or until you use an action to end the effect.

Sometimes, a spell produces an ongoing effect as a result of a successful roll made against the target. These "nested" durations are described in the effect.

ROLLS

Some spells require you to make an attribute roll to produce the desired effect or to improve its effect, while other spells might allow targets to mitigate the spell's effects with a successful roll. If a spell has multiple targets and calls for a roll, you roll for each target separately.

COVER: The rule for cover applies when an obstacle partly blocks the path between the source of the spell effect and the target and only if you are rolling against a target's Defense or Agility.

NESTED DURATIONS: Sometimes, an effect created by a success or failure lasts for a period of time. Such durations follow the normal rules concerning durations.

RITUALS

Some talents and spells require the performance of a ritual to produce their effects. Performing a ritual takes 10 minutes. When you finish, you produce the effect. Many rituals also require the expenditure of other resources, which are expended when you finish the ritual. If something interrupts the ritual before you can finish, you expend no resources, but you must start over from the beginning to produce its effects.

A SEASON OF HUNGER

A Novice Quest for Shadow of the Weird Wizard

Trouble darkens the doors in Stillwater and it seems this time the goblins take all the blame. In fact, the goblins seem hellbent on driving out Stillwater's people from their homes. People have seen them snooping, stealing small things, frightening the livestock, and painting foul graffiti on walls. To make matters worse, a blight now threatens to starve the people out, as the grains purchased from a larger town miles away have not yet arrived, and now people fret about leaving their homes or starving within them. Someone needs to do something about these faeries!

THE QUEST

Panic grips the villagers of Stillwater. Harold Brewer, the spokesperson for the village, recruits the characters to recover the grains that the villagers believe the goblins to have stolen. The group completes the quest when they recover the purloined foodstuffs and bring peace to the community.

BACKGROUND

Bandits settled in a tower several miles from Stillwater. The tower marks the remains of a haunted Old Keep. The bandits spotted the grain-laden wagons returning to the village, waylaid them, and carried off the goods. Now, bandit captain Otto Dent sees an opportunity to take over the town by being the hero who returns their food and helps them survive until the next harvest.

IMPORTANT PLACES

You can set *A Season of Hunger* anywhere you choose in the borderlands, preferably somewhere that can accommodate the following locations.

STILLWATER VILLAGE

Stillwater village comprises six buildings crowding the eastern shore of the eponymous lake. The village belongs to refugees from the Old Country who settled here a year ago. All buildings feature rough, crude construction of wood and stone.

Three buildings, each long, low structures divided into rooms with curtains, house families. The fourth is the trading post—a roof supported by four thick posts. A brewery operates out of the fifth building, while the sixth is a chapel of the High One. Outbuildings serve as coops for chickens, a shelter for the village's few pigs, a community barn and silo.

Grain fields reach north from the village, but the plants show signs of being blighted and unsuitable for consumption; the locals have left them to rot. Grazing pastures extend to the south, where a few thin cows crop at the grass. A path made by foot traffic and the occasional wagon runs alongside the settlement. Just on the

other side of the path stands the village well, which the people now use instead of the lake water.

STILLWATER LAKE

A modest body of algae-choked water covers the ground on the village's western side. Crayfish, minnows, frogs, and a few turtles live here. Locals supplement their food supply with the wildlife they can catch here, but there isn't enough to sustain them for long. The water is potable after boiling.

NORTHFIELD

Grassland extends to the village's north, where a few scrawny trees dot the land. Rocks in the soil make the land difficult to farm, but villagers spend some time each day digging up rocks and hauling them back to the village, for use in construction.

UNNAMED WOODS

A smudge spotted on the southern horizon reveals itself as a small wood of deciduous trees. Rodents, deer, raccoons, and small monkeys, along with numerous birds fill this area and offer the villagers hunting and trapping opportunities.

GROEBEN STEADING

Henry Groeben and family live about five miles north of Stillwater. Groeben has no plans to join the settlement, but he has been a friend to them, lending a hand whenever they need it. Wooden walls surround his place, which includes a barn, silo, pen for the pigs, forge, and modest house.

OLD KEEP

About five miles north and east of Stillwater, two miles east of the Steading, stand the ruins of Old Keep. Of the original structure, just one tower remains. People from the village and steadings nearby carried off some of the building materials to build their own homes and field walls, but most believe the place haunted and now leave it alone.

