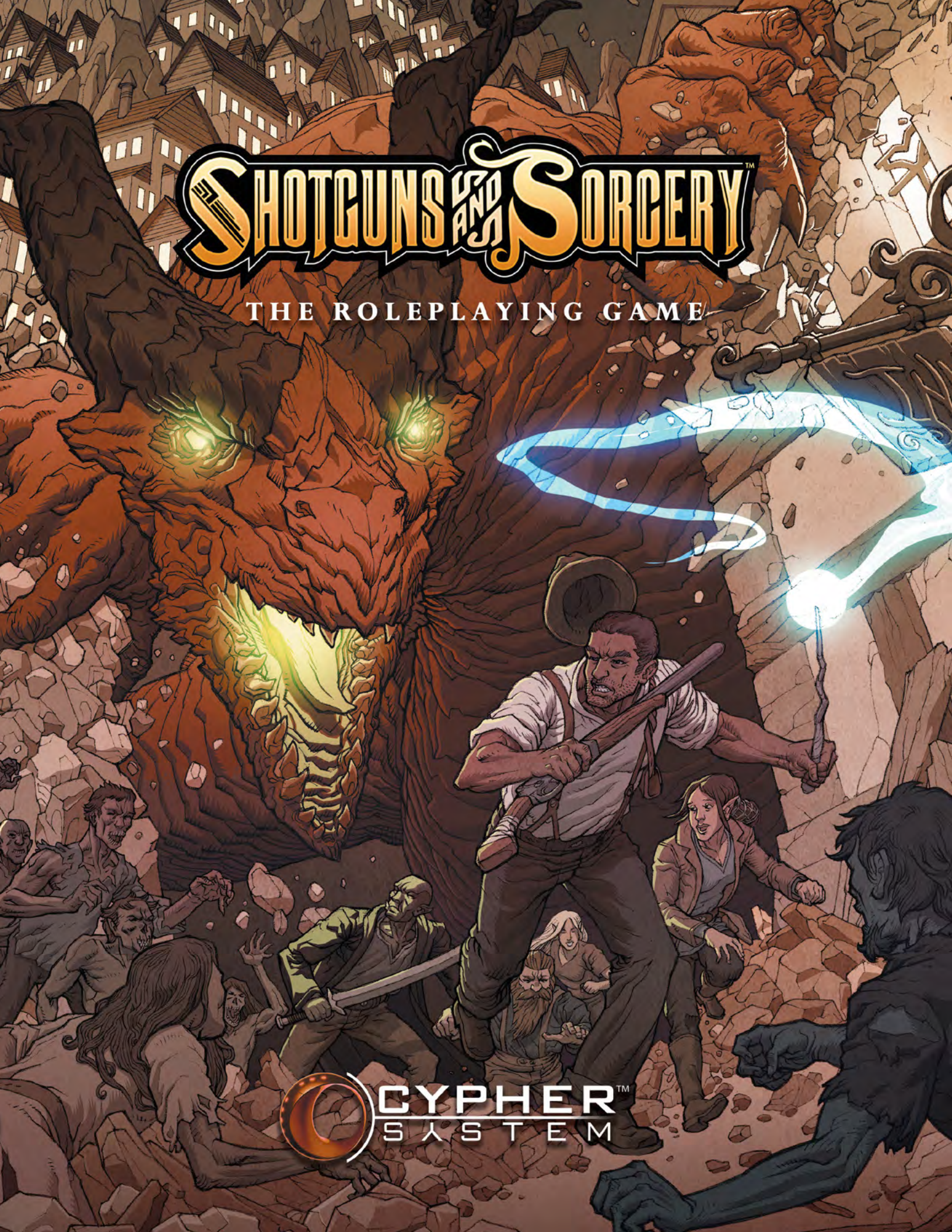

SHOTGUNS AND SORCERY™
THE ROLEPLAYING GAME
CYPHER™
SYSTEM

Shotguns and Sorcery™

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Table of Contents

Part 1: Getting Started

Chapter 1: Introduction 4
Chapter 2: How to Play 6

Part 2: Character Creation

Chapter 3: Creating your Character 12
Chapter 4: Race 17
Chapter 5: Type 23
Chapter 6: Descriptor 38
Chapter 7: Focus 47
Chapter 8: Equipment 76

