BLOODWRAITH

RULES

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Based on an original conversation between jim pinto and Darren Pearce

Bloodwraith is a fantasy game setting for any rules system. It was designed and written in roughly 60 hours, as a personal challenge to produce a usable fantasy world after reading some poorly written PDFs. This is for spite.

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

This book does not care about your background. Anyone — ANYONE — can use this book. This game is for anyone who wants a different kind of fantasy setting and ruleset. And if you're living in a part of the world where your ethnicity, gender, or sexual identity is cause for debate at the gaming table, I hope you find better people to game with.

She is the generic third-person pronoun throughout.

NEW DARK AGES

Now come ye children one and all
Let's heed Ezekiel's call
And bide until the word is good and ripe
And get plucked clean out of sight

— Bad Religion, New Dark Ages

CONTENTS

BLOODWRAITH

Bloodwraith is a fantasy roleplaying game, with old school mechanics and tragic overtones. The setting is defined in the world book. This rulebook assumes the gamemaster and players are at least partially aware of what the setting has in store for them. This document explains how to play *Bloodwraith* using a modified system of a tried and true game. The following pages are written in a short-hand format, with basic rules for character creation, character classes, and dice rolling rules.

Bloodwraith assumes players are familiar with the tropes of roleplaying games to a minor degree. Based on the Old School Revival (OSR) genre of roleplaying games, *Bloodwraith* avoids spelling out rules for everything. The gamemaster arbitrates over anything lacking in this document. The holes are deliberate, providing a break from needless stricture. The gamemaster always has the right to modify the rules or make snap decisions for the benefit of play.

Bloodwraith requires two kinds of participants: players and a gamemaster.

For players, the first step in playing *Bloodwraith* is to create a character: a persona she will inhabit throughout the game. This is a simple matter of rolling dice to determine a character's strengths and features, choosing a character class, and determining their role in the community.

The gamemaster, however, must prepare the adventure, campaign, and individual sessions. This is covered on page 68.

DICE

Bloodwraith uses different dice types. They are abbreviated according to the number of dice sides.

For example, a four-sided die is noted as 'd4.' If a player is required to roll '3d4,' she rolls three four-sided dice and adds the results together. Other die types (six-sided, eight-sided, ten-sided, twelve-sided, and twenty-sided) follow in the same manner (d6, d8, d10, d12, and d20, respectively).

When asked to roll d100, roll two ten-sided dice, treating the first roll as the 'tens' and the second as the 'ones.' So, if one were to roll a '7' and then a '3,' the result would be 73.

The roll of two zeroes is treated as a result of '100,' so you cannot roll a '0' on percentile dice. The lowest result possible is a '1.'

> *In general, rolling high is good and rolling low is bad.*

When asked to roll 1d3, roll one six-sided die, and divide it by 2, rounding up. A roll of 1–2 thefore becomes a '1,' a roll of 3–4 becomes a '2,' and a roll of 5–6 becomes a '3.' Any odd-numbered die roll can be generated in this fashion.

CHARACTER CREATION

A character sheet organizes all necessary PC information, for the benefit of both the gamemaster and player. For *Bloodwraith*, the character sheet is informal. A simple index card will suffice. However, a character sheet appears at the back of this book (as well as a free pdf sheet online).

The key information listed on a character sheet are attribute scores (strength, intelligence, etc.), character class, armor class, hit points, saving throw, drama points, bonuses, basic class abilities, attack modifiers, and visions. Equipment, relationships, and spells are also important. All of this information combines to provide context of *who* a character is. So while two characters may have similar information or overlapping abilities, no two are ever the same.

All of this information is generated over the next few pages. It shouldn't take more than a few minutes to create a character and the community she lives in.

ATTRIBUTE SCORES

Six basic attributes represent the Strength, Intelligence, Wisdom, Dexterity, Constitution, and Charisma of a character. These are measured with a numeric value, usually between 3 and 18, though its possible to go higher or lower through magical means.

Reaching '0' in any attribute means certain death.

GENERATING ATTRIBUTE SCORES

The standard method for generating attribute scores is to roll 3d6 for each attribute in the previously mentioned order. Once those rolls have been made, it is often obvious which character class best fits the attributes values rolled — though, the player always has the option to play any class desired.

Note, Bloodwraith has a smaller selection of classes than most OSR games.

Once a class is selected, points from other attributes may be shifted around, but **no ability score can be reduced below 9 through this method.**

Ability scores above 14 are generally considered good and below 9 are considered poor. Depending on the gamemaster, scores of 18 are considered exceptional and grant additional bonuses.

OPTIONS

With the gamemaster's approval, players may roll 3d6 (or 4d6, taking the best three dice) six times and arrange the rolls however they wish. This allows players to place the best results into abilities that best suit the type of character the player wants to be.

STRENGTH

Strength represents the character's physical power. It reflects the ability to hit and damage an opponent in hand-to-hand combat. A high Strength score (15 or higher) grants a character a +1 bonus on attack rolls while using a melee weapon, and a low score (8 or less) incurs a –1 penalty.

The gamemaster may determine that a Strength score of 18 grants a +2 bonus to melee attacks and damage.

INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence represents IQ, reasoning, and the ability to solve puzzles or understand difficult concepts. A high Intelligence score grants a character an additional language for every point above 10.

Languages in *Bloodwraith* include: Ahari, dwarf, elf, gaveedi, goblin, ijdani, jarudi, new jarudi, nowasi, orc, orchoi, and toghani. Bloodwraiths communicate through emotion and powerful visions. As such, humans may understand it, but they can't express anything in it. It is not a language option.

WISDOM

Wisdom determines a character's insight, perception, and good judgment. A character with a Wisdom score of 15 or higher gains +1 to saving throws.

The gamemaster may determine that a Wisdom score of 18 grants a +2 bonus to saving throws.

DEXTERITY

Dexterity is a combination of coordination and quickness. A high Dexterity score (15 or higher) grants a character a +1 bonus on attack rolls while using a ranged weapon, and a low score (8 or less) grants a –1 penalty. Dexterity also grants an equal bonus (or penalty) to armor class and initiative.

The gamemaster may determine that a Dexterity score of 18 grants a +2 bonus.

CONSTITUTION

Constitution refers to the health and endurance of a character. Character's begin play with hit points (see page 32) equal to their level plus Constitution score. Each level, a character gains one additional hit point.

The gamemaster may determine that a Constitution score of 18 grants a +1 bonus to stamina-related saving throws.

Characters with a Constitution score below 9 are generally considered too weak to play. With the gamemaster's approval, either raise the Constitution score to 9 or retire the character and roll up a new one.

CHARISMA

Charisma refers to a character's leadership. It also determines the number of companions a character can lead on adventures, excursions, hunting parties, etc. These companions include anyone from the enclave. Charisma modifies the loyalty of these companions, as well. Companions are further addressed in the gamemaster section.

In *Bloodwraith*, enclave leaders need a high Charisma score in order to keep the community in check. This attribute also governs how many companions a given character can command and the modifier to their loyalty. The relationship column indicates the modifier to a character's total number of starting relationships. This means a character could start with none (if the gamemaster is so inclined). These bonus relationships comes from any segment of the enclave (see page 38).

Charisma Bonus Table			
Score	Companions	Loyalty	Relationships
3–4	1	–2	0*
5–6	2	–2	0**
7–8	3	–1	0
9–12	4	0	0
13–15	5	+1	0
16–17	6	+2	+1
18	7	+2	+2

* **The gamemaster may determine the PC begins play with two fewer relationships than normal, or two of those starting relationships are rivalries.**

** **The gamemaster may determine the PC begins play with one fewer relationships than normal, or one of those starting relationships is a rivalry.**

LEVEL, ADVANCEMENT, AND EXPERIENCE POINTS (XP)

Characters start at 1st level and advance up to 10th level. But *Bloodwraith* does not use an XP system for level advancement. Instead, the gamemaster has a list of options for level advancement on page 46. This still does not allow characters to change their class until they reach level 10. Once a character advances beyond level 10, she can take level 1 in any other class, gaining all the benefits of both classes and using the best abilities and values of either. Repeat as necessary.

Effectively, a 60th level character would have six character classes, but this is obviously silly.

CHARACTER CLASSES

Bloodwraith uses a class system. This simplifies the character creation process and gets to the meat of the game. Classes reference bonuses and abilities that affect combat and non-combat situations. Anything outside the rules of the class are relative. The success of a given action that is not delineated by any of the classes is determined by the gamemaster and players.

For instance, the archer class has an acrobatics ability. Without this ability, characters cannot do back-flips or run on tightropes, regardless of whether or not there is actually archer in the party. This class already delineates said ability.

Character classes contain information on armor class, saving throws bonuses, attack bonuses (based on level), and a range of abilities. Saving throws are used both reactively, to avoid damage from a magic spells (for instance), and actively, to determine if a class ability works or not. As the value required to succeed at a saving throw goes down each level, characters become more competent at their core abilities.

Unlike traditional OSR games, characters deal damage in combat based on their class, and not on their weapon (its the wielder over the tools). This allows players to customize their characters based on flavor and not mechanical benefit. There is no need for everyone to run around with greatswords. Fight with what you want.

> *Swords are extremely rare in Bloodwraith. Characters use what they can find.*

Armor class is also determined by class, and not by armor (with bonuses added to a base 10). This precludes characters from combing through pages of armor types to determine what works best under which conditions.

> *Bloodwraith is a roleplaying game about ragtag heroes. Characters wear whatever they can find. Plate mail is a thing of the past.*

Character classes grant bonus drama points (beyond the starting one drama point), which is explained in detail on page 32.

Finally, there is a new concept included with each character class called community. The rules for building an enclave community start on page 38. Each character class confers its own benefits for the number of starting relationships it has, with additional relationships gained through Charisma.

CLASS LIST

There are seven classes in *Bloodwraith*: Archer, barbarian, druid, fighter, irregular, scout, and warlock. Unless approved by the gamemaster, all classes are human. Even so, there are no mechanical benefits to a character based on species (though enemies and monsters may have them).

ARCHER

Archers are adept with ranged weapons. While anyone can learn to fire a bow, it takes practice to become a marksman. It takes nerves to fire an arrow through a crowd or at a charging foe. The term *archer* is reserved for the very best.

ARCHER ADVANCEMENT TABLE			
Level	Hit Points	Saving Throw	Attack Bonus
1	Con+1	15	0
2	Con+2	14	1
3	Con+3	13	2
4	Con+4	12	2
5	Con+5	11	3
6	Con+6	10	3
7	Con+7	9	4
8	Con+8	8	4
9	Con+9	7	5
10	Con+10	6	5

ACROBATICS

An archer is capable of amazing physical feats. When using acrobatics, she rolls a saving throw. If the roll is successful, the archer succeeds at the task. Acrobatic maneuvers go well beyond the standard physical fare of climbing fences and trees. A Dexterity-based saving throw is only required when the archer attempts something extraordinary.

This ability can be used to make a standing jump at a distance (or height) of five feet, plus her level or a running jump twice that distance. When using a ten-foot pole to assist in these jumps, add an additional ten feet to distance. This ability also allows them to walk along narrow ledges or tightropes when used successfully, as well as scale sheer surfaces without the aid of tools.

Acrobatics also covers running silently, though at 1/3rd movement, and remaining still — without being noticed — for lengthy periods of time.

Finally, a successful saving throw allows an archer to reduce damage suffered from a 50-foot (or lower) fall from 5d6 to 1d6.

ARMOR CLASS

Archers typically stay out of harm's way, gaining +3 to their armor class. At 6th level, this bonus increases to +4.

COMMUNITY

Archers begin play with one relationship to the enclave leader (the Avag), *or* the fourth-highest ranking member of the enclave (the Namak). This relationship is determined during enclave creation (see page 38).

DRAMA POINTS

Archers begin play with three additional drama points.

EQUIPMENT

Archers carry a compliment of equipment for fighting and travelling. They start play with three additional small items beyond the normal five.

Note: Archers make their own arrows. They are always assumed to have roughly 20 arrows on them at any one time. Creating more is a simple matter, requiring no more than a day to fashion another dozen or so. However, *Bloodwraith* does not require players to keep track of arrows unless they want to.

HUNTER

Among other skills, archers also track and hunt game. This has taught them to be patient and wait for the right moment to strike.

An archer who spends one action aiming, may claim a *called shot*. The archer gains a +2 to attack on the called shot, also allowing her to attack some place specific, fire a warning shot, or to deal extra damage. Extra damage from a called shot is equal to the base hit bonus of the archer (minimum 1).

A called shot is most useful when hunting game, giving the archer a clean kill on a deer or something smaller.

SAVING THROW

Archers receive a +2 bonus to any saving throw made to reduce or avoid the effects of any trap — magical or mundane.

SHARPSHOOTER

Archers gain +2 to all ranged attack rolls and deal 1d6+2 damage when attacking with ranged weapons. In melee combat, archers deal 1d4 damage.

At 4th level, the archer can attack twice per round with ranged weapons.

At 10th level, the archer can attack three times per round with ranged weapons.

SWIFT RUNNER

Archers move quicker than other humans and have a movement rate of 15 instead of the standard 12.

BARBARIAN

Barbarians are not cultureless thugs, given to fits of rage. They are hardy and respected members of the enclave, concerned with protecting their communities and way of life. Barbarians are not trained to fight, but learn to survive through trial and error. They rely on strength and wisdom to survive.

BARBARIAN ADVANCEMENT TABLE				
Level	Hit Points*	Saving Throw	Attack Bonus	Savage Blow
1	Con+4	15	0	0
2	Con+5	14	1	0
3	Con+6	13	2	1
4	Con+7	12	2	1
5	Con+8	11	3	1
6	Con+9	10	3	2
7	Con+10	9	4	2
8	Con+11	8	4	2
9	Con+12	7	5	3
10	Con+13	6	5	3

ARMOR CLASS

Barbarians wear loose-fitting armor, but have thicker than average skin. They gain +3 to their armor class. At 7th level, this bonus increases to +5.

COMMUNITY

Barbarians begin play with three relationships to citizens from the lowest class in the community (citizens, pariahs, or tradesmen). These relationships are determined during enclave creation (see page 38).

DRAMA POINTS

Barbarians begin play with one additional drama point and gain one again at 2nd, 5th, and 8th level.

ESTABLISH ENCLAVE

At 8th level, a barbarian with a Charisma score of 13 or higher may build a new nomadic straggler enclave. If so, she is considered to have reached the rank of Ishkhan (lower chief), recruiting a number of humans equal to twice her Charisma score. These survivors swear fealty to the character.

KEEN INSTINCTS

Barbarians are keenly aware of their surroundings. A barbarian gains a +2 to any saving throw involving sight or sound. A barbarian with a high Wisdom score (15 or higher) gains an additional +2 to the roll.

Barbarians can detect hidden locations, traps, and vaults in the wild easier than other humans. To discover secret places, the barbarian must succeed at a saving throw. This does not apply to dungeon-delving or inside man-made structures like castles and strongholds, but does apply to camouflaged tents and the like.

Barbarians cannot be surprised.

SAVAGE BLOWS

Barbarians gain +2 to all attack rolls and deal 1d10+2 damage when attacking with melee weapons.

In ranged combat, barbarians deal 1d6 damage.

In addition, the barbarian adds her savage blow score to all damage dealt in melee combat.