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

The following supporting characters play important parts in this quest.

HAROLD BREWER

The proprietor of the Stillwater Brewing Company, Harold Brewer (**murderer**) enjoyed some success with his small operation. His modest wealth and connections throughout the vicinity earned him more status than he really wants. He never had ambitions to lead the town, but people look up to him and pay attention to what he says. The crisis of the missing grains has landed squarely on his shoulders and he wants a quick resolution to the village's troubles.

Brewer is a middle-aged human man with spare frame, large hands, and a face creased with worry lines. He's animated when talking, using his hands as much as his voice. His wife and three children, all young adults, along with two hired hands run the brewery.

Unbeknownst to anyone in Stillwater, Harold Brewer leads a secret life, one that had forced him to abandoned the Old Country for a new life in the borderlands. He is a cold-blooded killer and has been such for as long as he can remember. Brewer looks after the community as it's good for his family, the only people he will never hurt. Anyone else is fair game and could make the situation in Stillwater quite dangerous if the conflict with the bandits spirals out of control.

OTTO DENT

When Lord Barrowman sent his forces north and west to challenge the centaurs, Sir Otto Dent (as **bandit captain**), a sworn sword of the Barrowman family for all of his adult life, gathered his troops and led them into battle. The centaurs made swift, short work of them. Dent signaled the retreat and led the ragtag survivors back to his master, where Otto received a flogging for his reward. After he recovered, he killed his master and fled.

The former soldiers have grown their numbers over the last weeks, filling out their ranks with peasants and bandits by offering food, shelter, and coin. Otto refuses to fight for anyone other than himself and hopes to become a lord himself, one wiser and fairer than the feckless twits who inherit their titles rather than earn them.

Currently, Otto and his bandits have settled in Old Keep and wait for the villagers to grow desperate enough to accept the captain as their leader when he delivers the grain he and his fellows stole.

With his sixties looming, Otto believes his best days are behind him. He's still strong and tough, but he's thickened around the middle and his knees give him trouble. He has a flushed face, a head full of gray hair, and a couple of days of stubble on his chin.

THE MIGHTY HIGH THUNE

The Mighty High Thune (**mog**) has always had big ideas, but no one took him seriously until after his recent growth spurt. Before, he was small, even by goblin standards, and endured years of abuse and mockery. Suddenly stronger and tougher than the goblins who bullied him, he has turned the tables on his fellows.

He could have had a place in his boss's retinue, but he had an ill-advised affair with one of the boss's lady friends, and took off before he could be caught. He brought with him the sycophants and fools who feared and believed him with the intention of starting a new gang free from the boss's meddling. Now, the once-named Runt calls himself The Mighty High Thune—it sounds great to him, and has eyes on making trouble for the people of Stillwater.

Tall, portly, and ugly as sin, The Mighty High Thune has dark green skin riddled with warts, one of which he believes talks to him. He has a long, rodent-like nose, beady red eyes, and a mass of knotted black hair.

BYSTANDERS

Stillwater has a small population made up by four families, none of whom play much a role in the story. All human, the villagers have pinched features, spare frames, and wear mended clothing. They have little to say and have lived in fear of their lives long enough that they cringe away from confrontation. You can use rules for **peasants** for any interactions with the locals.

STORY PROGRESSION

The story unfolds in response to the players' decisions, but if the group becomes side-tracked with something else, you can use the following as a guide for determining what happens.

Day 0: Bandits kill the teamsters and steal the grain. That night, the goblins discover the ambush site and loot the bodies.

Day 1: The bandits attack Groeben Steading. They kill Henry Groeben and his hired hands. They carry off Mary, his wife, and their child, Robin and hold them in cages at the Old Keep.

Day 2: The bandits spend the day waiting until they receive orders to march on Stillwater. That night, the goblins discover the Old Keep and bring word of the place to the Mighty High Thune.

Day 3: The bandits travel to Stillwater and offer to share their grain in return for accepting Otto Dent as their lord and master. The villagers have no choice but to agree to Dent's terms. The goblins raid the Old Keep, open the door to the cellar, and free the horror that's trapped in the book.