Part 3: Playing the Game

Chapter 9: Game Rules 82

Part 4: Setting

Chapter 10: Dragon City 106
Chapter 11: Organizations 125
Chapter 12: Beyond the Great Circle 132

Part 5: Creatures and Characters

Chapter 13: Creatures 136
Chapter 14: Iconic Characters 171
Chapter 15: Generic NPCs 189

Part 6: Magic Items

Chapter 16: Magic Items 194
Chapter 17: Cyphers 196
Chapter 18: Artifacts and Trinkets 209

Part 7: The Game Master

Chapter 19: Running the Game 228
Chapter 20: Bringing the World to Life 254

Appendix

Character Sheet 264
Backers List 266



Part 1: Getting Started



Chapter 1: Introduction

Welcome to *Shotguns & Sorcery*, the roleplaying game! It's been a long journey to get here, and I'm thrilled to have you along for the ride.

Shotguns and Sorcery

At its heart, *Shotguns & Sorcery* is a blend of two of my favorite genres: hard-bitten detective noir and epic fantasy. More to the point, it mashes up two of my favorite authors: Raymond Chandler and J.R.R. Tolkien.

It has enchanted guns that fire spell-bearing bullets. Shotgun-toting dwarf crooks with something to prove. Cold-hearted elf beauties who can tear out your mortal heart with a glance. Halfling hacks flying carpets through the skies. Orc gangsters with poor impulse control. Shots of booze that burn with magical mojo. Freelance adventurers with a history of violence.

In short, it's a hell of a lot of fun.

But those images alone aren't enough. They look great, sure, but a world has to beat with a pulse. It has to have reasons for becoming what it is. So, I took what I wanted and backtracked to give it a history, the kind of past that makes the present seem plausible—maybe even inevitable.

I took a standard fantasy realm and threw a zombie apocalypse at it.

The Ruler of the Dead—the greatest necromancer in the world—finally made her bid for dominating the land. She launched an unstoppable army of the dead at the free peoples of the world and scoured them from the face of the world. Or so it seemed.

The refugees that fled before the Ruler of the Dead gathered at the base of the mountain home of the land's other greatest threat—a gigantic, ravenous dragon—and they cut themselves a deal. If the dragon would protect them from the armies of the dead long enough for them to build a wall strong enough to keep out the undead, they would crown him their emperor and live as his subjects forevermore.

It worked.

With the remnants of the free peoples stuffed inside a wall that encircled a large part of a mountain, the real fun began. Social levels stratified along racial lines, reinforced by longevity and wealth. Magic-laced technology development ramped up. Neighborhoods grew. Societies formed.

Soon, I had everything I needed for the stories I wanted to tell, ones that involved both pistols and magic, in the noirest fantasy city I could concoct. I'm thrilled to finally be able to share Dragon City and the entirety of *Shotguns & Sorcery* with you as a roleplaying game, so you can tell your stories there too.

Strange Beginnings

Believe it or not, *Shotguns & Sorcery* actually started out as a setting for another roleplaying game, back in the year 2000. This was not too long after I left my position as president of Pinnacle Entertainment Group, publishers of *Deadlands*, *Brave New World*, and lots of other great games, and I hadn't started writing novels yet.

I originally came up with the idea of Dragon City as a drop-in location you could use with your existing *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Third Edition* game. I pitched it around to a number of different publishers and struck an agreement with Mongoose Publishing in the summer of 2001. Our contract had me writing a series of gaming books that would start coming out in 2002.

Then, in the fall of 2001, my wife, Ann, became pregnant with quadruplets. As you might imagine, this disrupted everything.

(The kids — Pat, Nick, Ken, and Helen — all turned out fantastic. Along with our eldest, Marty, they're happy and active teenagers now. It's a *full* but fun house.)

I apologized to the understanding folks at Mongoose and put *Shotguns & Sorcery* on a shelf. It sat there until 2010, when Robin Laws (creator of *Feng Shui*, *Shadowfist*, *Gumshoe*, *Hillfolk*, etc.) asked me for a short story for an anthology called *The New Hero*.