SAVING THROWS

Barbarians receive a +2 bonus to all saving throws made to resist poisons, spells, and magical effects.

SWIFT RUNNER

Barbarians move quicker than other humans and have a movement rate of 15 instead of the standard 12.

WILDERNESS SURVIVAL

Barbarians are adept at surviving in the wild places of the world and are always able to find food and water to sustain themselves when in the wilderness.

Barbarians can also set rudimentary snares and traps for catching game and/or alerting the barbarian someone is coming — an enemy patrol for instance.

They also understand basic first aid. After a fight, a barbarian may attend to one person. On a successful saving throw, she stops the bleeding, restoring 1 lost HP. This will not save a character who has already fallen below 0 HPs.

In addition, barbarians start play with +3 hit points. This is already calculated on the barbarian advancement table.

DRUID

A *Bloodwraith* druid is akin to a medicine man or shaman. She understands nature, can commune with spirits, and can treat illnesses. Most importantly, druids have access to magical spells, including healing magic. They are similar to those who practice witchcraft, but the overlap in skills is negligible.

DRUID ADVANCEMENT TABLE			
Level	Hit Points	Saving Throw	Attack Bonus
1	Con+1	14	0
2	Con+2	13	0
3	Con+3	12	0
4	Con+4	11	1
5	Con+5	10	1
6	Con+6	9	2
7	Con+7	8	2
8	Con+8	7	3
9	Con+9	6	3
10	Con+10	5	4

ARMOR CLASS

Druids do not gain any inherent bonuses to their armor class, beyond Dexterity.

COMMUNITY

Druids begin play with one relationship to the Vhuk, *or* three relationships to citizens from the lowest class in the community (citizens, pariahs, or tradesmen). These relationships are determined during enclave creation (see page 38).

THE CUDGEL

Druids deal 1d4 damage when attacking with melee or ranged weapons.

DRAMA POINTS

Druids gain one drama point at 3rd, 5th, and 8th level.

EQUIPMENT

Druids carry a large array of items beyond the normal equipment one might possess. In addition to a host of herbs, polstices, and unguents, druids start play with four additional 'natural' items.

FORESTRY

Druids are most at home in the wilderness, among the flora and fauna of the world. Their understanding of forests helps them in a number of ways:

- They can track animals and humanoids in natural environments with a successful saving throw.

- While in natural environments, druids can remain silent and unseen with a successful saving throw.

- When a druid encounters an aggressive natural animal, she may attempt to calm and soothe it, with a successful saving throw.

LEY STONE

Starting at 2nd level, druids can create magical ley stones. Ley stones emit magical energy, allowing the druid to locate them again later. The creator of the ley stones is already attuned to her creations, therefore she does not need to carry one, but others can. So long as a ley stone is within one mile of her, she knows exactly where the stone is. This requires very little concentration, unless something has been done to obscure the stone (such as magic or some supernatural barrier).

It takes a full day for a druid to find and prepare a proper stone to be imbued with leyline essence. It is a tiring ritual, but it does not require the expenditure of any other kind of magic. Ley stones radiates subtle divination magic, equal in strength to the druid's level.

A druid may not create more ley stones than she has levels. If she does, the oldest stone burns out when a new one is created. Thus, a 5th level druid could have up to five ley stones. But if a 6th ley stone was made, the first one would burn out and return to its inert state.

A ley stone can be as small as a palm-sized rock to as large as a boulder. Semi-precious and precious stones can also be used, but still need to be at least the size of someone's palm.

PRIMAL FORCE

At 10th level, a druid is so in tune with nature, she becomes as powerful as the earth. Tapping into the ancient essence of the earth, the druid can unleash a torrent of strength and fury unmatched by any human in Gyrr.

Each round, a druid may sacrifice a spell slot to gain a bonus to attack and damage in melee. The bonus is equal to the level of the spell being spent. For example, an 8th level spell grants a +8 to attack and damage for one round.

Note: If the attack misses, the spell slot is still lost.

PROXIMITY ATTUNEMENT

At 1st level, a druid must decide which kind of druid she is — a blood druid, ice druid, or ruins druid. Blood druids derive an inexplicable power from the Bloodmarshes, while ice druids draw their power from the Ice Wall (*jégfal*) and ruins druid draw their power from the past. The former is not necessarily evil, but somehow gains strength from the Bloodmarshes all the same. The two latter druids are more in tune with nature.

Druids become stronger when they are in proximity to their attuned terrain type. What this means is that an blood druid grows stronger when she is closer to the Bloodmarshes and an ice druid grows stronger when she is closer to the Ice Wall. Ruin druids draw strength from statues, ruins, and other objects marked by the past civilization. How this power manifests is different each time. Spells may deal more damage, heal more, a strange prophetic vision or whisper may follow the casting of a spell, or the spell range could extend to the edge of one's sight.

While the gamemaster is the final arbiter of what constitutes *stronger*, players are encouraged to develop creative ideas on how the druid's increased strength manifests.

SAVING THROW

Druids receive a +2 bonus to all saving throws made to resist damage from cold, fire and poisons.

SPELL CASTING

A druid's most potent power is her ability to cast spells. The amount of druidic spells she can cast each day is listed on the table below. Because the number is limited, the druid need not prepare her spells, but rather casts from the short list of spells available in the *Bloodwraith: Magic* book.

Spell levels match character levels, so a 9th level druid has access to 9th level spells.

Each day the druid meditates in a natural location such as a cave, forest, or grove in order to replenish their spells. This chart appears again in *Bloodwraith: Magic*.

DRUID SPELL ADVANCEMENT TABLE										
Druid Level	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
3	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
4	2	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
5	2	2	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–
6	2	2	2	1	1	1	–	–	–	–
7	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	–	–	–
8	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	–	–
9	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	–
10	4	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	1

FIGHTER

The fighter is trained in battle and in the use of armor and weapons. She might be an enclave defender, a focused crusader, or an immoral raider. Unlike other classes, fighters lack non-combat class abilities. This is the most straight-forward class.

FIGHTER ADVANCEMENT TABLE				
Level	Hit Points	Saving Throw	Attack Bonus	Bonus Attacks
1	Con+1	14	0	0
2	Con+2	13	1	0
3	Con+3	12	2	0
4	Con+4	11	3	0
5	Con+5	10	3	1
6	Con+6	9	4	1
7	Con+7	8	4	1
8	Con+8	7	5	1
9	Con+9	6	5	1
10	Con+10	5	6	2

ARMOR CLASS

Fighters typical wear light, effective armor, and are particularly adept at quickly donning and caring for it. They gain +5 to their armor class. This bonus increases to +8 at 6th level.

COMBAT READY

Fighters gain additional attacks based on their level, as indicated on the fighter advancement table.

Fighters deal 1d8 damage when attacking with melee or ranged weapons. Starting at 6th level, fighters deal 1d10 damage.

Whenever a foe rolls a critical failure against the fighter, that foe suffers 1 hit point of damage in addition to any other effects.

COMMUNITY

Fighters begin play with one relationship to the fourth-highest ranking member of the enclave (the Namak), or two relationships with tradesmen. These relationships are determined during enclave creation (see page 38).

DRAMA POINTS

Fighters gain one drama point at 3rd, 6th, and 9th level.

EQUIPMENT

Fighters are like pack mules when travelling overland. In addition to the normal allotment of gear, they start play with three additional pieces of equipment, one of which must be a signature weapon.

ESTABLISH ENCLAVE

At 9th level, a fighter with a Charisma score of 13 or higher may build a new enclave. If so, she is considered to have reached the rank of Avag (chief), recruiting a number of humans equal to ten times her Charisma score. *Survivors* swear fealty to the character and help build the new enclave. They speak the main language of the fighter.

MARTIAL PROWESS

Starting at 5th level and again at 8th level, the fighter learns a new manuever selected from the list below:

- Disarm: When a foe rolls a critical failure, the fighter makes a saving throw. If successful, the foe is disarmed.

- Mighty Blow: When a foe rolls a critical failure, increase the damage suffered by the foe from 1 to 2.

- Shield Bash: When a foe rolls a critical failure, the fighter makes a saving throw. If successful, the foe is pushed back 5 feet (along with the fighter who follows up).

SAVING THROW

Fighters gain a +2 bonus on saving throws vs. death and poison.

UNWAVERING FORTITUDE

A fighter may remain standing up and fighting without penalty until she reaches a number of negative hit points equal to her level. If she exceeds this limit, the fighter immediately drops dead. Once the battle concludes, the fighter dies in 1d6 rounds unless she receives immediate healing to restore her to at least 1 HP.

WEAPON SPECIALIZATION

Fighters are trained in nearly all weapons. However, each fighter has a preferred weapon, which is selected at character creation. When wielding her specialized weapon, the fighter gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls. At 5th level, the fighter gains specialization in a second weapon of her choice.

IRREGULAR

Irregulars are not properly trained to fight in formation. Instead, they use unusual (sometimes guerrilla) tactics to accomplish their ends. The enemy can't anticipate an irregular soldier's attack and therefore cannot plan for it.

IRREGULAR ADVANCEMENT TABLE				
Level	Hit Points	Saving Throw	Attack Bonus	Bonus Attacks
1	Con+1	13	0	0
2	Con+2	12	1	0
3	Con+3	11	1	0
4	Con+4	10	2	0
5	Con+5	9	2	0
6	Con+6	8	3	1
7	Con+7	7	3	1
8	Con+8	6	4	1
9	Con+9	5	4	1
10	Con+10	4	5	1*

AMBUSH

Irregulars catch foes unaware and strike from positions of advantage. When an irregular is alone and attacks an unaware opponent with a melee weapon, she gains a +2 bonus to attack. If successful, the irregular deals 2d6 damage. This damage increases to 3d6 at 10th level.

Irregulars also take advantage of enemy weaknesses. If the irregular studies an enemy for at least 30 minutes, she doubles her attack bonus for a number of attacks equal to her level. E.g. a 5th level irregular gains +4 (instead of +2) for up to five attacks.

ARMOR CLASS

Irregulars are agile and light-footed. They gain +1 to their armor class per level (i.e. a 5th level irregular gains +5 to her armor class). This bonus is lost when the irregular stands directly next to an ally.

COMBAT READY

Irregulars gain additional attacks based on their level, as indicated on the irregular advancement table. At 10th level, an irregular who kills a foe in one strike gains one additional attack against an adjacent foe, once per round.

Irregulars deal 1d6 damage in melee or ranged combat.

COMMUNITY

Irregulars begin play with four relationships with community outcasts. These relationships are determined during enclave creation (see page 38).

DEATH BY ONE THOUSAND CUTS

Whenever an irregular rolls maximum damage against an opponent, that opponent's movement rate is cut in half (rounding up) for 1d6 days.

Starting at 6th level, whenever an irregular would reduce a foe to '1' hit point, the foe is reduced to '0' hit points instead. At 10th level, this ability increases to include foes reduced to '1' or '2' hit points.

DRAMA POINTS

Irregulars begin play with four additional drama points, but never regain them through any normal methods. If the group is ever awarded drama points by the gamemaster, the irregular receives two less than the rest of the party would. Irregulars can never spend drama points on Charisma-based rolls.

HIDEOUT

At 6th level, an irregular may build a small shelter (hideout) in the wilderness that no one else can find. A hideout holds 1d4 additional people comfortably, allowing a safe place to hide or rest in times of trouble for 1d6 days before they must move on. Visitors can never recall exactly how to find a hideout again.

LEGION

Irregulars use unconventional tactics, taking advantage of exposed enemies. An irregular who spends one action preparing to strike against an already engaged enemy gains a +4 on the next attack roll and +2 to damage. An irregular must disengage from the fight to use this ability against the same foe again.

LIGHTNING REFLEXES

Irregulars with a high Dexterity (15 or higher) gain an additional +1 bonus to armor class and initiative. In addition, they are only surprised on a roll of 1–3 on 1d20 when rolling for surprise.

Regardless of the initiative system being used, irregulars never join any given side in a battle. They always determine initiative separately and act independently of any group.

SAVING THROW

Irregulars receive a +2 bonus to any saving throw made to reduce or avoid the effects of any trap, magical or mundane.

SCOUT

One part guardian, one part hunter, and one part eyes and ears of the enclave, the scout is an agile all-arounder. They are excellent couriers and messengers, traversing the wilderness alone or with archers and irregulars, at breakneck speeds. They are clearly more than the sum of their parts.

SCOUT ADVANCEMENT TABLE				
Level	Hit Points	Saving Throw	Attack Bonus	Bonus Attacks
1	Con+1	14	0	0
2	Con+2	13	0	0
3	Con+3	12	1	0
4	Con+4	11	1	0
5	Con+5	10	2	0
6	Con+6	9	2	1
7	Con+7	8	3	1
8	Con+8	7	3	1
9	Con+9	6	4	1
10	Con+10	5	5	1

ALWAYS MOVING

Scouts can move quickly, in and out of a fight. Once per combat, a scout can move up to 10' away, disengaging from a fight without consequence.

ARMOR CLASS

Scouts typically wear light armor. They gain +3 to their armor class. At 6th level, this bonus increases to +4, and at 10th level, this bonus increases to +5.

Scouts with Dexterity of 15 or higher gain an additional +1 bonus to armor class. Scouts with Intelligence of 15 or higher gain an additional +1 bonus to armor class. These bonuses stack with all other armor class bonuses.

COMMUNITY

Scouts begin play with one relationship to the third-highest ranking member of the enclave (the Ishkhan), and two relationships with pariahs. These relationships are determined during enclave creation (see page 38).

DRAMA POINTS

Scouts begin play with two additional drama points, gaining one additional drama point at 3rd, 6th, and 9th levels.

ESTABLISH ENCLAVE

At 10th level, a scout with a Charisma score of 13 or higher may build a new enclave. If so, she is considered to have reached the rank of Avag (chief), recruiting a number of humans equal to thrice her Charisma score, though the followers come from numerous places throughout Gyrr. *Survivors* swear fealty to the character and help build the new enclave.

KEEN SENSES

Scout must be ever aware of their surroundings, watching for ambushes and enemy nests. A scout with a Wisdom score of 15 or higher gains a +2 to any saving throw involving sight or sound.

Scouts can detect ambushes, camouflage, hidden doors, and traps with a successful saving throw.

In addition, they are only surprised on a roll of 1–3 on 1d20 when rolling for surprise at the beginning of combat.

Scouts gain +1 to their initiative rolls. A scout with a Wisdom score of 15 or higher gains a +2 instead.

MESSENGER

Scouts can travel overland faster than anyone. When travelling alone and outside of combat, a scout has a base movement rate of 18.

Scouts also have their own symbol-based language that only other scouts can read. Messages left are simple, but effective. Typical messages indicate danger, point out directions, or indicate a safe, but hidden, camp site (among others).

In addition, a scout can memorize a message (perfectly) with a number of words equal to her Intelligence score.

Scouts speak and understand one additional language.

RESOURCEFUL

Scouts can make weapons from nearly anything. Even when disarmed, they always have another hidden weapon at the ready.

Scouts deal 1d6 damage in melee or ranged combat.

SAVING THROW

Scouts with an Intelligence or Wisdom score of 15 or higher receive a +1 bonus to all saving throws.