Day 4: The horror, hungry, falls on Stillwater and kills most of the bandits and villagers before being driven off to terrorize someone else.

1. MISSING GRAIN

Stillwater sent four villagers with two wagons to buy grain from the merchants in a large town some ten miles east. The wagons were due back to Stillwater two days ago. Stillwater's people can tell the characters that the wagons followed a rough path to the town and were expected to return by it. Characters traveling toward the ambush site spot vultures circling in the sky overhead about three miles out of the village.

WHAT HAPPENED

Bandits waylaid the villagers on the way back to Stillwater. They killed one in the combat, two surrendered and were hanged, and the fourth ran off, but was shot through the neck before he could reach the tree line. The teamsters did manage to kill one of the bandits in the attack. His body is buried on the other side of the wagon path.

The night following the attack, a gang of goblins happened upon the site and looted the bodies. The goblins made no effort to conceal their presence and carried off their spoils to their den, which is in the Unnamed Woods to the south.

CLUES

Inspecting the ambush site reveals the following clues.

RUTS: The wagons are gone, as are the oxen that drew them, but the vehicles left ruts in the muddy path. The markings suggest that the wagons were driven off the road and across the field to the north. Following these tracks takes the characters to the Old Keep ruins.

BODIES: Two men, villagers from Stillwater hang by their necks from a rope tied to a tree's lower branches. Another body lies near the path, partly eaten by the vultures.

TRAIL: Inspecting the ground reveals a trail through the high grass that heads south. Following the trail reveals the body of the fourth villager, dead with an arrow through his neck. All the bodies have been picked over, but the characters can find a club dropped in the grass.

GRAVE: On the north side of the road, not visible from the path, is a freshly dug grave, the turned earth not yet having sunk. Also, prints of heavy boots appear in the dirt all around it. From the grave, a trail leads off to the north.

The grave holds the remains of a bandit, killed in the fight against the teamsters. The cause of death was a heavy blow to the head from a club. The man wears a gray uniform with a red slash on each arm, the same uniform worn by the bandits at the Old Keep.

GOBLINS: Smaller footprints near the roadside suggest small-footed people have been near. The goblins left these prints. Following them leads toward the Unnamed Woods.

2. GOBLIN DEN

The Mighty High Thune commands a group of **8 goblins** who together live inside a cave in the Unnamed Woods. The cave burrows into the side of a wooded hillock that rises from a boggy patch of ground about a mile into the forest. The goblins hang crude goblin masks from trees to warn off trespassers. The air stinks of their den and animal bones, dung, and rubbish cover the ground near the entrance.

The goblins sleep from shortly after dawn until about an hour before dusk. At least one goblin stands guard while the rest sleep, but boredom and laziness make this guard unaware of all but the loudest noises or obvious approaches. If the goblin notices the group's approach, he shouts a warning to his fellows, who waken after a couple of rounds.

At night, the goblins take to the woods. About half spend the night hunting and foraging, while a few others fan out, looking for farms and settlements. As there are few in the area, they have had little luck so far. The group might run across a couple of scouting or hunting goblins as you decide.

The goblins wear patched and threadbare clothing. All wear caps made from animal skins.

INTERACTING WITH THE GOBLINS

The goblins fight only if they think they have the upper hand. Shows of competent fighting ability or a flashy spell get them to drop all signs of hostility and becomes servile, cringing even, and remain in this way until such time that they think they could attack the characters and defeat them. Otherwise, they offer to help the characters in any way they can, though it should be clear to the players that these are shifty fellows, untrustworthy and wicked.

The goblins admit to looting the bodies by the road, though they make no move to hand over what they found—12 cp, 2 sp, 2 clubs, 4 days of provisions, 2 canteens, a bow with arrows, and a lock of hair from one of the teamster's sweethearts. The goblins complain with no little bitterness that they weren't able to kill the villagers first and express their disappointment as if the characters might feel the same way. The goblins might suspect the bandits, if they have discovered them.

The characters might attempt to recruit the goblins. The Mighty High Thune agrees to any deal and vows to help, but his word is worthless and he sees the benefit of exploiting the character's trust and good natures to his own benefit. The goblins betray and attempt to kill the characters the first chance they get.