A New Start

Robin's premise for this was that many heroes didn't follow the dramatic arc of character development you hear discussed in literary circles. In these stories, the hero undergoes a personal change that we witness, but that didn't fit the heroes of serial fiction like Sherlock Holmes, James Bond, or Batman. Instead, these heroes forced the world to change by remaining true to who they were. Robin dubbed them *iconic heroes*, and he set out to prove his theory by asking writers to come up with new examples.

For my tale, I dusted off the *Shotguns & Sorcery* setting and came up with a hero I thought fit the bill: Max Gibson, an ex-adventurer who made a fortune at it but watched his life fall apart around him just as he struck it rich. His first story, "Friends Like These," appeared in *The New Hero: Volume 2*.

I liked Max and his friends so much I returned to them when my longtime pal Stephen Sullivan asked me for a short story for the Gen Con Writer's Symposium anthology. "Goblintown Justice" debuted in *Carnage & Consequences*, edited by Marc Tassin.

Enter the Books

In 2012, I finally made the leap with Max and company to novels. As part of an ambitious challenge called 12 for '12, in which I tried to write a dozen short novels in a year, I ran a Kickstarter drive to fund a trilogy of *Shotguns & Sorcery* novels: *Hard Times in Dragon City*, *Bad Times in Dragon City*, and *End Times in Dragon City*. The drive successfully funded all three books, but only due to a huge spike in the last day, thanks to the kind help of Neil Gaiman, John Kovalic, Wil Wheaton, Jon Rogers, and the hundreds of backers who stepped up to make it happen.

When those books hit shelves, I thought I was done with Dragon City for a while. Then a company called Noble Beast knocked on my door. They'd had a huge success on Kickstarter with *Steampunk Holmes*, an enhanced ebook that featured animations, music, maps, and all sorts of great bonuses—and they wanted to give the Dragon City books the same treatment.

Unfortunately, Noble Beast folded before they could realize that vision. However, Jeremy Mohler—the fantastic artist they'd assigned to illustrate the books—didn't want to let go. While he didn't know if he could pull off an enhanced ebook set himself, he was a huge gamer from way back and wanted to know if I'd license *Shotguns & Sorcery* to him for a tabletop RPG.

I said no.

What's in a Game?

I'd published RPGs before myself, as the president of Pinnacle, and I thought that if I wanted a *Shotguns & Sorcery* RPG out there, I should just create it myself. When I found the time, I'd hire Jeremy to illustrate it, of course, but I didn't want to sign it all over to someone else. Fair enough, right?

Jeremy and I kept in touch, though, and every now and then, he'd bring up the idea of a *Shotguns & Sorcery* RPG. I was mostly writing novels those days, along with things like *The Marvel Encyclopedia* and *The Avengers Encyclopedia*, and I didn't see how I would ever find the time to get around to doing a proper job of publishing an RPG myself. Not anytime soon at least.

Eventually I realized I might never find the time to manage it myself. If I ever wanted the game to escape my head and be played in the light of day, I was going to need some help. A lot of it.

The next time Jeremy asked—persistent but always polite—I said yes.

You're reading the results right now.

Jeremy and his company—Outland Entertainment—ran a Kickstarter for the *Shotguns & Sorcery* RPG, and they nailed it. In addition to lining me up to write a good chunk of the book, they licensed the excellent Cypher System (from *Numenera* and *The Strange*) from Monte Cook Games. And then they hired the incredible Rob Schwalb (of *Shadow of the Demon Lord fame*, among many other excellent games) to take those two things and marry them into a turbo-powered, dragon-scaled, flying carpet of adventuring fun.

The Game's the Thing

I made the right call there. That's a dream team of gaming talent, one I'm thrilled to be a part of. But the best part of it?

I get to play the game myself.

It's a wild kind of thrill to sit down at a table with a group of players and start concocting brand-new stories of our own set in a world that—until now—has mostly been rattling around in the back of my head. To see them figure out how the world works, what their characters' roles are, and what kinds of adventures they can have in it.

Better yet, now you can play in this world too. With this book, you can create your own stories, go on your own adventures, and get into your own kind of trouble.

Go. Play. Breathe your own life into Dragon City. Haunt its alleys. Poke around in its darkest corners. Have an absolute blast.