SCRAPE BY

Hungry scouts can find just enough food and water to sustain themselves for a number of consecutive days equal to their level after two hours of foraging and a successful saving throw. Scouts may attempt this roll once per day.

They also can also can set rudimentary snares and traps for catching game and/ or alerting the scout someone is coming — an elf patrol for instance — with a successful saving throw.

TRAVELER'S TRINKETS

Scouts pick up various pieces of equipment in their travels. Unlike other classes, scouts do not need to keep an equipment list. Instead, when a scout needs a piece of small, mundane, non-magical gear — flint and steel, a campknife, string — the scout spends 1d6+1 rounds looking through her gear. If the scout succeeds at a saving throw, she finds the item among her belongings.

VAGABOND

Scouts typically travel alone. They make do with what is around them, often camping wherever they can find a place to sleep. As such, scouts require half the rest of other classes, often getting by with periodic cat naps. After a number of days of this equal to her level, a scout must rest take a full night's rest before returning to her 'cat naps.'

WILDERNESS LANDMARKS

Scouts are most at home in the wilderness. They use natural landmarks to navigate their way through dense forests and across open fields.

They can track animals and humanoids in natural environments with a successful saving throw.

While in natural environments, scouts can remain silent and unseen with a successful saving throw.

At 3rd level, a scout gains one personal landmark. The scout gains a second landmark at 7th level, and a third landmark at 10th level. A personal landmark is either a cave (for resting), cliff side (for scouting), game trail (for hunting), glade (for foraging), or watering hole. These landmarks are at least 50 miles from the enclave and can always be found by the scout while traveling.

WARLOCK

Warlocks are a catch-all category of magical characters. Anything from a blood-mage consorting with supernatural forces to a witch who brews potions falls into the ranks of a warlock. Warlocks select a magic type from the *Bloodwraith: Magic* book, which determines the number of spells they cast per day as well as the spells they have access to.

Level	Hit Points	Saving Throw	Attack Bonus
WARLOCK ADVANCEMENT TABLE			
1	Con+1	15	0
2	Con+2	14	0
3	Con+3	13	0
4	Con+4	12	1
5	Con+5	11	1
6	Con+6	10	1
7	Con+7	9	2
8	Con+8	8	2
9	Con+9	7	2
10	Con+10	6	3

ARMOR CLASS

Warlocks gain no inherent bonuses to armor class, beyond Dexterity.

COMMUNITY

Warlocks begin play with one relationship to the Vhuk and one relationship to a citizen or tradesman. These relationships are determined during enclave creation (see page 38).

DRAMA POINTS

Warlocks gain one drama point at 4th level and another at 7th level. Some (but not all) warlocks gain additional drama points based on their magic type, as detailed in *Bloodwraith: Magic*.

FORSAKEN LORE

Some warlocks know things about the world, beyond human comprehension. Others gain visions, providing insight to the great beyond. On a successful saving throw, the warlock recalls the lore and history surrounding creatures and objects associated with bloodwraiths, curses, the infernal, the undead, and other forms of forbidden knowledge. This includes identifying the history of certain magical items and the characteristics of some monsters. In addition, Forsaken Lore also allows a warlock to notice when an individual is under the influence of mind-affecting magic or suffering from a curse.

Note: The style of this lore is based on the magic type chosen under spell casting on the next page. Players and gamemasters are encouraged to find creative ways how this knowledge is bestowed upon their characters.

MAGICAL AFFINITY

Warlocks are attuned to the magical world. Any magical item or person within 10 feet per level can be sensed, though the strength and type of magic cannot be directly known. This power is passive and requires no concentration.

MAGICAL FOCI

Regardless of the spell type selected, warlocks do not require material components to cast spells. Players are welcome to add creative elements like this to play, but they are not required. However, some spellcasters choose to create a foci attuned to themselves. At 3rd level, a warlock may create a magical item to help cast spells. Each foci is unique and no two warlocks create them the same way. Intuition and supernatural forces are at play here and only the warlock knows exactly what to make for herself. The foci takes the shape of something meaningful to the caster. Once per day, the foci can be used to enhance a cast spell, increasing all of its effects as though the caster was one level higher.

RITUALS

Warlocks may turn any spell they can cast into a ritual. Rituals cannot be performed in combat, but rather take at least 30 minutes per level to cast. Each ritual is unique and players are encouraged to find creative ways to express each one. Once cast, the ritual spell produces an effect as though the warlock was two levels higher and the effective spell range is doubled. If there is a cost associated with the spell, reduce the cost by 1 (minimum 1). This bonus can be combined with the warlock's foci, if appropriate.

SAVING THROW

Warlocks receive a +2 bonus on saving throws vs. spells — including those cast from magic items.

SOLDIERING ON

Warlocks deal 1d4 damage when attacking with melee or ranged weapons.

SPELL CASTING

Warlock are born with magic. They learn, through repetition what works and what does not. Warlocks gain a certain number of spells based on their magic type, as explained in the *Bloodwraith: Magic* book, as well as the ability to cast them. Each magic type is different.

- **Abhorrent Magic**
- **Blood Magic**
- **Dwarven Earth Magic***
- **Elven Truth Magic***
- **Sorcery**
- **The Testament****
- **Witchcraft**

Dwarven and elven magic (*) are limited to dwarves and elves, respectively, though gamemasters and players are welcome to invent reasons a human character might be born with this magic.

The testament (**) is a unique bond of faith. Warlocks who take a covenant do so without knowing what power (if any) they receive in return. Such warlocks are not truly spell-casters, but devoted soldiers of the sleeping dead gods.

Each day the warlock wakes refreshed with her spell slots restored, though players are welcome to invent rituals for the day's spell preparation if they like.

Spell levels match character levels, so a 7th level warlock has access to 7th level spells.

ARMOR CLASS AND HIT POINTS

A character's armor class determines the value required to strike the character in combat on the roll of a 1d20. This is explained in detail on page 48. Each character and character class has its own unique armor class based on many factors. *Bloodwraith* uses an ascending armor class system, meaning the higher the number is, the harder it is to hit that person. An armor class of 15, requires a die roll of 15 or higher to hit (after all bonuses have been calculated).

ARMOR CLASS

All characters start with an Armor Class of 10, modified by class and Dexterity.

HIT POINTS

Hit points (HP) represent the amount of damage a character can suffer before dying. HP is determined by using the character's Constitution score and adding her level. For example, a first level fighter with 13 Constitution starts play with 14 HP. That same character at fourth level would have a 17 HP.

Some classes gain additional hit points due to survival traits and so on.

DRAMA POINTS

Each character starts play with one drama point and gains more during stressful situations (as determined by the gamemaster), including critical failures. Drama points can be used in a number of situations, including rerolling dice (except when a player rolls a '1'), taking over for five minutes of *plastic time* (see page 67), gaining a bonus action, maximizing damage, ignoring spell requirements for one spell, and changing the results of loyalty tests — just to name a few.

Essentially, drama points are used to break the rules and/or change the focus of play. Once spent, drama points are gone and do not return until such time as the rules state. A character can spend a drama point to take over a scene, reroll a failed die, heal faster, avoid a certain amount of damage (determined by the GM), use a special ability again, recast a spell, and so on. The only limitation is the gamemaster's approval.

In general, drama points are gained whenever a character critically fails a die roll, suffers a vision, or sits out of the story for too long — and ultimately, the gamemaster decides when that is. Some character classes also start play with more drama points and/or regain them at a faster rate.

At the end of an adventure, gamemasters should award between one and three dram points to the party, based on group achievements and the overall difficulty of the adventure. Individual drama point gains are built into every character class and gamemasters are not required to award additional points out in this manner.

EQUIPMENT

People carry whatever they can make, barter for, scavenge, or claim. Most exotic items come from the dead or are stolen. During character creation, characters start with five specific items of equipment, plus any bonus items from their class. These items can be anything from an abacus to a coil of rope to a bag of nails to an oxen yoke. Characters also begin with armor, one or two weapons, and clothing. Only keep track of arrows if that's important to the campaign.

FOOD AND WATER

Every gamemaster has her own way of handling rations and water. Some gamemasters expect players to keep track of ever piece of hardtack and jerky, while others don't care at all. This is a game about survival. Food, shelter, and water are important components. But this can easily be reflected through background elements rather than hard math. If the gamemaster wishes to make food supplies an issue, she can create an adventure about it rather than punishing the players with accounting. A shorthand system for survival is to assume the PCs are never eating enough when they are away from the enclave. PCs can remain outside the enclave for a number of days equal to their Constitution scores, with each day beyond that costing one hit point.

ARMOR

Armor better than chainmail is non-existent, while chainmail itself is uncommon. Leather, scale mail, and the equivalent armor types are most common for adventurers, though an elf or dwarf might wear something nicer — if you can get it off them and make it fit.

EQUIPMENT

Any gear that requires advanced forging techniques is hard to come by. Most everything is made from animal hides, animal stomachs, burlap, canvas, cloth, fur, intestine, leather, rope, or wool. The rougher and more rugged the material, the better. Making something once — and having it last — is better for most communities than cheaply made goods.

WEAPONS

Forging weapons is not easy. Finding a place to set up an anvil, heat coals, and then hammer iron into shape is a luxury in Gyrr. Weapons with wooden handles are preferred over anything made from four pounds of metal.

SWORDS

Swords are extremely rare. Few bladesmiths know how to make them, so most people carry axes, hammers, and spears. If someone finds a sword, it is generally ten times the price one expects in other settings.

RELATIONSHIPS

Traditional roleplaying games assume relationships of adventurous intent, but good stories are built when players develop relationships beyond glory and greed. Characters are not born inside vacuums. Most, in fact, know each other and/or come from the same village. Strangers do not just meet in a tavern and hope to get along inside the dungeon. It's a good idea to establish how the characters know each other before the game starts.

Relationships are determined by choosing two characters (one is usually your own) and drawing one random poker card from a deck, comparing the result against the chart on the next page. The characters in question share this relationship.

EXPRESSING RELATIONSHIP VALUES

The descriptions are purposely vague, as specificity is the job of the players. For instance, the ♣10 reflects a relationship of family and trust. Alone, these words mean nothing. However, the characters sharing this relationship may define it as an ongoing issue of trust between two brothers who have lied to each other since childhood. As an example.

Relationships are dynamic. They can be positive or negative, but they are never easy. In most cases, two players can easily work out relationship details. However, there are instances when two players do not want their characters romantically involved or kinfolk. The suits and values are prompts, not absolutes. Family could be in-laws. A romantic relationship might be two characters who were once involved with (or chasing after) the same person. Community is as simple as knowing each other from the enclave, indicating a shallow relationship. There are numerous ways to interpret these terms.

COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Characters may have relationships with the community as a whole, or individual people living in that community. The gamemaster should produce a small list of important NPCs living in the enclave with the main characters. Relationships with NPCs aid the PCs in their ability to keep the enclave alive. The gamemaster section has advice on using relationships in game.

ENCLAVES

Page 38 details advice for gamemasters on how to build enclaves and which details are most important to the setting. Building the enclave *before* character creation allows the PCs to add themselves into an already established environment. Building the enclave *afterwards* puts the characters at the center of the community, as the details grow around who they are. Building both together makes everyone's choices matter.

RELATIONSHIP CHART

The following chart is for characters in *Bloodwraith*. One playing card is drawn for each pair of characters who share a relationship.

SUIT

- ♣ **Family/Long-Term**
- ♦ **Friends/Rivals**
- ♥ **Romantic***
- ♠ **Community**

VALUE

A	Unrequited
2	Codependent or Sycophantic
3	Confusing or Complex
4	Divided or Estranged
5	Inspirational
6	Burdensome
7	Indebted
8	Betrothed
9	Reliable or Supportive
10	Trust
J	Buried Secrets
Q	Compassionate
K	Comrades-in-Arms
Joker	Took Oaths Together

* There is little room for traditional romance in Gyrr. Romantic relationships are defined as anything in the sexual-love-marriage spectrum. Players should work out the level of detail they are comfortable with and not force a situation outside their boundaries.

TWENTY QUESTIONS

Before, during, or after character creation, each player should answer two or three of the following questions about their characters and/or environment before the adventure/campaign can begin. Some questions allow the players to implicate another PC or NPC. Know the boundaries of others before imposing untenable answers onto them.

1. Why have you lost your faith? What will it take to restore it?
2. How did your parents die? Did you witness it or hear about it later?
3. What about the enclave do you value the most?
4. Who among you is being eyed for a position among the elders?
5. What law was recently enacted that affects you personally? How?
6. Who among the enclave has become your confidant?
7. Who has wronged you and you, in turn, them? How? What are the lasting consequences of this?
8. Who refuses to be alone with you? Why? How does this affect your work in the enclave?
9. What function do you have inside the enclave beyond defenses?
10. How did you lose your eye? Who finds your scars abhorent?
11. Where do you go to be alone? How precious is privacy to you?
12. Why do you have more free time than most?
13. Why do your parents continue to track the family lineage?
14. Why do you keep your "sacred" medallion a secret from others?
15. Why do you bear a limp? What happened? Why won't it heal?
16. Who among you refuses to stand guard at night? Why?
17. Who among you goes days without rest, only to crash and sleep for hours on end? What haunts her?
18. Name and describe a nearby glade the others considered foul and tainted (but you still visit)?
19. Name and describe an outsider from another enclave, who has joined your community. Define your relationship to her.
20. Name and describe a member of the inner circle of your enclave. What makes her so reliable *or* quick to make snap decisions. Define your relationship to her.

COMMUNITY/ENCLAVE BUILDING

Bloodwraith provides a unique community setting for fantasy roleplaying games. Characters are not friendless thugs roaming the country side in search of gold, but rather they are tied together with other people in a given community.

Depending on play style, gamemasters may wish to build the enclave before the first session, after the first session, or with the players during the first session. The ingredients of the enclave are simple.

- Where in Gyrr is it located and what geographical features mark the area around the enclave?

- How big is it? How often does it move?

- What sustains it? How do people eat and defend themselves?

- Who are the important people in the community?

This final ingredient takes the most time to define.

IMPORTANT NPCS

While different enclaves have different languages — and therefore different words to describe community ranks — the following list includes generally accepted terms in Gyrr for positions of authority and status ranks within a community. Gamemasters and players are welcome to ignore the language of the game and just use terms like chief, seneschal, etc.

Each NPC needs a name, rank, and at least one affectation that makes her unique. Each character has relationships to the NPCs based on her class abilities, as described in each character class section. The relationships define how important a specific character is to the community as well as their level of responsibility.

Note: Some enclaves do not have leaders and some lack all the titles below. Make educated guesses when building a community.

RELATIONSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIP MAPPING

In communities of 50 to 150, everyone knows everyone else. But the term 'relationship' in *Bloodwraith* indicates a deeper level of knowing someone (even if it's a bad relationship) beyond just knowing who they are. Everyone knows the enclave Avag (chief), but that does not mean they know her well. Or have a relationship of value.

Characters with relationships to key NPCs gain certain benefits, as explained under each title. Most relationships grant additional drama points. These drama points must be spent in a way that relates to the NPC. For instance, a character with a tradesman relationship spends one drama point to quickly repair her armor. In the story, she clearly learned this talent from someone in the community and this can now come into play through a short vignette.

For more information on drama points, see page 39.