FIGHTING THE GOBLINS

A fight involves a varying number of goblins depending on when the combat happens. During the day, the group faces all of them, but with the benefit of sunlight. At night, the group might fight a few goblins to start and then have to deal with the arrival of reinforcements.

BATTLEFIELD

A battle between the goblins likely takes place in the woods across an area roughly 50 yards square. If the characters encounter the goblins at their den, expand the battlefield to include the hillock and the cave.

Woods The Unnamed Woods has trees everywhere. The trees provide partial cover from attacks originating from enemies from more than 5 yards away and total cover from enemies more than 15 yards away. Whenever a creature runs through the woods, roll a d6. On a 1, the creature runs across a hidden branch, depression, or some other obstacle: the creature makes an Agility roll and, on a failure, falls prone and its movement ends.

Hill Trees cover the hill with the same effects as the woods. Moving up the slopes of the hill toward the top counts as moving across challenging terrain.

Cave A tunnel, about 5 feet wide, extends 5 feet into the hill and opens into a cavity. Dead grass and flexible branches cover the ground inside and serve as bedding. A few tallow candles have been melted on rocky outcroppings and burn day and night.

Melted wax spills off these rocks and puddles on the floor. The air in the cave reeks of sweat, dung, and rot.

A search of the cave turns up a dozen more tallow candles, a tinderbox, ten days of dubious provisions, ten canteens, an old bucket, bones, bits of fur, a human finger, two bronze-bladed shovels, and plenty of roaches. The goblins have been robbing old graves and have dug up a few pieces of jewelry worth 5 sp.

3. THE STEADING

The group can visit the Groeben Steading while exploring the environment around the site of the attack on the caravan. What they find depends on how much time has passed since the group set out from Stillwater. If the group waits too long, the bandits hit the site first with terrible consequences for the people who live here.

STEADING INTACT

If the characters reach the Steading within a day of finding the wagons, the group finds the Steading intact and carrying out business as usual. Henry Groeben reveals himself as a friendly, hospitable man, and offers the barn to the characters if they wish to spend the night. He can tell the group that he doesn't know what happened to Stillwater's wagons, though he was aware that they were sending for aid from a larger town a ways away. He can confirm that he's chased off goblins trying to steal his chickens and make a nuisance of themselves, but so far, they seem more interested in mischief than anything else.

One thing that troubles him is that he's seen smoke coming from the north. The only thing nearby is the Old Keep. Since everyone knows that place is haunted and keeps clear of it, he suspects either some fools or scoundrels have made camp there. He hasn't made the trip to check, but he's told his hired helpers to keep an eye out for trouble.

BANDIT ATTACK

If the characters camp in the Steading's barn, **5 bandits** under the command of a **veteran bandit** approach the farm at night and attack. The characters have a chance to ambush the robbers, who are unaware of the group's presence.

BATTLEFIELD

A combat at the Steading might involve several areas: the large walled yard, the farmhouse, the barn, chicken coop, and pig pen. Arrange these locations in any way you like.

A low stone wall edges of the yard.

The farmhouse's main floor has a few rooms, and bedrooms upstairs. Populate the farmhouse with furniture and whatever miscellaneous items you deem appropriate.

COMBAT DEVELOPMENTS

The bandits have no idea that a well-armed group of adventurers are present. Once the characters reveal themselves, the bandits focus their attention on them. If two or more bandits fall or the sergeant falls, the rest flee. If fighting breaks out between the group and the attackers, the hired hands and Henry Groeben join the fight, while his wife and child run for safety. They use rules for **peasants**.

STEADING RUINS

If the characters come to the Steading 24 hours after finding the wagons or later, the group finds the bandits' handiwork. The hired hands lay dead where they fell, while Groeben hangs nailed to the farmhouse door, brutalized and burnt. The bandits left the barn and other buildings intact, but they torched the farmhouse after ransacking it for all its valuables. When the bandits left, they took the pigs with them, which left an obvious trail to the Old Keep.

FRIGHTENED SHEPHERD

If the group needs an additional clue, you can have them encounter Ayma (**peasant**), a shepherd who tends her flocks in the fields around Stillwater. She carries a staff and sling, and has skill enough with both to keep predators away. She encountered one of the bandits a couple of days ago. A man approached her at dusk, asking for food and water. She was cautious and threatened him with her staff if he didn't keep back. She gave him a bit of bread and a few pulls from her canteen. He seemed to want something more, but she sent him on his way. He had the look of a soldier to him, but unkempt, filthy, and with a nasty way. She thinks he came from the north.