Just don't forget to pack some heat with you — shotguns, sorcery, or, hell, both — and keep your friends and your wits about you. It's a dark and dangerous city out there, and you're going to need every bit of help you can get.

—Matt Forbeck



Chapter 2: How to Play

If you're familiar with *Numenera* or *The Strange* from Monte Cook Games, you already know how to play *Shotguns & Sorcery*. If not, you'll find this game features straightforward rules drawn from the Cypher System™ designed to help you and your friends tell exciting stories that take place in the mean streets of Dragon City and in the ruined landscape outside its towering walls.

Before you dive in and explore everything this tabletop roleplaying game has to offer, take a few minutes to read through this brief chapter. It gives you an overview of the game's core concepts and the fundamental rules. Once you have all this nailed down, you might head on over to Chapter 9: Game Rules to get a more detailed look at the game system's nuances.

What You Need to Play

You need a few friends to play *Shotguns & Sorcery*. At least one, and probably no more than five or six. One person becomes the **game master** (GM), and the rest become the **players**. Like other tabletop roleplaying games, the experience takes place in your imagination.

Each player creates a character using the rules in this book. A **player character**, or PC, is the persona adopted during play, and the player makes all the decisions about what that character looks like, how she behaves, and what she does during the game. The GM is the players' eyes and ears, describing what the characters see and hear, taking on the personalities of the people they meet, presenting the challenges and complications the characters face, and offering rewards for their efforts.

You're going to need a few dice to play this game. Each player should have at least one twenty-sided die (a d20). You'll also need a d6 (a six-sided die). Sometimes you'll need to roll a number between 1 and 100 (often called a d100 or d% roll), which you can do by rolling a d20 twice, using the last digit of the first roll as the "tens" place, and the last digit of the second roll as the "ones" place. For example, rolling a 17 and a 9 gives you 79, rolling a 3 and an 18 gives you 38, and rolling a 20 and a 10 gives you 00 (also known as 100). If you have a d10 (a ten-sided die), you can use it instead of the d20 to roll numbers between 1 and 100. You can grab these dice at most fine hobby shops and game stores.

Each player will need a copy of the character sheet—you can photocopy the one at the back of this book. Finally, everyone will need something to write with.

Additional Resources

You don't need anything other than this book to play the *Shotguns & Sorcery* RPG. However, you may find the following online resources helpful.

Outland Entertainment: Our website offers a downloadable character sheet and other support materials for *Shotguns & Sorcery*. Visit http://www.outlandentertainment.com.

Matt Forbeck: The creator of the *Shotguns & Sorcery* universe and the author of novels and short stories set in Dragon City. You can find Matt's work at http://www.forbeck.com.

Cypher System: Published by Monte Cook Games, the Cypher System™ is the rules framework upon which this game is based. Monte Cook Games also offers a free downloadable rules primer from their website. If you'd like to learn more, check out http://cypher-system.com.

Game Concepts

Shotguns & Sorcery uses a simple core mechanic to resolve what happens in the game. You determine the results of most actions by rolling a single twenty-sided die (d20). Whenever the rules call for "a roll" and no die is specified, roll a d20.

Action

An **action** is any activity or task described by a player or the GM. Once it has been declared, an action either happens or it doesn't. Many routine actions—walking from one side of the room to another, ordering a drink at a bar, or taking a quick nap—happen automatically. More challenging actions might happen or not depending on the task's difficulty and the result of a die roll.

Difficulty

Every action has a **difficulty**, which is a number from 0 to 10 chosen by the GM based on the action attempted. A difficulty 0 action is routine, which means anyone can do it with automatic success. A difficulty 10 action is impossible, meaning that it automatically fails. The Task Difficulty table summarizes what each difficulty number means.

Changing the Difficulty

Once the GM sets the difficulty, there are several ways to change it—either to increase the difficulty, which makes the task harder, or to decrease the difficulty, making the task easier.

Typically, increasing the difficulty happens because of some unfavorable circumstance, such as being poisoned, laboring under a curse, or suffering some kind of mishap. Increasing the difficulty doesn't happen often and usually results from factors outside the player's control.