A relationship map is a matrix of all the important characters in the story and how they relate to one another. Gamemasters should generate a list of all the important NPCs and draw a map of whom knows who, including the PCs in the map. This can be done like a 'crime wall,' with index cards and names pointing to who knows who.

> *Cutting out artwork from a card game and taping it to the index cards might help the players visualize who is who in the community.*

THE AVAG

Also known as the chief. Some communities have councils of shared authority, while others have a single leader. However, the **Avag** is the single most important decision maker in most enclaves. Knowing her is status unto itself.

Characters with an Avag relationship gain one additional drama point at the beginning of the campaign, which can only be spent dealing with NPC enclave members diplomatically. The character gains another drama point at 6th level.

Example: A PC needs to enter someone's tent who is difficult to deal with. She doesn't want to enter through force and reminds the NPC of her close relationship to the Avag, spending a drama point in the process. Not only does the NPC step aside, she becomes compliant and cooperative.

THE HIMNAKHAN

The **Himnakhan** is the second in command, serving as the right hand to the Avag. The Himnakhan is most likely to deal with day to day issues of the enclave, leaving the Avag to focus on bigger headaches.

Characters with a Himnakhan relationship gain one additional drama point at the beginning of the campaign, which can only be spent dealing with day to day issues of the enclave. The character gains another drama point at 6th level.

THE ISHKHAN

More of a seneschal than a commander, the **Ishkhan** is the third in line of enclave power. The Ishkhan works closely with the Namak to get communities ready to move and so on. Not all enclaves have an Ishkhan. If none of the characters have an Ishkhan relationship due to their character class, consider excluding the rank from play.

Characters with a Ishkhan relationship gain one additional drama point at the beginning of the campaign, which can only be spent dealing with outsiders. The character gains another drama point at 6th level.

THE NAMAK

Fourth in command in most communities, the **Namak** is the community guardian, tasked with more responsibilities than anyone else. The Namak is always some kind of warrior type and a veteran of numerous hostile exchanges with dwarves, elves, and so on.

Characters with a Namak relationship gain one additional drama point at the beginning of the campaign, which can only be spent while defending the enclave. The character gains another drama point at 6th level.

VHUK

Vhuk (both singular and plural) is a catagory of spiritualist — druids, shamans, warlocks, witches, etc. — who often act in an advisory or medicinal role within an enclave. Some communities may not have a Vhuk, while others employ sages or natural healers.

Characters with a Vhuk relationship gain one additional drama point at the beginning of the campaign, which can only be spent dealing with nature or spirits. The character gains another drama point at 6th level.

TRADESMEN

Trademen is a catch all category of people who work with some kind of skill. Blacksmiths, coopers, tanners, weavers, and so on. Tradesmen are generally valued in the community above farmers and basic laborers.

Characters with a tradesmen relationship gain one additional drama point at the beginning of the campaign, which can only be spent dealing with a specific trade. Once spent, this point is never regained.

CITIZENS

Citizens are everyone else who do not fit neatly into any of the other categories of enclave members. They are farmers, laborers devoid of trade skills, or any of a host of people just surviving through the day.

Characters with a citizen relationship gain a +3 to their Charisma score for determining that specific citizen's Morale.

PARIAHS

Pariahs are the lowest member of the enclave. They are dregs, outcasts, and vagabonds. Some live on the edge of the enclave and some merely drain the community of its resources, offering nothing in return. Most enclaves have only a few pariahs, but everyone knows who they are.

Characters with a pariah relationship gain a +2 to their Charisma score for determining each pariah's Loyalty score.

CALLING IN FAVORS (OPTIONAL)

Because of the nature of the enclave, everyone knows everyone. To a degree. People generally help one another, as cooperation is the key to survival. PCs may call upon others in the enclave for favors. Once per session, a PC may turn to an NPC she has a relationship with and ask a favor. Approval of the favor is up to the gamemaster, but should be based upon the scale of the favor being asked and the standing of the PC, presently, in the enclave.

> *A PC who has been acting like an ass is unlikely to get help. Logic still holds in these situations.*

This favor reduces a PC's Charisma score by 1, until the end of the session.

VISIONS

Ever since the fall of the gods, people have been haunted by messages they cannot decipher. All characters suffer visions. For most, it is always the same vision. Nonetheless, they are cryptic and inconvenient. Each PC determines her own ominous vision, either randomly or by selecting from the list below. This list provides flavor, while the rules for visions appear on page 57.

1. Assaulted by demon spirits; flesh torn from arms and face.
2. A burning wheel in the sky, spinning ever clockwise and upward.
3. A circle of cultists chant the names of dead gods, in unison.
4. A cloudy and colorless sky rolls backwards as the moon rises and the sun shrinks.
5. The repetitive and wet sound of coughing emanates from an unmarked grave.
6. A crumbling temple teeters on its edge, never falling, but never righting itself, either. A deformed and swollen cat speaks backwards and in rhyme.
7. Dwarven drummers pound out a human dirge.
8. Eight spears hold aloft the dead body of a vaguely elven figure.
9. Four glowing eyes spin around the body of a dead calf.
10. A father and mother wear bloody aprons and stand before a hearth, hands barely touching at the fingertips.
11. Flies buzz around the rotting remains of a half-dead cow.
12. The ghostly image of a lost friend watches someone sleeping.
13. A goblin, in chains, claws at her own skin in an attempt to remove her shackles.
14. Haunting, indescribable images from the bleeding realm, repeat like a broken kaleidoscope.
15. An ivory-handled dagger drips with blood over a melting wax pool.
16. Lovers hung upside down like slabs of meat.
17. Magical lines intersect against a vague, cosmic shape and texture.
18. Six dead people, locked arm in arm, stand before the gates of an unknown and unseen place.
19. Someone is stabbed repeatedly by a blood elf, while a dog howls in the distance.
20. Two (bloodless) soldiers stab one another for eternity.

PLAYING THE GAME

Once characters are created, the gamemaster sets the tone for the campaign. Some of this is in voice and some of it is not. Establishing the enclave, who knows whom (and how), and what to expect can only be done informally. The gamemaster and players are just people setting expectations and getting their feet firmly planted in what is to come.

Once the game starts, the gamemaster takes on a particular voice (like a narrator) and begins the *conversation of roleplaying*, which is a high-brow way of saying "gaming." The gamemaster describes where the characters are and what they can see. The game might start in a rural peasant village, a decrepit and falling castle, a noisy tavern, or on the edge of the enclave.

The conversation continues when the players describe how their characters behave and react to the environment. Walking down stairs, attacking a dragon, talking to other people, sharpening weapons, etc. — everything the players are in control of.

> *Nobody puts Baby in a corner.*

The gamemaster in turn responds to the PCs, describing the results of their actions: the stairs lead down 120 feet to a massive, poorly-lit tomb, the dragon breaths fire and cooks the characters, people generally avoid your gaze, etc.

For the most-part, roleplaying games lack rules governing how these operations take place. Which is good. Gamemasters and players should feel free to behave outside the constraints of codified rules. Rules, therefore, should only deal with conflict, when two people want something and are at odds: Abe wants the last beer, the dragon wants to eat you, the stairs are trying to kill you.

The rules handle combat, movement, healing, dying, and other important parts of the game which require arbitration outside a single person's purview.

Basically, the gamemaster and players work together to tell stories, with the gamemaster handling the details of the environment, and PCs handling the details of their characters. And when those things collide, roll dice.

ADVANCEMENT AND EXPERIENCE

Traditional fantasy roleplaying games use experience to denote when a character has satisfactorily completed a "stage of development" and gains more numeric bonuses. In *Bloodwraith*, the characters advance when the gamemaster decides, but generally this is at the end of a number of sessions equal to the PCs' present level, so at the end of session one, they advance to level two. After two more sessions, they advance to level three. Three sessions later... ad infinitum. Conversely, they advance every session or at the conclusion of an adventure. Whatever feels right.

TIME

Time is an inevitable measure of reality. There are only so many hours in a day and only so much we can do with the time we have. Existential arguments aside, the players only have a few hours to play each week and the characters only have so much time in their lives to 'save the world.' Time must somehow be measured to understand what can and cannot be accomplished on someone's turn.

In general, time passes smoothly and without incident. There is no need to measure every moment at the table, nor a need to roleplay every second of a character's life. The gamemaster makes general rulings on the passage of time (e.g. "A few hours later..."), which is governed by common sense. This is referred to as *plastic time*, the idea being that while five minutes has passed at the table, two weeks may have passed in the adventure/story.

> *Plastic time is especially useful when the PCs have a time limit to get something done. Gamemasters can merely refer to the 'plastic clock.'*

Two important time measurements merit definition: turns and rounds. Turns last ten minutes. They measure and track actions, movement, and resources when characters are in dangerous places. Rounds are shorter — lasting roughly one minute — and are used during battles to account for more specific 'blow by blow' actions. Though, this too is a little abstract.

MOVEMENT AND DISTANCE

The standard movement rates is 12, which is further modified by the amount of gear a character carries. To keep the system simple, a character can carry a number of items up to her Strength score before becoming encumbered. Encumbered characters have their movement cut in half (round up). These rates are further modified by the type of movement.

Movement Type	Adjustment
Careful	Half of Rate
Normal	Average Rate
Running	2x Average Rate

Distances are measured in abstract terms, but with concrete terms. Gamemasters may employ modifiers to ranged attacks at specific ranges: 0/−1/−2, for example.

Range	Adjustment
Short	15 feet
Medium	60 feet
Long	120 feet

COMBAT

Whenever the characters are in a situation that cannot be resolved peacefully, combat starts.

Note: Fantasy game veterans may find this system different.

Before the fight can start, it's important to determine if either side is surprised. An ambush is automatic surprise. Otherwise, each player rolls 1d20 and on a 1–5, her character is surprised, though some monsters and classes reduce this value to 1–3.

The gamemaster does the same thing for the enemy, grouping larger enemies into *squads* so she doesn't have to roll for every single dwarf in a 200-man army.

Surprised characters do not act during the first round of combat.

INITIATIVE

Players roll 1d20 for initiative for each of their respective characters, adding any respective bonuses. The gamemaster does the same thing for the enemy. Numbers are tracked for each character on a list called a *bullpen*. Initiative is only rolled once for the entire combat encounter.

Characters act in initiative order, with the highest result going first, descending down to the lowest value before the combat round ends and the cycle begins anew. A character may choose to use her action to reset her initiative, adding +10 to her initiative, thus reordering the bullpen.

Combat continues until one side is dead, routs, or surrenders.

Note: Some people prefer the traditional 'group vs. group' initiative system. If that's the preferred method, these rules will not contradict that system.

HIT DICE

Hit Dice (HD) represents the relative level of a given monster. A monster's HD indicates the number of dice (d8) rolled before combat to determine an individual creature's HP. A plus or minus after the number indicates the value to add or subtract from the total rolled. To streamline this system, simply multiply the HD of a monster by 4.5 (rounding up) to determine its starting hit points.

ACTIONS

Characters have the options of a number of different actions during combat, including attacking, casting spells, moving, preparing equipment, and running away (to name a few). Most actions do not require a die roll, except attack rolls and saving throws. Attack rolls are active actions rolled on a specific player's combat round action. Most saving throws are reactive and rolled as a result of someone else's combat round action.

THE ATTACK ROLL

Whenever a character or monster attacks an opponent, she rolls 1d20, adding all combat bonuses to the result. These bonuses include the character's base class attack bonus, special abilities, Dexterity (for ranged attacks), Strength (for melee attacks), and any magical bonuses. Monsters simply add their HD to the attack roll, plus any bonuses listed under the monster's tactics.

> *Most of this is calculated before the fight begins. There are no surprises. Combat runs smoothly when everyone knows what they are doing.*

- If the result is equal to or greater than the target's AC, the attack hits and damage dice are rolled.
- If the result is less than the target's AC, the attack results in 1 point of damage (and no more).

A natural roll of a '1' or '20' is considered a critical failure or critical hit, as detailed on page 50.

MELEE ATTACK

A melee attack is an attack with a hand-held weapon. Two combatants within five feet of each other are considered to be in melee.

RANGED ATTACK

Ranged attacks are attacks with ranged weapons such as bows or thrown axes. When making a ranged attack into melee, characters cannot choose which opponent (or friend) receives the brunt of the attack. On a successful ranged attack into melee, the gamemaster (randomly) determines who is actually hit. Note: An archer's called shot supercedes this rule.

THE SAVING THROW

From time to time, a hazard or spell requires characters to roll a saving throw. A saving throw is made by rolling 1d20, adding any appropriate bonuses and checking the value against a character's specific class table.

- If the result is equal to or greater than the target number, the saving throw is successful.
- If the result is less than the target number, the saving throw fails.

A roll of '1' always fails and a roll of '20' always succeeds, regardless of modifiers.

If a monster is required to make a saving throw, it rolls 1d20, adding its number of hit dice to the roll against a target number of 18.

Each saving throw is different, contingent upon the effect generated. Generally, a successful saving throw lessens the effect of the hazard or spell by half. Effects which would cause certain death still result in some damage.

CONDITIONS AND EXCEPTIONS

The following guidelines cover a majority of common combat situations. Most are in place to keep the game running smoothly, but do not replace common sense. Veteran gamemasters usually have systems for these sorts of things.

DAMAGE AND DEATH

When a character (or creature) is hit, the amount of damage taken is deducted from his HP. When hit points reach 0 or less, the character dies. Some monsters and poisons target a character's attributes scores (like Strength) instead of a hit points. Whenever an attribute is reduced to 0, the character dies.

CRITICAL FAILURE

When an attack roll shows a '1' (called a natural 1), the character is assumed to have fumbled (and does no damage). The gamemaster has hundreds of ways of dealing with this, but at the very least the character might lose her next action recovering from the mistake, or picking up a dropped weapon.

> *I generally hate 'miss a turn' rules, but combat in Bloodwraith is fast enough it shouldn't be a problem. If the game runs slowly for some reason, consider a penalty on the next attack roll instead.*

CRITICAL HITS

When an attack roll comes up a '20' (called a natural 20), the character achieves a critical hit. Critical hits result in maximum damage. No need to roll.

SPELLS

Most magical spells do not require an attack roll to succeed. Damage is dealt directly, based on the text of a given spell. Some spells are instantaneous and others take time to prepare. Because of this, magic-users usually stay away from enemy weapons. Druids and warlocks interrupted or wounded during spell casting/preperation must succeed at a saving throw or lose the spell.

INVISIBLE OPPONENTS

An invisible opponent can only be attacked if its general location is known, and the attack suffers a –4 attack penalty. Some powerful monsters (those with sensitive smell, hearing, or those with more than 6 HD) may detect invisible opponents. Each creature and situation is unique. The gamemaster is the final arbitor on reducing the attack penalty based on the situation.

Blinded characters suffer a –4 attack penalty as though they were attacking an invisible opponent.

SHADOWS

Shadows, specters, and wraiths are a specific part of *Bloodwraith*. Not only are they harder to hit, they are harder to kill. All attacks against shadows, without a magical weapon, suffer both a –2 to attack and damage (minimum 1). At night, shadows are particularly hard to see, increasing the attack penalty to –4.

Note: Critical failures against shadows are particularly devastating, as detailed under the monster entry for each shadow.

Shadows (and some undead) attack a character's Charisma score in addition to hit points. When a character is reduced to 0 Charisma as a result of fighting a shadow, the character is turn to ash and shadow, returning as an archon beastman.