4. THE BANDITS

A squat tower with the broken, crumbling remains of walls jutting out to the sides marks the location of an old stronghold abandoned some fifty years ago. Until the bandits moved in, people avoided the place, claiming it was haunted. Plenty of stories circulate about the pale woman, a ghost who sometimes peers out of the arrow slits, or the silent boy, whose crying sometimes sounds on nights when Sister Moon fails to rise into the sky. The bandits, unaware of the local folklore, settled into the place and have had an uneasy time since moving in.

The Old Keep stands in the center of open ground, with high grasses, weeds, and brambles covering the hard-packed earth. A few dead trees rise up here and there, bark pale, splintered, and riddled with cavities. It's unlikely that anyone approaching the tower can do so unnoticed.

ENEMY FORCES

The number of bandits and their activities depend on the time of day the group approaches and how much time has passed since the quest began. Under normal circumstances, night sees the bandits at their most active since they use the dark to cover their movements. During the day, they hunker down in the ruins, most sleeping, while a few stand guard, watching the approach to the ruin. If the group comes to the Old Keep during day 3 or later, the bandits have cleared out and either make their case to rule Stillwater or have taken control of the place.

In addition to Otto, the **bandit captain**, the band includes **2 infamous bandits**, **10 veteran bandits**, and **10 bandits** and **15 peasants**, the last 25 having joined up during the band's march to this region. Keep a running total of these enemies, reducing their numbers as they fall in battle. For combat, you can use the following encounter groups.

SENTRIES: Guard duty falls to the peasants. At any time, 4 peasants watch from the top of the tower. Poor soldiers, they ease their boredom playing cards and dicing. At night, they take turns sleeping, with two up and watching the grounds. Every six hours, another set of 4 peasants replace them.

PATROLS: The captain has four pairs of torch-bearing bandits walking the grounds around the tower at night. With north at 12 o'clock, one pair stands guard at 3 o'clock, another at 6, and the last at 9. They rotate positions every hour or so.

FORAGING PARTIES: Each night, 8 or so peasants under the command of a bandit forage in the surrounding countryside. They leave about an hour after sunset and return a couple hours before dawn, usually with sacks full of foodstuffs and leading livestock.

RAIDING PARTIES: During the first two nights of the quest, the captain sends out two raiding parties to strike farms and homesteads in the surrounding countryside. A sergeant leads a team of 4 bandits, making up any shortfalls with bandits and peasants as needed. They leave the tower around midnight and return a few hours later.

ALERTING THE BANDITS

A direct assault against the Old Keep ought to prove unwise, as the defenders most likely outnumber the characters. If the characters make the attempt, the enemy forces attack using ranged weapons from arrow slits and from behind the battlements at the tower's top. If the characters retreat, a force made up of half the occupants gives pursuit. Captured characters are brought into the tower, interrogated, and eventually executed unless the bandits have some special reason to spare the characters' lives.

OLD KEEP LOCATIONS

The keep comprises the following locations.

YARD AND CRUMBLING WALLS

Two crumbling walls reach out from the tower, collapsing into rubble piles about fifteen feet out. Poison ivy clings to the stones. The walls form a shallow yard, where the bandits keep animals penned, prisoners in wooden cages, and where they cook their meals over three firepits. Depending on when the characters visit the Old Keep, the bandits might have two prisoners from the Groeben Steading. Also, the stolen wagons and the grain they hold sit just inside the walls.

GROUND FLOOR

The bottom floor serves as a barracks. The bandits pushed all the rotting, moldy furniture toward the walls to create a clear space in the center. There, they unroll their bedrolls during sleep shifts. A wooden ladder leads up through a trap door to the second floor. Buried under the furniture is another trap door that opens onto stone steps descending into the cellar.

SECOND FLOOR

Like the ground floor, the second floor consists of a single room.

Arrow slits offer views to each cardinal point. Some bandits sleep up here, as their bedrolls suggest. A bronze brazier loaded with wood keeps the room warm at night. Trap doors lead up to the third floor and down to the ground floor.