More common is to decrease the difficulty, and there are three common ways players can go about doing it: **skills**, **assets**, and applying **Effort**. Each of these favorable circumstances can decrease the difficulty by one or more **steps**. A step, in this case, reduces the difficulty number that the GM assigned by 1. So, if a character must attempt a difficulty 4 action and she decreases the difficulty by two steps, the character is now attempting a difficulty 2 action instead.

Skills

Skills are broad or narrow areas of training or expertise that relate to specific tasks. Skills involve things like climbing, recalling esoteric knowledge, persuasion, sneaking, keeping your balance, or intimidating someone. While anyone can attempt any action, characters with a skill have a better chance at being successful when attempting tasks related to that skill.

Skills have two levels: **trained**, which indicates competence at actions related to the skill, and **specialized**, suggesting mastery in such actions. If you are trained in a skill related to an action you attempt, you decrease the difficulty by one step. If you are specialized, you decrease the difficulty by two steps. Regardless of the number of skills that apply, the use of skills can never decrease a task's difficulty by more than two steps.

Glossary

Game Master (GM): The player who doesn't run a character, but instead guides the flow of the story and runs all the NPCs.

Nonplayer Character (NPC): Characters run by the GM. Think of them as the villains, the opponents, and all the minor characters in the story. This includes creatures as well as people.

Party: A group of player characters (and perhaps some NPC allies).

Player Character (PC): A character run by a player rather than the GM. Think of the PCs as the main characters in the story.

Player: The players portray, or "run," their own individual characters in the game.

Session: A single play experience, usually lasting a few hours. Sometimes one adventure can be accomplished in a session. More often, one adventure takes place over multiple sessions.

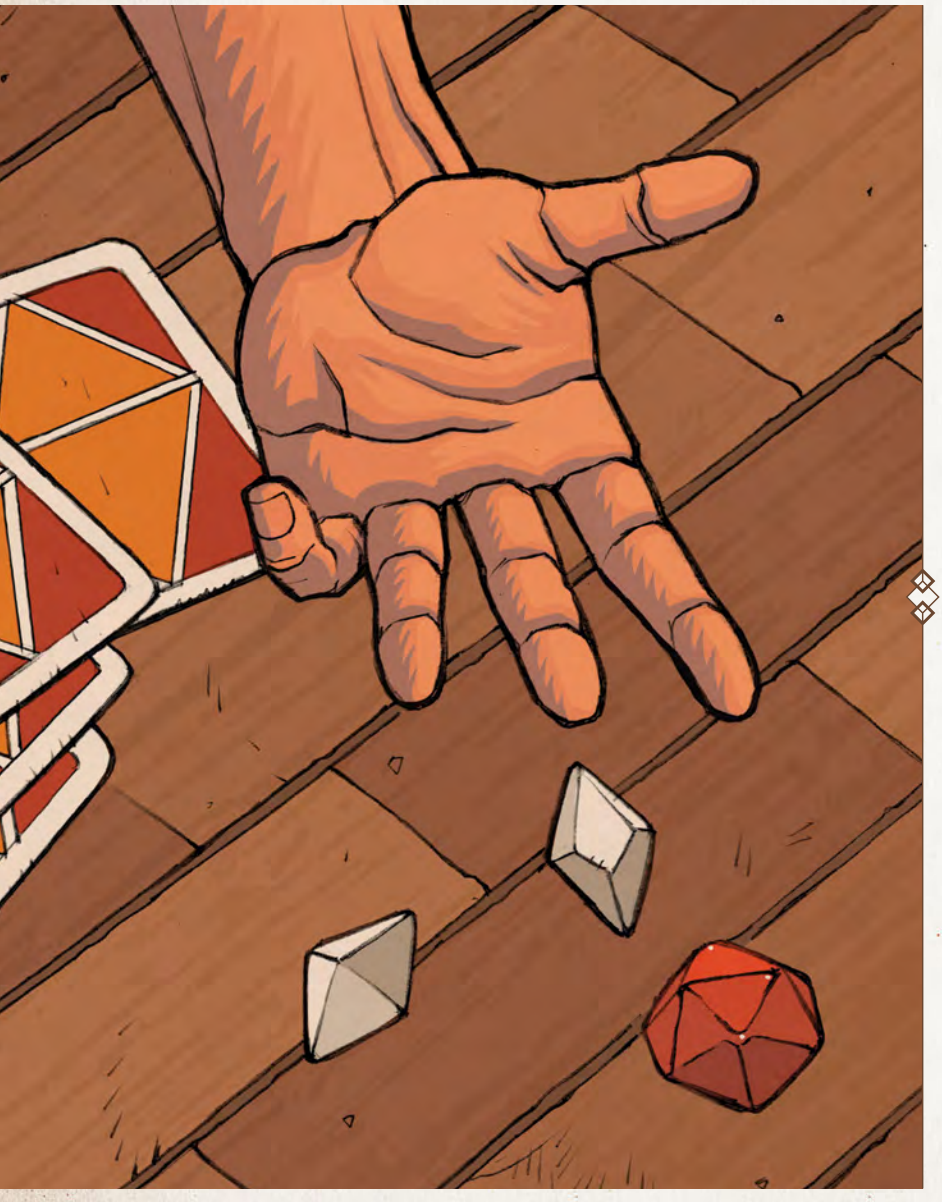
Adventure: A single portion of the campaign with a beginning and an end. Usually defined at the beginning by putting forth a goal for the PCs, and at the end by whether or not they achieved that goal.