UNDEAD

Undead are rare in *Bloodwraith*. Since the 'turn undead' ability does not exist in *Bloodwraith*, players must find other methods of combating the unliving.

COWLS

Cowls are specific types of undead who linger in specific places due to some undreamt tragedy no one can get past. Either as victim or perpetrator of some horrible crime, the cowl haunts a particular place. They serve neither humanity nor the bloodwraiths, attacking any who would disturb their unrest.

The place of the tragedy is considered sacred to the cowl. Cowls regenerate while on this sacred ground and gain a +2 to armor class. Those who die fighting cowls are forced to wander the spirit realm (or bleeding realms) for years, until they find their way back.

SHROUDS

Shrouds are the most common type of undead in Bloodwraith. Each has its own unique attack form, which is usually focused on making the living just like them. A shroud that drowned tries to fill a PCs lungs with water, etc. Those who die fighting shrouds, return as shrouds.

FEAR

Some creatures are so fearsome merely seeing one is enough to instill dread in a character. Shadows and undead come to mind. Characters faced with supernatural fear are expected to succeed at a saving throw, while NPCs must make Loyalty checks.

COUP DE GRACE

A downed or unconscious opponent of equal or smaller size to the character can be killed in a single round. There is no need for a die roll. Larger opponents may take some time to finish off, especially creatures with vital organs alien to a character's understanding of "anatomy."

OVERWHELMING ODDS

Whenever a character or creature is out-numbered by at least 3-to-1, they are considered overwhelmed (though larger creatures do not worry about this unless the outnumbered by equally-sized creatures). While overwhelmed, the character suffers a –4 attack penalty and all creatures attacking her gain +2 to all attack and damage rolls.

5 OR LESS (OPTIONAL)

A roll of 5 or less is generally a miss, though some classes have enough bonuses to still hit opponents with lower ACs. Some creatures have rules for what happens whenever a character rolls 5 or less in combat. Should a character ever strike a creature on a roll of 5 or less, both effects occur.

HEALING

Under no condition can any form of healing ever restore a character's hit points above their starting maximum.

BINDING WOUNDS

At the conclusion of a battle, characters are assumed to bind their wounds. This is a general action no one needs to describe. Adrenaline wears off, shock sets in, and characters generally rest for a few moments at the conclusion of a fight. The amount of time spent resting varies, but those who didn't die, recover 1d4 hit points each. Characters only recover hit points lost during this particular battle.

MAGICAL HEALING

Characters with access to healing spells need not call out to the gamemaster they are healing others. This is an assumed part of the process. The player merely selects a target, rolls the appropriate dice, and calls out the healing value. The same is true of healing potions and salves.

REST

In addition to the various means of restoring hit points, a characters recover 1 point per day of uninterrupted rest. Four weeks of rest restores all of a character's hit points regardless. Attribute scores recover at a rate of 1 point per day, as well.

MORALE

Certain monsters, such as mindless or undead creatures, are fearless and always fight to the death. The majority, however, do not throw their lives away in a hopeless battle. The gamemaster decides when monsters abandon the battle and retreating or surrendering. Each situation is different and the monster's intelligence is taken into account.

Morale can impact the loyalty of the PC's companions. Should a loyalty check fall far enough (gamemaster's discretion), the companion turns tail and runs.

LOYALTY

Loyalty checks are required whenever NPC companions are put into dangerous situations (or offered bribes to change sides during a conflict). When a Loyalty check is made, roll 1d20 (modified by Charisma) and consult the Loyalty table. These checks are modified by the character's Charisma score.

When a Loyalty check results in a 2 or less, the NPC leaves the PC permanently, perhaps joining the enemy. When a Loyalty check results in a 19 or higher, the NPC never needs to check again. Good treatment and respect garner bonuses to Loyalty checks, while abuse brings penalties, abandonment, or worse.

LOYALTY TABLE

1d20	Loyalty
1–2	Traitor
3–5	–2 on next loyalty check*
6–8	–1 on next loyalty check*
9–12	Average
13–15	+1 on next loyalty check**
16–18	+2 on next loyalty check**
19–20	Loyalist

* Given the circumstance, the NPC may retreat from the situation at this point.

** Given the circumstance, the NPC may dive deeper into the fray, putting her own life at risk.

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

The gamemaster is responsible for handling situations that aren't covered by the rules, making fair evaluations of what the characters do and deciding what happens as a result. This is not a game in which the players are "against" the gamemaster, even though the gamemaster is responsible for creating tricky traps, dangerous situations, and running the monsters and other foes, the PCs will encounter during the game.

In fact, the players and the gamemaster cooperate with each other to create a fantasy epic, with the gamemaster creating the setting and the players developing the story of the heroes. If they aren't skillful and smart, the epic might be very short. But it's not the gamemaster's job to defeat the players — it's her job to provide interesting (and dangerous) challenges, and then guide the story fairly.

There are occasions where PCs may want to talk their way out of trouble, or trick an opponent into revealing information. The following is a short list of possible situations involving two non-physical combatants, with one trying to get something out of the other. In nearly all instances, the characters must be able to communicate with one another.

BRIBERY

An attempt to bribe someone forces a Loyalty check, based on the level of the bribe. A few shot of alcohol aren't going to get a guard to leave her post, but an entire keg might. Gamemasters may ignore the need for a die roll if enough equipment is offered.

Note: Bribery is rare in *Bloodwraith*, but is included for completion's sake.

COERCION/EXTORTION

Coercion is simply persuading someone to act against their better interest through force or threats of force.

> *"Sign this, or there will be trouble."*

Coercion involves leverage. Therefore a failed attempt can backfire on the character. A coercive act forces an opponent to make a Loyalty check (with appropriate modifiers). If the opponent fails, she acts in the interest of the character. If the opponent succeeds, she react negatively, although not obviously. Clever opponents may pretend to act in the character's interest.

Regardless, a failed coercion attempt grants the opponent a bonus in all future dealings.

Extortion is the specific use of coercion to get goods or money.

DIPLOMACY AND NEGOTIATION

Diplomacy is complicated and involves numerous steps of understanding and compromise. No set of rules or die rolling can replace good roleplaying. Negotiation is no different, though it usually involves two people and takes a lot less time than protracted diplomatic sessions. The gamemaster may choose to handwave diplomacy and have targets dice off against one another, applying Charisma and Wisdom modifiers to the rolls.

INTIMIDATION

Intimidation is similar to coercion, but the effects are different. Intimidation involves someone using their size to weaken an opponent's resolve. When a character intimidates an opponent, she spends one action to do so. The opponent must succeed at a saving throw or suffer −2 on all rolls until she can no longer see the intimidating individual.

The gamemaster may apply the Strength score modifier of the intimidating character as a penalty to the opponent's saving throw.

MANIPULATION

Manipulation involves deception, lies, and misdirection.

When a character manipulates someone, the target must make a saving throw. If the target fails, she believes the lie. Some roleplaying of the manipulation is essential to understand the context of what is going on.

Attempting (and failing) to manipulate someone injures trust, almost indefinitely.

Note: Manipulation is an ongoing process, unlike coercion and the others. More than one roll may be required, at the gamemaster's discretion. For more on manipulation as it applies to psychological horror, see page 62.

SUFFERING VISIONS

All humans in Gyrr suffer visions, but not all the time. People know and understand the symptoms. They are unmistakable. Callous characters may not care when a comrade suffers a vision, but most are likely to rally to their aid.

During stressful (and particularly dramatic) times, visions manifest. Each nightmarish vision is specific, with minor variations. For instance, a character may suffer images of "flies buzzing around the rotting remains of a half-dead cow," but it need not always be the same cow, same flies, same place, or same time of day. Sometimes the cow is metaphoric. Sometimes the flies are.

> *The sleeping dead gods send messages to humanity, but it is unclear what the messages mean or why they are so limited.*

Whenever a character is in a particularly stressful situation, that character must succeed at a saving throw or suffer a vision. Some game effects produce immediate visions. In any case, the vision produced is based on the character (mixed with whatever editorializing the gamemaster imparts).

> *Gamemaster: "Boern sees a half-dead cow, unable to climb out of a pit of mud and debris. Flies buzz all around it. The vomitous stench of decay is obvious, albeit unnatural. Boern must succeed at a saving throw or be sickened."*

At the very least, visions keep a character occupied for 1d6 rounds, reduce Wisdom (temporarily), and sometimes force the character to flee. In the worst case scenarios, characters go catatonic until the vision passes. While occupied, the character suffers a −2 to all die rolls.

Below is a list of possible effects to PCs, determined by the gamemaster.

*   The PC can defend herself, but not move or flee.

*   The PC loses 1 hit point per round for 1d6 rounds due to vomiting.

*   The PC suffers an intense headache. She cannot concentrate or cast spells.

*   The PC loses her equilibrium, suffering −4 to any Dexterity-related checks.

*   The PC loses 2 Wisdom and 2 Intelligence for 1d6 hours, adding to any previous losses.

*   The PC hallucinates, believing the vision to be real.

*   The PC loses one important memory and/or the ability speak one language (temporarily)

*   The PC loses 1d6 prepared spells

*   The becomes catatonic for 1d6 hours

*   The next action the PC takes must be random.

PSYCHOLOGICAL HORROR

Reprinted from Post World Games' King for a Day.

I can't possibly address and explain every aspect of writing a true horror story. Horror's origins did not start with slasher gore, lighting-quick zombies, and trap-building sociopaths. It started with gritty, psychological horror; the kind this adventure is about. Now, there are a number of tools available online discussing the lengths Hitchcock, Poe, and Shelley (to name a few) went through to beguile, misdirect, and terrify the audience. This chapter includes a number of tools I feel relevant to good horror adventures.

Something to keep in mind is that while show-don't-tell is the rule of thumb for storytelling, this rule isn't 100% accurate for roleplaying games. Exposition is the hallmark of genre fiction. As such, it may be necessary during play to over-describe the behaviors of the NPCs. A gamemaster is a performer as well as a writer. She can read the reactions of the players and determine when to pull back or ramp up the horror. Be keenly aware of what they pick up on what they are disregarding. Use their pre-conceived notions to your advantage.

And don't be afraid to say, "there's something really wrong here."

If you are playing with people who do not read body language cues well or who do not enjoy subtle human interaction, this part of the book may not be for you. You can't play the long, slow, psychological con on the players if they are just waiting out the roleplaying *bits* to get to the fights. Players who insist rolling dice to *sense the motives* of others should (a) expect to make a lot of rolls during a single interaction; and (b) be unsure of the results most of the time.

DECEPTION

Deception involves half-truths or outright lies. Concealment, disguise, distraction, equivocations, exaggerations, fabrications, mimicry, propaganda, sleight of hand, and understatements are employed to create feelings of betrayal or resentment. Deceptions violate the social contract between people and can violate expectations — after all, we expect people to be truthful most of the time. Knowing this, people employing deception use a victim's expectations against her.

Any type of communication that intentionally distorts or omits the complete truth is deceptive. Since some of the villains of *Bloodwraith* are "alien" and do not exist on the same moral axis PCs do, there is no limit to what kinds of deceptive tactics they may use. Appearing as a friend with false information or leaving clues that are outright lies can all diminish the PCs' faith in what is going on. They may even go as far as to impersonate a member of the party.

It can be difficult to detect when someone is deceiving you. Players are notoriously suspicious, so it becomes important for a gamemaster to avoid over-using this technique, and at the same time keep track of the lies you've told the players. On the other hand, once the player's trust has been completely eroded, it doesn't matter what you say anymore. This can be the perfect moment to strike with the biggest lie of all.

The true horror of deception in this context is the use of *social* tools to produce deleterious *psychological* effects.

DEHUMANIZATION

Dehumanization is among the lowest psychological tricks perpetuated on the ego. When we think of psychological abuse, this is among the worst. Verbal abuse is big, but ignoring someone else's voice can be just as powerful a dehumanizing tool. By undermining individuality one can slowly erode the mental well-being of another person.

Dehumanization can be directed against racial, ethnic, national, or religious ties just as easily against gender or people who think differently. This is especially important in this game because of the nature by which the bloodwraiths wish to assert control before wiping humanity from the map. If dehumanization doesn't work, people can simply disappear...

DESTABILIZATION

Destabilization is a big-picture word to describe any number of tools used to disorient and disarm a victim, including humiliation, intimidation, and torture. It is the ultimate end of the bloodwraiths to destabilize the human enclaves.

GASLIGHTING

The term gaslighting has been around since the 1938 play *Gas Light* about a husband who tries to convince his wife she is crazy. False information is used in order to disorient a victim or by manipulating environmental elements. The overall effect is to make the victim doubt his own memories and perceptions. The tricks are subtle and numerous, and often dismissed by those around the victim, especially those pulling the strings. It typically leads to paranoia and paranoid delusions.

CASSANDRA METAPHOR

Valid warnings are often dismissed or ignored, especially when related by unreliable people. Therefore, a powerful tool of the bloodwraiths can be to place real evidence into the environment, but have it voiced by untrustworthy sources. In certain contexts, this can be the PCs themselves, trying to convince others that evil is afoot.

MANIPULATION

This is a short list of ways NPCs can manipulate the PCs. It is by no means exhaustive.

- **Denial** involves the failure to admit that any wrong doing has happened.

- **Diversion** involves not giving straight answers to questions.

- **Evasion** involves giving irrelevant, rambling, or vague responses to questions.

- **Feigning Anger** involves intense emotional displays to shock the victim.

- **Feigning Confusion** involves playing dumb and acting confused about important issues.

- **Feigning Innocence** involves claims of ignorance that any wrong-doing has taken place. This is especially useful when the claims are tenuous at best.

- **Guilt Trips** involve preying upon the conscience of the victim.

- **Minimization** involves denial and rationalization to the extent of saying "oh, it's not that bad."

- **Playing the Victim** involves garnering sympathy in order to evoke compassion.

- **Playing the Servant Role** involves serving a noble aim to conceal a true selfish agenda.

- **Rationalization** involves making up excuses for behavior/events.

- **Scapegoating** involves projecting blame on others.

- **Seduction** involves charm or flattery in order to garner trust.

- **Shame** involves increased self-doubt. This is a very powerful tool against those who are eager to please.

- **Veiled Threats** involve subtle/veiled hints that put the victim on the defensive.

MIND CONTROL

In its more basic form, mind control is any tactic that subverts an individual's sense of personal control. This includes feeling, thinking, and decision-making. Since the true power of mind control is never knowing you are being controlled, it's important to know where the edges are.

Mind control should not be used in direct or abusive ways. Making the PCs do things they don't want to do isn't fun. Instead, the other tools of psychological horror exist to coerce characters and NPCs to behave in a compliant manner. The same can be said for the PCs, should they fall under the villains' power.

While it can be argued that it is unethical to manipulate the thoughts of others, the fact that mind control does not conflict with any ethical axis that villains adhere to is what makes this truly terrifying.

MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE

A Manchurian Candidate is a victim of brainwashing, forced to perform a specific act upon seeing, hearing, or receiving a specially coded phrase or word. This trigger causes the otherwise normal-acting person to behave in a near-robotic manner until the task is completed.

If you really want to make *Bloodwraith* horrifying, find a player in the group who truly trusts you and tell her she's a manchurian candidate for the bloodwraiths. Give her a code phrase. When she hears this code phrase, she needs to act out a very specific task, which is programmed ahead of time. She's been brainwashed for this one very specific task... so make it good.