THIRD FLOOR

The trapdoor opens into a cross-shaped hallway, which divides this floor into four equal size rooms. Across the hall, another ladder leads up to the roof. Open doors offer access to the four rooms, while more arrow slits pierce the outer walls at the end of each hall. The rooms are bedrooms. Furniture quality makes it clear these were officers' quarters, though none of the bandits sleep or spend time here, it being haunted.

A search of the rooms turns up moldy uniforms, rotten letters, and personal effects such as brushes, bars of soap, basins, and the like. Behind one wardrobe, a searching character can find a magical sword (grants 1 boon on rolls to attack). In another room, a search of the sunken mattress turns up a pouch containing 30 sp.

At night, a **ghost** of a dead woman appears along with **4 haunts** of her children, who run and play, making no sounds as they do. The ghost woman has a terrified expression and her tongue sticks out of her mouth. She's hostile to characters, but she frequently points between her feet and screams as she attacks the characters to drive them away.

The group can put the ghosts to rest by finding their remains in the cellar and giving them a proper burial. Groups that accomplish this make luck rolls with 1 boon until the end of their next quest for as long as they remain in the same environment.

ROOF

A crenelated battlement surrounds the roof. A wide iron brazier stands in the center, spotted with rust. The sentries often burn the tower's furniture at night.

THE CELLAR

If the characters find the trap door on the ground floor under the debris, they find stone steps leading down to a square space, dark and full of black mold. Shelves line the walls; glass jars of varying sizes sit on the shelves. Against the wall opposite the stairs stands a shoddy wooden door.

Opening the door reveals a small space with a dirt floor covered in the bones of five people, whose spirits haunt the upper levels. An altar made from animal bones stands in the center of this room and balanced atop sits an old book, leather covers black with age and gouged. Opening the book reveals blank pages, but stained brown on the edges. If fresh blood is spilled onto the page, the blood forms letters in a script the donor can read. If the words are read aloud, shadows gather above the altar and a **horror** steps free. The horror is hostile and attacks any creature it sees. It kills until it itself is destroyed.

If the characters fail to find the book, the goblins do find it when they ransack the ruins and one foolishly reads from its pages, summoning the monster as a result. The horror, freed from the book, marches toward Stillwater to make carnage from the villagers unless someone stops it first.

CONCLUSION

Unless the group manages to recover the grain from the bandits and deal with them in the process, the bandits show up to make their demands. Otto and any surviving followers march into the center of Stillwater, leading the wagons laden with grain. Otto demands to speak with the village's leader. Henry Brewer steps up if the characters don't take charge. Otto explains that he will share this grain that he and his followers found on the road and that, in the best interest of the community, he is moving in to take charge of the locals. In return for his protection, he expects the villagers to work for him and hand over a third of what they make, sell, and grow.

Unless the characters intervene in some way, Brewer has no choice but to accept the terms and urges the other villagers to adapt to the new way of life. However, Brewer is not about to put up with these scum and starts killing them off, a few at a time, in discrete ways until it becomes clear that something is going on. If the characters are still in the village, they might become implicated in the murders or be pressed to investigate them.

In addition to the unhinged killer hiding in plain sight, there's also the matter of the goblins and the horror. The goblins, unless prevented in some way, release the horror from under the tower at the Old Keep, which eventually sniffs out warm bodies to kill. The horror's appearance might unite the bandits and the villagers or give Brewer the chance he needs to make an end of Otto and drive off his underlings.

The characters might participate in any of these activities, playing the parts of negotiators, peace keepers, or not. If they leave Stillwater to its fate, they eventually hear about how mounting disasters put an end to the settlement.

If the characters manage to deal with some of the bandits, Stillwater recovers thanks to the reclaimed grains and enjoys a better growing season the next year. Any surviving bandits might stay in the area and cause further trouble for the villagers, however, which might see the characters enlisted in rooting them out.

The goblins could become a problem for Stillwater as well. Releasing the horror sees enough of their numbers killed that the survivors scatter, never to be seen again. But, if the goblins never get the chance to search the cellar, they grow into a larger gang, the Mighty High Thune attracting more goblins. A confrontation between the villagers and the goblins becomes inevitable.

ENEMIES AND ALLIES

The following characters appear in *A Season of Hunger*.