Campaign: A series of sessions strung together with an overarching story (or linked stories) with the same player characters. Often, but not always, a campaign involves a number of adventures.

Character: Anything that can act in the game. Although this includes PCs and human NPCs, it also technically includes monsters, undead, constructs, animate plants, and so on. The word "creature" is usually synonymous with "character."

Task Difficulty

Task Difficulty	Description	Target Number	Guidance
1	Simple	3	Most people can do this task most of the time.
2	Standard	6	A typical task requiring focus, but one that most people can do.
3	Demanding	9	A task that requires full attention; most people have a 50/50 chance of succeeding.
4	Difficult	12	Trained people have a 50/50 chance to succeed.
5	Challenging	15	Even trained people often fail, though specialized people have a 50/50 chance to succeed.
6	Intimidating	18	A task beyond the abilities of most normal people.
7	Formidable	21	Impossible for those without skills or great effort.
8	Heroic	24	A task worthy of tales told for years afterward.
9	Immortal	27	A task worthy of legends that last lifetimes.
10	Impossible	30	A task that normal humans couldn't consider (but one that doesn't break the laws of physics).



Assets

Assets include any factor or circumstance that makes a task easier—such as help from an ally, using a particular piece of equipment, or a favorable environmental condition. No matter how many assets you have, their collective effect can never decrease a task's difficulty by more than two steps.

Applying Effort

Player characters can apply Effort to reduce the difficulty of an action. Doing so draws on their own intrinsic resources to help overcome a challenge. You can find more details about Effort in Chapter 9: Game Rules.

Target Number

Each difficulty has an associated **target number**. The target number is *always* three times the difficulty (difficulty ×3). For example, every difficulty 4 action has a target number of 12.

Roll the Die

Once the final difficulty is determined, if the difficulty is 0, no roll is needed: the character automatically succeeds. If the final difficulty is 1 or higher, the player rolls a d20 against the associated target number. In *Shotguns & Sorcery*, players (not the GM) make all the die rolls. If a character uses her shotgun to blow away a zombie, the player makes an attack roll; to twist away from the zombie's grasp, the player makes a defense roll.

If the number rolled equals or exceeds the target number, the roll is a **success**, and the action happens—your shot hits, the guard accepts the bribe, or the ogre misses you. Otherwise, the roll is a **failure**—the shot misses, the guard refuses the bribe, or you fail to dodge the ogre's meaty fist.

Players make all die rolls. If a character attacks a creature, the player makes an attack roll. If a creature attacks a character, the player makes a defense roll.

Difficulty 0

Difficulty 0 actions never require a roll—they automatically succeed. Many actions have a difficulty of 0. Examples include walking across the room and opening a door, casting a spell that shields your friend from the fiery breath of a dragon, or using a device (that you already know how to use) to lift yourself to an open window far above your head. For characters in the world of *Shotguns & Sorcery*, these are all routine actions that don't require rolls, even though some of them might seem quite fantastic in our world!

Even for non-routine or dangerous actions, you can sometimes apply enough skills, assets, and Effort to decrease the difficulty to 0, and thus negate the need for a roll. Walking across a narrow wooden beam is tricky for most people, but for an experienced gymnast, it's easy. You can even decrease the difficulty of an attack on a foe to 0 and succeed without rolling.