DON'T USE PSYCHOLOGICAL TORTURE

The intent of psychological torture is to weaken a victim's resolve. It can be used to erode a victim's self-image by removing her control. This leads to feelings of helplessness, which can have lasting effects on the psyche. I won't go into the techniques of psychological torture. Suffice to say, it is not something most people condone and because of the real world horror associated with some modern tactics, it is not recommended for this game.

For that matter, I've avoided bringing up emotional abuse and sexual assault — dark and disturbed tactics of psychological horror. Just don't use them in your game unless you know 100% people are comfortable with them. Too many people have emotional triggers for things we don't know about.

Be aware. Be considerate.

GAMEMASTER ADVICE

This game has an old school feel about it. Gamemasters running old school games already have their play styles. Most advice sections are superfluous and generally ignored anyway. The first few pages detail a shared language, followed by the kinds of adventures gamemasters can expect to run with bloodwraith. Note the adventure ideas on page 84 of *Bloodwraith: Setting*.

I'll do everything I can to make the next few pages interesting and useful.

When I was about 13 years old, I started writing my first roleplaying game. It was stupid. I didn't want to 'copy' *D&D*, so I found new words for all the mundane stuff. Strength, saving throws, and so on. I even changed the word campaign, which I didn't fully understand at the time. What did a political run have to do with a collection of adventures?

Seriously. I was 13. I didn't know military campaigns were a thing.

Lots of games speak to the gamemaster with highfalutin language that alienates the reader. I do it. I know the books I was raised on did it. It's a hard habit to break when you've studied so much story writing and scene structure. Gamebooks use terms like motif, theme, tone, and so on, begging the gamemaster to digest a dictionary in order to write their own adventures.

Maybe that's why the old guard loved monster bashes so much.

But if you've ever watched even a second of soap operas, wrestling, or even the cheesiest of movies, you know the action is meaningless if we're not invested in characters and their conflicts. By whichever manner you learn to tell stories, the main component of Western mythology is characters in conflict.

The three ingredients of a well-rounded character are:

* Who is she?
* What does she want?
* Why can't she get it?

The same goes for story conflict:

* What is the plot?
* What is at stake?
* Why is it so hard to accomplish?

Now look at the books and films that do this so well: *Blade Runner, Dune, Mad Max: Fury Road, The Road, Seven Samurai*. The list goes on. These stories draw upon simple, classic concepts and explore them through complicate character concepts and unique themes. What makes them memorable isn't the plot, but the conflicts within those plots.

RUNNING GAMES

Gamemasters wear many hats — actor, administrator, guide, narrator, referee — and some people are better at different jobs than others. It's impossible to master all of the jobs of being a gamemaster. No one expects that, actually.

Hundreds of games have provided hundreds of pages of advice on this subject. Most people already have their play and gamemastering styles and know what they expect roleplaying games to do. And those who are fans of the OSR philosophy, most likely have decades of experience doing all of this. The advice on these pages only works if you apply it.

NARRATIVE VS. NARRATION

Dungeons and Dragons™ (and its contemporaries) has a particular advantage over other games. It has been around a long time, so people have learned to play it without the language of storytelling tools. In fact, some people don't even use it to tell a story, but rather to advance their characters through a series of puzzles. The main hurdle of gaming advice is teaching a new language for doing something people already know how to do.

Narrative is a fancy word for the story being told, while **narration** is the *way* in which the story is told. To use an example most everyone understands... *Star Wars'* narrative is a young farm boy getting revenge for the death of his family against a tyrannical overlord who turns out to be his father. *Star Wars'* narration is the story being told using the methods of Western-film stylings, with dark music and black costumes for the bad guys. Shots are big to reflect the epic nature of the world and the droids act as the Greek chorus to keep us informed.

Narrative is panel by panel. Narration is how those panels look and feel.

NOMENCLATURE

Books often instruct gamemasters to have a concept before writing their adventures. But words like concept and context mean different things to different people. Growing up on popcorn entertainment, we often think in plot first, not concept. Gamemasters don't sit and outline fifty different story arcs before settling on a final design. They think of a plot and go from there, putting obstacles in the PCs ways.

Because that's what Joseph Campbell taught us.

If you want to understand words like concept, plot, theme, and tone, there's some definitions on the next page. But you can gloss over this section if you want to get to the meat of writing adventures, which starts on page 68. This merely helps develop a shared language for discussing game writing.

And also makes you a hit at parties.

AGENCY

A buzzword for a character's authority within a story. In gaming circles it includes a player's authority as well, both inside and outside of the story. If a character has agency, she has the power to impact her fate. A character without agency is nothing more than a plot point.

CONCEPT

Concept is the abstract idea of a (written) work. In *Bloodwraith,* the concept is humans on the verge of extinction. In *Mad Max 4*, the concept is a futuristic wasteland where people are chattel and pregnant women are bartered and controlled. In *Star Wars,* the concept is to sell a lot of toys.

CONTEXT

I use this word a lot. It's a dying subject, but I believe you can't have a good story without it. Context is all the things that go together. Too many ingredients and you lose context. For instance, if you create a game about pirates stealing treasure in a supernatural world, adding zombies at the bottom of the ocean is contextual. Adding fire-breathing Russian bears is not. The context of *Bloodwraith* is a fantasy world where wraiths and undead hunt humans and people work together to survive the horror-based onslaught.

ETHOS

Ethos is a character's credibility or ethical appeal. In order to believe something a character says, we must respect her. If a player wants to be heard during play, she must create a likeable character. This is not always true, but an evil character who is charming gets away with a lot more than an antisocial hero

GENRE

Genre is a term that gets bandied around a lot. At its simplest, genre is a combination of structure and veneer. In literature, the fantasy genre follows specific structural rules, while maintaining a veneer of elves, dragons, magic, and the like. People love to argue whether or not something is within a genre. For the purposes of this document, it is merely to explain what makes up a genre, not whether your favorite science fiction show is sci-fi or not.

GESTALT

There is an idea that when all of the parts are combined in a whole, that whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. Some people refer to this as a tableau. The primary concept of gestalt is to bring order out of chaos and combine all of the necessary elements to make the finished picture resonate. Gamemasters deal with this all the time when balancing which ingredients to include in an adventure and which to ignore. They may not realize they are doing it, but they are. Context grows from the chosen elements of a given gestalt. Without it, the context is muddied by too many ingredients.

LOGOS

Logos is a character's appeal to reason.

MOTIF

When people say theme, they usually mean motif. It is what something looks like. A cowboy-themed party where people only dress up as cowboys, but don't brand cattle (for instance) is actually a party with a cowboy motif. In order for it to be cowboy-themed, people would have to do some cowboy stuff, including listening to Merle Haggard.

PATHOS

Pathos is a character's appeal to emotion.

PLASTIC TIME

Every minute of a book isn't a minute of real time. If you can read a novel in six hours, it doesn't mean six hours has passed in the novel. Players are not playing minute by minute in a roleplaying game. Instead, there is an abstract passage of time known as 'plastic time.' Plastic time measures both real and imagined time together into a single unit of measurement. If the gamemaster tells the PCs they have one hour to solve the murder, they most likely have one hour of plastic time to solve the murder. The tension is still there, but the clock isn't ticking in a literal manner.

THEME

This word never gets used correctly. It does not mean genre or veneer. The way something looks is not a theme, though one could decorate their home in an art deco theme, the term theme is more complicated than that.

Theme is the combination of all underlying subtext in a story: family division, hopelessness, love, valor, and so on are all themes. The list of themes is near endless. What it is not is "fantasy village."

TONE

Tone is the mood of a piece... what it feels like. The specific tone of a game might be subtle or obvious. For instance, a dark tone might be oppressive, with each scene making the players more and more depressed. Conversely, a mysterious tone might only be noticed in scenes where people aren't getting direct answers to their questions.

ZEITGEIST

Zeitgeist literally means spirit of the age, which is a high-brow way of saying "of a particular period in time." In game design, it primarily refers to what the game is about and what am I doing in it. What is the zeitgeist? In *Bloodwraith*, the zeitgeist is humanity on its last legs in age of godlessness.

WRITING ADVENTURES

While dungeon crawling is certainly a possibility in *Bloodwraith,* it is not the norm. Adventuring, in fact, is a bit of a misnomer, given that PCs are likely to spend just as much time building walls, hunting games, preparing defenses, and solving everyday enclave problems.

COMMUNITY

The focus of *Bloodwraith* is on the semi-nomadic enclaves the PCs are a part of. Even if the characters are always away from the community, fighting and plundering, their duty is to the enclave. The community rallies and suffers along with the adventurers. Adventures start and end with the enclave.

Several published adventures focus on this style of play, showing gamemasters how to facilitate play around the community. Building the enclave (page 38) is vital to creating a community-centric campaign for *Bloodwraith*. The community is a living thing, always evolving, with its own priorities and needs.

RUMORS

There is no perfect method of communication amongst the enclaves. It is very easy for information to be lost, misconstrued, improperly translated and so on. Even if an enclave never has contact with the outside world, rumors within a community — grown from a scout returning from another mission — are easily misunderstood or retold with information missing/changed.

HISTORY AND RUINS

It is unclear how much time has really passed since the purge. This is purposeful. Vague gaps of time provide gamemaster's the opportunity to create their own histories. Exploring the ruins and old writings of Gyrr is a definite option in *Bloodwraith*. As such, gamemasters can find literal hundreds of old school dungeons just waiting to be transformed for Gyrr.

The key ingredient of a *Bloodwraith* 'dungeon' is discovering lost histories and magic. The PCs find a now submerged temple. Who or what did it serve? What writings survived? What does it hint to? What do the symbols on this statue mean? How can they interpret them? Which of the dead sleeping gods is trying to make contact through this holy site?

SURVIVAL

Survival is an ongoing theme in *Bloodwraith*. But rules for managing survival in a roleplaying game are always unfun bookkeeping. Since this game's origins lie in OSR mechanics, gamemasters are encouraged to bring up hunger and exhaustion through roleplaying, not through die rolls. Certainly there will be times when food supplies are low and the gamemaster wants to call for a saving throw or a Constitution check, but those decisions rest with the individual.

PLANNING THE CAMPAIGN

Depending on the length of the campaign, gamemasters may link adventures together into a coherent storyline. The PCs do not merely take on one adventure and go on to another 500 miles away, without a through-line. Gamemasters sometimes overdo it by planning every little piece of a campaign. Campaigns should reflect the story being told in the present, not the story the gamemaster wants to tell. The actions of the PCs resonate with lasting consequences and the world around them should change to reflect those actions.

> *Do not ignore this.*

The people whose lives have been affected by the PCs aren't going away — for better or worse. The aftermath of their actions string together from adventure to adventure in such a way that the next plot feels organic. Always leave unresolved plot threads somewhere in an adventure so the next part of the story feels like it belongs.

SCALING ENCOUNTERS

Monsters in *Bloodwraith* do not scale at the same rate as PCs. A monster with 6 HD has many more hit points than a single PC at the same level. Basing an encounter on hit points to hit points is a good way to gauge the PCs' survival rate. If this is a simple encounter, keep the hit point total well below the PCs. If this is an important encounter, 75% to 100% is a good ratio. Beyond that, save the toughest fights for end of the adventure encounters.

Some monsters deal a great deal of damage and/or have unpredictable powers. This should always be taken into account. It's not the goal of the gamemaster to kill the PCs, but to challenge them. If the PCs are on the verge of dying from a fight, have the enemy retreat and explain it away later. Maybe they are a distraction force. Maybe they stole something and don't have time to finish the PCs off. Maybe this is a ploy to throw the PCs off their plans or test human limits in combat.

ALWAYS WINNING

With any game system, there are opportunities to exploit cracks. Over time, these exploits lead to the PCs winning at everything. It happens. There are no perfect game systems. The goal for the gamemaster is to challenge, but not break the PCs. So even if they create characters who win at everything, the gamemaster must challenge the path to victory through tougher monsters or more complicated encounters.

Take the characters out of their elements. Pit the fighter against a horde of small goblins so her strength is useless. Surround the archer with twisted vines or undead creatures. Force the warlock to deal with things unaffected by illusions or magical damage.

ALTERNATIVE INITIATIVE RULES

Write all the PCs' **names** on small chits and place them in a cup. Write **Villain** on one, twice if there are more than four PCs in the group. Write **Wraith** on one to three chits, write **Shroud** on one, and write **Orc** on two chits. The remaining chits are special chits: one **Drama**, **Setback**, and one **Chaos** (though this is optional and should never be used more than once per session).

In place of rolling dice for initiative, the GM places all of the chits into the cup and draws one at a time. Each time a **name** chit comes out of the cup, that PC acts. Otherwise, follow the rules below for monsters, villains, and special chits. The chits are chosen in turn, so no one knows who is going next, thus representing the fog of war. The process continues until every name or monster chit has been removed the cup. If a special chit is drawn at the end of the round with no names remaining, the chit is set aside with no effect.

The **orc** chit represents all of the lower level, 'fodder' monsters. When the **orc** chit comes out, half the *orcs* take a turn. The other half take a turn, when the other **orc** chit comes out. It doesn't matter which, and its good tactics to mix it up, so the PCs never know what to expect. So if the PCs are fighting kobolds, goblins, etc., anything that is lower than they are, the orc chit represents them.

The **shroud** chit represents lieutenants. These are characters and monsters within 1 HD of the PCs — 6th level PCs fighting 5 to 7 HD monsters. When the PCs reach 10th level, the range increases to 2 HD. Not every encounter has them, but they are the non-fodder, non-leader types within an encounter. It is recommended that this chit be left out of the cup until the PCs reach 3rd level.

The **villain** chit represents the main antagonist of the encounter — the leader if you will — but only if the PCs are facing someone of importance. The chit is not used if a stand-out enemy isn't present. When (and if) the villain chit is drawn a second time, the villain character gains one additional action, but not a full 'turn.' This action can be used to move, attack, cast a spell, and so on. But only half of what someone could accomplish in a normal turn.

The **wraith** chit represents one of two things: direct henchmen of the leader and intangibles of combat. Henchmen are the right hand of a villain. If no henchmen exist, promote one of the *orcs* to sergeant, give her an additional +1 HP per HD, and a nice weapon. She becomes a henchman and takes actions when the wraith chit is drawn, however, only once per round. Additional draws of wraith chits are not henchmen actions, unless there are numerous henchmen and each acts independently.

The **wraith** chit also represents inopportune moments in combat. Escape routes blocked, reinforcements, sneak attacks, torches going out, tremors, and anything the PCs may or may not have a contingency plan for. It is not deadly, but it is an inconvenience. Broken weapons are reserved for setbacks.

The **drama** chit is good for the PCs. Whenever drama is drawn, a second chit is drawn to see who is affected. If that chit is not a name chit, the drama chit is set aside and nothing happens. The other chit returns to the cup. If a name chit *is* drawn, that chit is placed back into the cup and the drama chit is set aside.

Drama becomes a small boon for the named character. It is a short moment to give a speech, a chance to run an additional 10 ft. to get to the golden chalice, a spear piercing through a shield, a magical barrier fizzling, a potion slipping out of a pack and onto the top of someone's foot, whatever is appropriate as determined by the PC. It is the equivalent of a +3 bonus to an die roll.