BANDIT

LEVEL ½

TYPE *Ancestry (Human)*

Defense 11 (padded), Health 5

Strength 10 (+0), Agility 10 (+0)

Intellect 9 (-1), Will 8 (-2)

TRAITS AND TALENTS

Languages Common

Size 1, Speed 5

ATTACKS

Club Strength (+0) (1d6)

Bow (Range 15) Agility (+0) (1d6)

BANDIT CAPTAIN

LEVEL 3

TYPE *Ancestry (Human)*

Defense 17 (mail, shield); Health 30

Strength 12 (+2); Agility 11 (+1)

Intellect 12 (+2); Will 11 (+1)

TRAITS AND TALENTS

Leadership (aura 5) Allies roll to attack with 1 boon.

Languages Common

Size 1, Speed 5

ATTACKS

Battle Axe Strength (+2) with 1 boon (3d6 or 4d6 in both hands)

Crossbow (Range 20, Reload) Agility (+1) with 1 boon (2d6)

GHOST

LEVEL 3

TYPE SPIRIT

Defense 22, Health 30

Strength 10 (+0), Agility 12 (+2)

Intellect 10 (+0), Will 11 (+1)

TRAITS AND TALENTS

Senses Awareness 10

Languages Archaic, Common, or Kingdom

Size 1, Speed 5 (Fly, Hover, Insubstantial, Silent, Slippery)

Immune blinded, deafened, frightened, held, on fire, poisoned, prone, unconscious

Fearsome Impose 1 bane on rolls to attack the ghost by enemies not immune to the frightened affliction.

ACTIONS

Chilling Touch Target one creature in reach. Make a Will (+1) roll with 1 boon against the target's Strength. On a success, the target loses 1d6 Health, and becomes weakened (luck ends). In addition, the target makes an Agility roll. On a failure, the target falls prone and drops whatever it is holding.

Spiritual Possession Target one creature in reach. Make a Will (+1) roll with 1 boon against the target's Will. On a success, the ghost moves into the target's body and causes the target to become controlled. The ghost remains inside the target until the affliction ends, it moves out of it, or is forced out. Each time the target takes damage, it makes a Will roll with 1 bane. On a successful roll, the affliction ends, and the ghost is forced out of the target's body to an empty space of its choice within the target's reach.

While it is inside a target, the ghost is immune to harmful effects except those that result from a successful or failed Intellect roll or Will roll.

If the ghost gets a failure on its Will roll, the target takes 1d6 damage but is not otherwise affected and becomes immune to this talent for 1 hour.

GOBLIN

LEVEL ½

TYPE ANCESTRY (GOBLIN), FAERIE

Defense 12 (leather), **Health** 5
Strength 8 (–2), **Agility** 11 (+1)
Intellect 9 (–1), **Will** 8 (–2)

TRAITS AND TALENTS

Senses Keen Vision
Languages Goblin Tongue
Size 1/2, **Speed** 6 (Slippery)

ATTACKS

Spear Agility (+1) (1d6)
Sling (Range 10) Agility (+1) (1d6)

REACTIONS

Sneaky (reaction, when the goblin moves to a place where it can hide) The goblin hides.

END OF THE ROUND

Sunlight Weakness At the end of the round, the goblin becomes weakened until the end of the next round if in a space lit by sunlight.

HAUNT

LEVEL ½

TYPE SPIRIT

Defense 15, **Health** 10
Strength —, **Agility** 10 (+0)
Intellect —, **Will** —

TRAITS AND TALENTS

Immune blinded, deafened, frightened, held, on fire, poisoned, prone, unconscious
Invisible A haunt is invisible.
Size 1, **Speed** 5; Insubstantial, Silent, Slippery

ACTIONS

Frightening Appearance Lose the haunt's Invisible trait until the start of its next turn. Each creature that can see it makes a Will roll. On a success, the creature becomes immune to the trait for 1 hour. On a failure, the creature takes 1d6 damage and becomes frightened of the haunt (luck ends).