Drama occurs once per combat. If a PC benefits from the drama chit, do not put it back in the cup at the end of the round.

The **setback** chit is just that, a setback. Whenever setback is drawn, a second chit is drawn to see who is affected. If that chit is not a name chit, the setback chit is set aside and nothing happens. The other chit returns to the cup. If a name chit *is* drawn, that chit is placed back into the cup and the setback chit is set aside.

The character suffers some kind of setback. Her weapon breaks, she trips on a rock, an orc she previously killed gets to his feet, a quiver of arrows falls to the ground, an enemy soldier gets a quick sneak attack in, and so on. Mathematically, the equivalent of setback is a lost action, a lost spell, or 1d6 hit points of damage.

A setback occurs once per combat. If a PC suffers because of a setback chit, do not put it back in the cup at the end of the round.

When the **chaos** chit is drawn, roll 1d20. On a 1, it affects someone negatively. On a 20, it affects someone positively. Otherwise, it is set aside and nothing happens. If something positive or negative happens, two additional chits are drawn (ignoring special chits), representing the benefactor and victim of the chaos. The **chaos** chit is not recommended for beginning players.

Chaos is chaos. It can be any of a number of things, all dependent on the DM/PC whims. And... it is recommended that these happen infrequently. Chaos is the random nonsense that can't be explained. It can be an old wound that opens/closes, two creatures bumping into one another, a PC stepping on and crushing his own holy symbol, a misread scroll, a previously used wand discharging (again) or producing a wand of wonder effect, a poison-tipped dagger drawn from the scabbard incorrectly, magical darkness springing up/going away, divine/infernal intervention, rat swarms, random encounters finding their way to the fight, a secret door/chute opening, blood from the ceiling, a wineskin rupturing in a backpack, temporary blindness, headaches, nosebleeds, adrenaline rushes, an orc producing a bag of itching powder and exploding it as he falls down (hitting everyone), and so on.

MONSTERS

Monster descriptions appear in the *Bloodwraith* world book. The following section is for game mechanics and tactics. Listed hit dice (HD) is the bare minimum. Gamemasters may wish to tailor the hit dice to a given encounter.

ARCHON BEASTMAN

AC: 14   **Attack/Damage: 1, 1d8 + visions***

HD: 3+8   **Move: 12**

TACTICS

Archons fight ferociously and without pause.

CRITICAL FAILURE

A critical failure while attacking a archon triggers a vision, often associated with someone familiar to the PC, as archons still possess a measure of human quality.

5 OR LESS

The archon beastman recovers 1d4 hit points.

BEGGAR SHADOW

AC: 14, Ethereal   **Attack/Damage: 1, 2d4 + visions**

HD: 4+1   **Move: 9**

TACTICS

Beggar shadows cannot technically be killed, nor can they kill. They can be banished for a short while (usually a few days), but they never entirely die. And the longer they are *fed*, the stronger they become. Beggar shadows gain an additional +1 hit points for every day they've been fed to a maximum of 20 additional hit points.

Anyone reduced to '0' hit points as a result of a beggar shadow attack is rendered unconscious.

Beggar shadows also trigger visions, forcing a saving throw with each successful attack. These visions manifest as guilt for not doing more, in addition to whatever visions the character already suffers.

CRITICAL FAILURE

A critical failure while attacking a beggar shadow results in the attacker losing something of value. The item is lost, stolen, or disappears through some supernatural method. In addition, she must succeed at a saving throw against manipulation or be unable to attack the beggar shadow for 1d4 turns.

5 OR LESS

The beggar shadow *attaches* itself to the PC and drains 1 point of Charisma.

BLOOD ELF

AC: 15+	**Attack/Damage:** 1, 1d8 or magic
HD: 5 and up	**Move:** 12 or 15

TACTICS

Blood elves are powerful and rare. They possess magical powers, bestowed upon them by the bloodwraiths. Some also know elven truth magic. Truth can be useful for getting information out of humans, while the powers bestowed by the bloodwraiths is used to a harmful degree. But each blood elf is unique. Each has her own compliment of powers.

A blood elf can cast one or two additional spells each day from the following list (chosen beforehand by the gamemaster):

Aposematism

Awaken

Cause Wounds

The Devil's Gaze

Dragonskin

Fiendish Voices

Hold Portal

Invisibility

Magic Hand

Keep to the Shadows

Protection from Violence

Raven's Claw

Severed Heart

Shocking Boly

Snake Hand

Stench of Death

An 8+ HD blood elf is rare and gains one additional attack each round.

BLOODWRAITH

Each bloodwraith is unique and beyond the scope of these rules. Gamemasters shouldn't administer combat with bloodwraiths the same way as other encounters. They have power beyond imagination and no set of monster stats can replace good old-fashioned gamemastering. Even 10th level characters should have a hard time against bloodwraiths, the way high-level characters would have trouble against a dragon.

CHIMERIC BEAST

AC: 16

HD: 5+3

Attack/Damage: Varies

Move: 9+

TACTICS

No two chimeric beasts are the same. They exist within the context of these rules to provide gamemasters leverage to create whatever they like. Chaos beasts and otyughs are perfect starting points for envisioning chimeric beasts. Beyond that, chimeric beasts have numerous attack methods and always surprise opponents with something they didn't see coming.

The mere site of a chimeric beast is enough to trigger visions, but hardy adventurers are allowed a saving throw to keep their calm.

Typical chimeric beast attack abilities/powers include:

Acid blood/spit/touch

Confusing gaze

Deafening cry

Fear-inducing aura

Grappling tentacles

Mind control/reading

Nauseating stench

Paralyzing touch

Psionic power

Regeneration

Shapeshifting

Tough/toxic skin

Vision-inducing aura/gaze

5 OR LESS

The chimeric beast gains one free attack against the PC at a –4 to the die roll.

THE CLOVEN

AC: 18	**Attack/Damage: 1 or 2, varies**
HD: 6+6	**Move: 9+**

TACTICS

The cloven does not engage directly, unless it is absolutely necessary. It stalks its prey for days, projecting fear and nightmarish visions. If that does not work, it employs its horns and hooves in melee. Its horns are razor-sharp and cause wounds (1d8+1 damage) that are difficult to close. It projects an inexplicable sense of foreboding. Just being around the cloven is unnerving. It also possesses 1d4 abhorrent magic spells, chosen by the gamemaster.

Its ultimate goal is to instill a permanent level of fear in its enemies in order to mark its territory and keep humans inside their respective enclaves.

The cloven flees combat before it can be killed, usually when 20% of its hit points remain. It uses shadowy magic to hide its escape. Any attempt to trail it suffers a –4 penalty. Some cloven can cast a *tree door*-like spell as a last resort, though this is exhausting for the cloven.

5 OR LESS

The cloven unlocks a new vision for the PC, triggering it at the same time. A PC may never gain more than one additional vision from a single cloven. Subsequent rolls of 5 or less result in a fear-like sensation causing the PC to suffer a cumulative –1 penalty to attack rolls. There is no saving throw against this fear. It is ever-present and supernatural. It fades 1d6 hours after being in contact with the cloven.

CORPSE EATER

AC: 14	**Attack/Damage: 1, 1d3 or fear**
HD: 1–1	**Move: 15 flight**

TACTICS

Corpse eaters attack in a swarm of 8 to 30. Only half of them attack each round as the swarm flies back and forth through the party. This means only half the swarm can be attacked in melee combat each round as well. Once half of the corpse eaters are killed, they flee.

Each round a corpse eater can attack with its beak and claws (a single attack roll which deals 1d3 damage when successful), or generate a fear-inducing screech that imparts a cumulative –1 to all of a PC's rolls for 1 hour on a failed saving throw. To keep combat fast and simple, have the corpse eaters attack the PC equally/randomly. Do not bother marking exactly where they are in the combat. Keep it abstract and have the PCs fight until the corpse eaters disperse. For most PCs, corpse eaters are a nuisance.

DEGENERATION HAG

AC: 15   **Attack/Damage:** 1, varies

HD: 6+4   **Move:** 9

TACTICS

Degeneration hags regenerate 1d6 hit points per round, gain +4 to magical saving throws, and can see perfectly in darkness. Merely seeing a degeneration hag forces a saving throw to resist their nauseating features. A failed roll results in a −2 to all rolls throughout the combat. Once per day, the hag can project superior darkness in a 15' radius that snuffs out all light and even extinguishes torches. Magical light in the area must make a saving throw to remain active.

Most hags were warlocks or witches in their previous form, before being twisted by the bloodmarshes. They possess 2d4 magical spells of various levels, as chosen by the gamemaster, but these spells have unpredictable results. In addition to their intended effect, a degeneration hag's spells produce strange side effects. When a spell is cast, the hag rolls 1d20. On a 1–5, the spell backfires dealing half of the effect back upon the hag. On a 6–15, the spell sends off any number of harmless, but unwanted effects such as signalling their location to others or slowing down speech patterns or starting a nearby fire. On a 16–20, the spell produces an additional random, but beneficial effect for the hag.

On a successful ranged attack, a degenerate hags deals 1 point of damage to a character's Charisma score, just like a shadow would. On a critical hit, this damage to Charisma increases to 2.

Some hag possess the ability to hypnotize or mesmerize a human opponent with a mere look. As an action, the hag locks eyes on the human who must succeed at a saving throw or become bewildered by the hag's gaze. The target loses one point of Wisdom and suffers a −4 to all actions the following round, which reduces to a −2 the round after that, and finally dissipates on the third round. Should the hag mesmerize an already bewildered opponent, the penalties stack.

Once per week, a degeneration hag can summon a pack of dire wolves, a murder of corpse eaters, or a swarm of bats. This summoning is a full action, like casting a spell, but it requires no energy and cannot be disrupted or dispelled.

Encounters with degeneration hags are chaotic and deadly. Some possess shadow powers in addition to everything listed above.

CRITICAL FAILURE

The character temporarily loses one memory and one point of Intelligence.

5 OR LESS

The degeneration hag regenerates 1d6 additional hit points.

DWARF

AC: 14	**Attack/Damage: 1, 1d8**
HD: 2+2	**Move: 9**

TACTICS

Dwarves are steadfast and resolute fighters. They gain a +2 to fear-based saving throws and morale checks. They also maintain near-perfect formations. In combat, a dwarf adjacent to at least one other dwarf gains a +1 to her AC, though this bonus is not cumulative.

5 OR LESS

The dwarf gains an immediate attack at –4 to the roll, disarming her opponent on a successful hit.

DWARF COMMANDER

AC: 16	**Attack/Damage: 1 or 2, 1d10+1**
HD: 5+5	**Move: 9**

TACTICS

Commanders are always high-level fighters. They increase the bonus of morale checks to all the dwarves they lead to +4. Dwarf commanders themselves never make morale checks and always carry at least a *+1 axe, hammer,* or *maul*.

Some high-level dwarf commanders (*forwost*) carry a *beacen stone*. The beacen stone is an earthen token, blessed with the blood of a dwarf priest and imbued with one dwarven earth magic spell (chosen by the gamemaster). The beacen stone glows either green or yellow.

5 OR LESS

The dwarf commander gains an immediate attack at –4 to the roll, dealing 1d4+1 points of damage on a successful hit.

DWARF CUTTER

AC: 13	**Attack/Damage: 1, 1d12+2**
HD: 4+4	**Move: 9**

TACTICS

Cutters are fearless elite shock troops. They dive into combat without fear or hesitation. They never need to make a morale check. Due to the cutters unusual fighting style, they do not grant an adjacency bonus to other dwarves.

5 OR LESS

The dwarf cutter immediately deals 1d4+1 points of damage to both herself and the target.

DWARF HAMMER

AC: 12	**Attack/Damage:** 1, varies
HD: 5 and up	**Move:** 9

TACTICS

Hammer is the nickname given to dwarven warlocks, also known as *dreo* or *galdere*. Hammers are rare, but powerful additions to a dwarf squad. A hammer is always accompanied by at least 10 dwarves, including at least two cutters and sometimes a commander.

The hammer's HD indicates it's casting level, and therefore its starting spells.

A dwarf hammers always carries a magical foci, known as a *hellruna*. Each foci is different, but in the right hands, the hellruna is a powerful tool in its own right. A dwarf hammer with at least 7 HD can store one dwarven earth magic spell inside the *hellruna* in addition to any other spells she knows.

ELF

AC: 14	**Attack/Damage:** 1, 1d8
HD: 2+2	**Move:** 15

TACTICS

Elves are deceptive fighters. Most are bowmen and spearman, attacking from a distance, while others use short weapons and fight in close, similar to the human irregular.

5 OR LESS

The elf deals 1 point of damage, +1 for every point below 5 rolled.

ELF ARCHER

AC: 13
HD: 2+2

Attack/Damage: 1, 1d8
Move: 18

TACTICS

Elf archers use longbows to debilitate their enemies, and move swiftly to keep the PCs at a disadvantage. So long as an elf archer is not within 30 feet of a PC, they always succeed at morale checks.

5 OR LESS

The elf archer moves out of striking range at minimum of 10 feet.

ELF COMMANDER

AC: 16
HD: 6 and up

Attack/Damage: 1, 1d8
Move: 15

TACTICS

Rank and file elves operate like archers, fighters, and irregulars. But elf commanders (*umras*) are a cut above everyone else. They always carry a magical weapon, a magical defense item, and at least one healing potion. Most command from the rear, where they can adequately gauge the fighting, descending on the PCs when a weakness is exposed. Unless the elf commander is the last one in a fight, she always succeeds at morale checks.

5 OR LESS

The elf archer gives a command to one other elf, allowing her to take one action (move, fight, cast a spell, etc.).
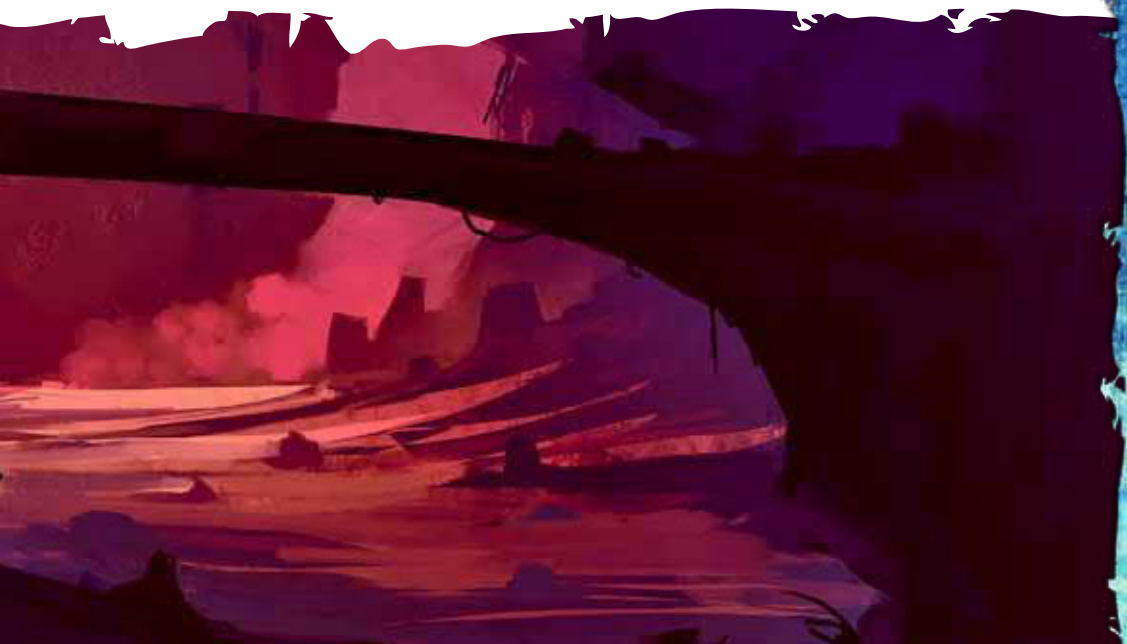
FRACTURE WYRM

AC: 20   **Attack/Damage:** 1, 2d12

HD: 10 and up   **Move:** 9 or 15 burrow

TACTICS

Fracture wyrms spend most of their time underground, burrowing through the earth. In combat, they can disappear into the ground as one action and appear somewhere else as another, putting themselves out of range of a fight.