HORROR

LEVEL 4

TYPE MONSTER

Defense 13 **Health** 30
Strength 13 (+3) **Agility** 13 (+3)
Intellect 13 (+3) **Will** 13 (+3)

TRAITS AND TALENTS

Senses True Vision
Immune controlled, confused, frightened, stunned
Fearsome Impose 1 bane on rolls to attack the horror by enemies not immune to the frightened affliction.
Size 1 **Speed** 6 (Teleport 6)

ATTACKS

Various Weaponized Appendages Strength (+3) with 1 boon (3d6)

Bloodthirsty If the result of the roll is 5 or lower, roll another d20 and add the number rolled to the result.

END OF THE ROUND

Rampage Roll a d6. On a 4 or higher, the horror's attacks deal an extra 2d6 damage until the end of its next turn.

INFAMOUS BANDIT

LEVEL 2

TYPE ANCESTRY (HUMAN)

Defense 17 (mail, shield), **Health** 20
Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 10 (+0)
Intellect 10 (+0), **Will** 11 (+1)

TRAITS AND TALENTS

Languages Common
Size 1 **Speed** 5

ATTACKS

Sword Strength (+2) with 1 boon (2d6)

20+ The target takes an extra 1d6 damage.

Crossbow (Range 20, Reload) Agility (+0) with 1 boon (2d6)

MOG

LEVEL 3

TYPE ANCESTRY (GOBLIN), FAERIE

Defense 14 (leather, shield), **Health** 40
Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 10 (+0)
Intellect 6 (–4), **Will** 10 (+0)

TRAITS AND TALENTS

Senses Keen Vision
Languages Goblin Tongue
Size 1, **Speed** 5

ATTACKS

Maul Strength (+2) with 1 boon (3d6 or 4d6 to an object)

END OF THE ROUND

Sunlight Weakness At the end of the round, the mog becomes weakened until the end of the next round if in a space lit by sunlight.

MURDERER

LEVEL 3 (SOLITARY)

TYPE ANCESTRY (HUMAN)

Defense 12, Health 40

Strength 13 (+3), Agility 12 (+2)

Intellect 11 (+1), Will 13 (+3)

TRAITS AND TALENTS

Languages Common

Immune frightened

Aggressive At the start of its turn, if there are no enemies in reach, use this trait to increase the murderer's Speed by 5 and deal an extra 1d6 damage until the end of the murderer's turn.

Size 1, Speed 5

ATTACKS

Battle Axe (Brutal) Strength (+3) with 1 boon (2d6 or 3d6 in both hands)

ACTIONS

Vicious Backswing If the result of the roll is 5 or lower, roll another d20 and add the number rolled to the result.

END OF THE ROUND

Rampage At the end of each round, roll a d6. On a 4 or higher, its attacks deal an extra 2d6 damage until the end of its next turn.

Down But Not Dead At the end of the round, if the murderer is incapacitated, it heals all damage and stands up.

MURDERER'S FURY

At the start of combat, the murderer gains 3 fury tokens and retains them until it spends them or the combat ends. Once per round, when the murderer gets a failure on an attribute roll or a luck roll, the murderer adds 1 token to its supply.

Once per round, at any time the murderer is neither stunned nor unconscious, it can spend 1 fury token to perform one of the following activities. It performs each activity just once. When it has performed each, it regains the ability to perform them all.

- Attack.
- Move up to Speed.
- Make next roll to attack with 3 boons.
- Turn a successful roll against it into a failed one.
- Remove all afflictions from itself.
- Heal 10 damage.

PEASANT

LEVEL ½

TYPE ANCESTRY (HUMAN)

Defense 10 Health 5

Strength 10 (+0) Agility 10 (+0)

Intellect 10 (+0) Will 10 (+0)

TRAITS AND TALENTS

Languages Common

Angry Mob If there are ten or more peasants all in the same size 5 space, each makes Strength rolls and Will rolls with 1 boon.

Size 1 Speed 5

ATTACKS

Club Strength (+0) (1d6)

VETERAN BANDIT

LEVEL 1

TYPE ANCESTRY (HUMAN)

Defense 15 (brigandine, shield) Health 15

Strength 11 (+1) Agility 11 (+1)

Intellect 9 (-1) Will 10 (+0)

TRAITS AND TALENTS

Languages Common

Size 1 Speed 5

ATTACKS

Sword Strength (+1) with 1 boon (1d6)

Bow (Range 15) Agility (+1) with 1 boon (1d6)