Once every 2d4 rounds, the fracture wyrm can breath a 10' wide line of liquid magma in addition to its normal attack. This magma deals 3d8 damage to everyone in its path.

Should the fracture wyrm ever deal maximum damage with its bite attack (e.g. 24 points of damage), the target is immediately swallowed and eaten, unless a saving throw is successful rolled with a –4 penalty.

CRITICAL FAILURE

The fracture wyrm's breath attack restores 1 round faster.

5 OR LESS

The fracture wyrm's wounds close up, increasing its AC by +1 (temporarily).

GOBLIN

AC: 12	**Attack/Damage:** 1, 1d4
HD: 1–1	**Move:** 12 or 15

TACTICS

Goblins lack any semblance of tactical acumen. They wear little-to-not armor, carry jagged blades, and fight with swarm-like tactics.

Goblin encounters are always a part of another species' assault, usually dwarf or elf. Diversionary raids are not unheard of, but they don't last long.

GOBLIN MAGI

AC: 12	**Attack/Damage: 1, 1d4**
HD: 3−1	**Move: 12**

TACTICS

One in one thousand goblins is born with magical power. These goblin magi (*afsuncu*) can cast abhorrent or sorcery magic, casting as third level or higher warlocks. Their foci is always a some kind of rotten fruit with maggots or worms inside. The fruit is perfectly preserved in its rotten state until the magi dies.

Goblin magi always lead other goblins, granting +1 to their morale checks. Should the goblins ever fail a morale test, however, they turn on the goblin magi before fleeing.

CRITICAL FAILURE

The goblin magi moves 10 feet away from the attacker.

LIZARDFOLK

AC: 14	**Attack/Damage: 1, 1d6**
HD: 2+4	**Move: 12**

TACTICS

Lizardfolk avoid conflict and only fight defensively. They attempt to flee at the first sign of trouble, even if the outnumber an enemy. If forced to fight, they would rather subdue an enemy and hide away afterwards.

5 OR LESS

The lizardfolk gains a (cumulative) +1 AC bonus until the end of the combat.

MURMUR LIZARD

AC: 14	**Attack/Damage: 2, 1d8**
HD: 5+3	**Move: 9**

TACTICS

Murmur lizards ambush their prey, like any cunning predator. If cornered, a murmur lizard uses its powerful legs to lunge at the enemy and its powerful jaws to rend and maim, before escaping. Murmur lizards also possess a preternatural awareness and are hard to sneak up on. Any attempt to surprise or ambush a murmur lizard suffers a −4 penalty.

Bull murmur lizards gain a +2 to attack and damage during the mating season.

5 OR LESS

The murmur lizard gains +4 on its next attack roll.

ORC

AC: 13	**Attack/Damage:** 1, 1d6 or 1d8
HD: 1+1	**Move:** 12

TACTICS

Orcs are the meat and potatoes of most bloodwraith armies. They are straight-forward and driven by war. Orc encounters are always in groups of four, eight, or fourteen.

Orcs do not know magic, despite attempts to teach them. The largest orc fights from the front and the weakest used ranged weapons from the rear. Large stones are a common orc weapon when arrows and spears run out.

5 OR LESS

One orc, previously reduced to exactly '0' hit points, regains 1d3 hit points.

ORC COMMANDER

AC: 15	**Attack/Damage:** 1 or 2, 1d8
HD: 1+1	**Move:** 9 or 12

TACTICS

Orc commanders distinguish themselves with body and face paint, along with a large weapon. Some adorn themselves with trophies from previous victories as well. Whatever the design, the commander stands out so her troops can recognize her on the battlefield.

Some orc squads have 2 or 3 orc commanders are various ranks. When elves are present, orcs take orders from the highest-ranking elf. Otherwise, they take orders from the highest-ranking orc commander.

Orc commanders leading from the front grant a +2 bonus to morale checks to other orcs. Orc commanders leading from the rear grant a +1 bonus to attack rolls.

5 OR LESS

The orc commander gains a (cumulative) +1 bonus to damage until the end of the combat.

PUS GOBLIN

AC: 11	**Attack/Damage:** 1, 1d4
HD: 1–1	**Move:** 12

Pus goblins are an expendable species of sub creatures the rest of Gyrr has deemed 'undesireable.' They are a rare encounter, often used for manual labor, and services others do not want to do.

RAVENWING OWLBEAR

AC: 16	Attack/Damage: 2, 1d8*
HD: 4+4	Move: 12, 6 (flying)

TACTICS

Ravenwing owlbears are massive creatures, beyond the normal imaginings of life in Gyrr. There is always something magical about a ravenwing owlbear, though no two are the same. One might radiate a magical shield energy, while another might have perfect infravision, and another might have a thicker hide.

Ravenwing owlbears are clumsy on the ground, suffering a –4 to any Dexterity-related rolls the creature might make. While flying at night, they are especially silent, surprising their enemies on a 1–8 on 1d20.

An owlbear that succeeds with both claw attacks against a single target, may attempt a third attack with its beak which gains a +2 to attack and damage.

5 OR LESS

The ravenwing owlbear regenerates 1d4 hit points.

RAZORBACK TROLL

AC: 15	Attack/Damage: 2, 1d6
HD: 3+3 and up	Move: 15

TACTICS

Razorback trolls look like hideous giant rats with large, bipedal bodies. They have dark vision up to 120 feet and are solitary. They fear large groups and flee when a fight turns against them. Nevertheless, their tools are best used to ambush an enemy and disappear quickly.

Their appearance is ghastly, causing foes to suffer a –4 to attack rolls the first time they are encountered. This penalty reduces to –2 after 2d6 rounds. Alternatively, a foe may attempt a saving throw every three rounds to reduce the penalty due to the razorback troll's hideous appearance.

Razorback trolls regenerate 1d4 points each round, except damage delivered from fire or magic. Whenever a razorback troll is reduced to half its starting hit points, it attempts to flee (without putting itself into undo harm).

CRITICAL FAILURE

The razorback troll moves 10 feet away from the attacker and gains a +1 cumulative bonus to its AC.

5 OR LESS

The razorback troll regenerates 2 hit points.

SHROUD

Shrouds are vague, apparitional forces, living under the weight of the bloodwraith's punishment. Shrouds take on many forms, based on how they died and/or were tormented before death.

Because of their nature, shrouds do not have traditional game statistics. Instead, each of the suggested shrouds is detailed below with game advice on how to use them in *Bloodwraith*. How they attack, how much they can hurt the PCs before being dispersed, and how they get away is up to the gamemaster. These are not traditional monsters, but they are still shadows for the purposes of combat.

Gamemasters are encouraged to create more.

THE BLIND
The blind attacks a PC's Intelligence and Wisdom scores, triggering new visions and reducing their sense of awareness of the reality around them. PCs reduced to 0 Intelligence from blind attacks become zombies. PCs reduced to 0 Wisdom from blind attacks become a blind shroud.

THE DROWNED
The drowned attacks a PC's Strength and Constitution scores with an icy touch. A PC who suffers from three attacks by the drowned feels her lungs start to fill with water. Enough attacks and she will die.

THE HUNGRY
The hungry reduce a PC's Strength and hit points, with a famine-like touch. The pain from their touch is excruciating, causing the victim to make a saving throw or lose one action on the following round. Anyone failing three saving throws in a single encounter, falls unconscious from pain.

THE LEPERS
The lepers spread disease with their touch, reducing a PC's Constitution score for a lengthy period of time. This, in turn, reduces a PC's maximum hit points.

THE SEVERED
The severed fill a PC's mind with horrible visions beyond the scope of any creature in Gyrr, short of a bloodwraith. Their mere presence gives anyone pause. Humans with a Constitution score below 8, upon seeing a severed, simply die. Others make a saving throw to avoid suffering 2d8 damage.

THE SORROWFUL
The sorrowful attacks in non-direct ways, slowly eroding a person's will to live. It spreads misery through proximity, turning otherwise stalwart individuals into sad and dejected nothings. They slowly damage a PC's Charisma until they die at '0.'

SOUL BORER

AC: 16	Attack/Damage: 2, 1d4
HD: 4+4 and up	Move: 12

TACTICS

Soul borers are essentially undead shadows. They are the damned, trapped between the earth and the bleeding realms. Their composition is complicated, and so is fighting them. They are excellent hunters, but once they start to attack a thing, the noise is unbearable and the process is slow and painful. Those damaged by a soul borer must succeed at a saving throw or suffer a –2 penalty to their next attack.

Soul borers suffer an additional +2 damage from cold attacks.

5 OR LESS

The soul borer deals 2 point of damage that is so painful, it triggers a vision.

SUNDER DWARF

AC: 16	Attack/Damage: 2, 1d8+1
HD: 6+6	Move: 6 or 9

TACTICS

Sometimes referred to as iron dwarves, sunder dwarves have never encountered humans. And if they have, the humans never lived to tell the tale. They are powerful enemies, beyond the scope of other dwarves (or even elves).

CRITICAL FAILURE

The sunder dwarf deals 1d4 damage.

5 OR LESS

The sunder dwarf gains a free attack at –2 to the attack roll.

TABARD SNAKE

AC: 15	Attack/Damage: 1, 1d3 + poison*
HD: 1+2	Move: 12

TACTICS

The tabard snake constricts and bites in a single motion, delivering a paralytic venom that also triggers hallucinations (visions). Once a tabard snake delivers its attack, it focuses on one victim until it is dead, regardless of size. Once a victim is reduced to 5 or fewer hit points, the tabard snake constricts for an addition 1d4+1 points of damage. Tabard snakes are stupidly fearless, continuing to bite and attack long after death — its head keeps biting until it is reduced to –6 hit points.

TOXIC THOLE

AC: 17   **Attack/Damage:** 1, 1d3*

HD: 4+2   **Move:** 15

TACTICS

Against prepared opponents, the toxic thole always flees. Against a defenseless opponent, the toxic thole drains 1 Constitution or 1 Wisdom (whichever is higher) each round from the victim.

TROLL

AC: 15   **Attack/Damage:** 1 or 2, 2d6*

HD: 4+8   **Move:** 12

TACTICS

No two trolls are the same. Their tactics and fighting capabilities are different from troll to troll. They regenerate 2d4 hit points of damage each round, except damage from blood magic and fire. Gamemasters are encouraged to add 1 to 3 random character class levels to a troll.

CRITICAL FAILURE

The troll regenerates 1d4 hit points.

5 OR LESS

The troll regenerates 1 hit point.

VAPOR GHOUL

AC: Varies   **Attack/Damage:** 1, Varies

HD: Varies   **Move:** Varies

TACTICS

Vapor ghouls take on the characteristics of whatever form they assume, gaining a +1 to attack and damage. Once the body it possesses is destroyed, the shadowy spirit inside floats away, searching for a new host. PCs have just a few rounds to destroy the spirit before it gets away, though it is unclear how this is done.

In addition, vapor ghouls possess one 2nd level spell each from three different types of magic. These spells can be cast once per day, without additional cost. Vapor ghouls cast spells and roll saving throws as though they had 6 HD.

CRITICAL FAILURE

The vapor ghoul tags its opponent, dealing 1 point of damage that never heals and making the foe easier to find later for all its nefarious plans.

WEATHER HAG

AC: 20	**Attack/Damage:** 1 or 2, 1d6*
HD: 8+8	**Move:** 15

TACTICS

Weather hags cannot die. They are part of Gyrr. While they can cast any spells involving cloud, fog, lightning, rain, and thunder at will, they are not meant to be fought. They are complicated encounters, upon which entire adventures are written.

If a weather hag is forced to fight, it rains down its most powerful magic first in such a dramatic display, anyone viewing it must succeed at a saving throw or flee in terror.

Gamemasters are encouraged to invent game effects for the weather hag, breaking the normal bounds of what is acceptable in *Bloodwraith* and what is not. Illusion spells fall into this category.

CRITICAL FAILURE

The foe suffers 1d8 damage.

WIGHT ELF

AC: 18	**Attack/Damage:** 1*, 1d8 or magic
HD: 6 and up	**Move:** 15

TACTICS

Wight elves are terrifying to behold. While they not undead, they are considered undead for the purposes of all game rules. In addition to their normal attacks, a wight elf may use its gaze once every 2d4 rounds as a free action. This gaze causes paralysis in any one foe who looks at the wight elf. The foe must succeed at a saving throw or suffer 3 points of Dexterity loss for 1 hour. Anyone reduced to '0' Dexterity in this manner falls crippled (to the ground) until the effect wears off.

Wight elves cast elven truth magic as 6th level warlocks. They also cast powerful blood magic, as well as all fire and lightning spells. They do not need to prepare spell slots and can cast any spell they know twice per day.

Wight elves gain +4 to any saving throw to resist control or manipulation.

CRITICAL FAILURE

The wight elf regains one spell slot.

5 OR LESS

The wight elf regains 1 hit point.

DESIGNER NOTES

Bloodwraith's uber-plot is based on years of game design experience, mixed with some stock art I had access to, and a personal challenge from a friend. The most important part of that statement is years of game design experience.

I've written somewhere in the neighborhood of 5 to 10 million words in gaming. I've lost count. A great deal of that writing has been gamemaster advice, pointing readers in the right direction so that one game does not play exactly like another.

People who want all their games to be the same don't need advice from me.

But the hardest part about any writing like this is a) not sounding preachy and b) getting the reader to accept and apply the advice. Anyone can read a self-help book, but if they don't want to change, nothing in that book matters.

No amount of creative endeavor from a game designer or writer is going to make a game *new*. If all you do with the product is kill orcs and dragons with it while questing for bigger magic items, then we didn't need anything after *Blackmoor* and *Greyhawk*.

But my optimism suggests some gamemasters and players want to break out of their rut and play something different and/or play the games they've been playing differently.

Bloodwraith addresses so many debates, ideas, and bad game sessions I've encountered in 35 years of gaming and nearly 20 years of game design. The sheer volume of conversations I could point to as to why a certain thing is in here or why this is OSR at all when it is so story heavy... I could fill two more books.

But I think I've rambled enough. My point is certainly made as to what I wanted from this game world. More fantasy worlds are coming in 2019 and 2020, products I've been working on for years with different approaches, themes, tones, and motifs. I hope everything I write inspires new ideas for your own games, even if you never step foot in Gyrr.

Game on.

— jim pinto

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