If there's no roll, there's no chance of failure. However, there's also no chance for remarkable success, which is possible by rolling certain numbers on the die as described under Special Rolls.

Bonuses

Sometimes an ability or piece of equipment does not decrease a task's difficulty, but instead adds a bonus to the die roll. Bonuses always add together, so if you get a +1 bonus from two different sources, you have a +2 bonus. If you get enough bonuses to add up to a +3 bonus for a task, discard the bonus and instead treat it as an asset, reducing the difficulty by one step. You never add more than a +1 or +2 bonus to a die roll.

Attack Rolls

An **attack roll** typically occurs when a player character attacks another creature during combat. As with any other roll, the GM assigns the difficulty. The player rolls a d20 and compares the number rolled to the target number. Generally, the difficulty for an attack roll is equal to the target creature's level. So, attacking a level 2 bandit is a difficulty 2 action (with a target number of 6).

Defense Rolls

A player makes a **defense roll** when a creature attacks his character. These rolls work just like attack rolls except that the player is rolling to avoid the attack. The GM sets the difficulty, which is normally the attacking creature's level.

Damage

Successful attack rolls (and failed defense rolls) usually result in **damage**. Damage is always a flat number based on the source—a weapon, spell, or something else.

Armor

Some creatures have an **Armor** characteristic, either from wearing armor or having natural armor such as a heavy shell or chitinous plates. Like weapon damage, Armor is a flat number. When a creature with Armor takes damage, it first subtracts the Armor from the damage it would take. For example, a bandit wearing a leather coat has Armor 1. If the bandit takes 4 points of damage from an attack, the Armor reduces this damage by 1 so that the bandit takes 3 instead. Armor can reduce damage to 0, which means the attack inflicts no damage.

Special Results

When you roll a d20, you can achieve a special result based on the "natural" number rolled (the number on the die, not including any bonuses that might apply). More details on special results can be found in Chapter 9, but the effects are summarized here:

Special Result

Die Roll	Special Result
20	Major Effect. An attack roll inflicts 4 additional points of damage or has a dramatic special effect. For any other type of roll, a natural 20 means success with an incredible result.
19	Minor Effect. An attack roll inflicts 3 additional points of damage or has a special effect. Any other roll means success with a better than expected result.
18	In combat only, the attack inflicts 2 additional points of damage.
17	In combat only, the attack inflicts 1 additional point of damage.
1	The GM introduces a new complication called a GM intrusion (see Chapter 20 for details).

Other Game Concepts

Shotguns & Sorcery uses a few other terms that are useful to learn before delving deeper into the book.

Distance

The rules sometimes express distance using exact numbers, but for most purposes, it's enough to use three broad categories: **immediate** (about 10 feet), **short** (about 50 feet), and **long** (about 100 feet). These range categories describe how far a creature can move, or how far away something is from a creature. Anything greater than long distance should be expressed using a specific number of feet.

It's almost never necessary to measure precise distances in *Shotguns & Sorcery*. Immediate distance is right there, practically next to the character. Short distance is nearby. Long distance is farther off. All weapons use the standard terms for their ranges. For example, every melee weapon has immediate range, while a thrown weapon probably has short range and a projectile weapon has long range.

Movement

Outside of combat, characters can typically go where they please at a rate that seems appropriate to the story. In combat, where more precise timekeeping is needed, characters move as follows:

A character can move an immediate distance as part of taking another action. As his entire action for the turn, a character can move a short distance. A character can try to move a long distance as his entire action, but the player might have to roll to see if the character slips, trips, or stumbles as the result of moving so far so quickly.

Any time the game rules call for "a roll," that means a d20. A d6 is used most often for recovery rolls (page 89) and to determine the level of cyphers (page 197).

Experience Points

The GM grants **experience points** (XP) to players whenever she intrudes on the story (this is called a **GM intrusion**) by introducing a new and unexpected challenge. For example, in the middle of combat, the GM might inform a player that his character drops his weapon. However, to intrude in this manner, the GM must award the player 2 XP. The rewarded player, in turn, must immediately give one XP to another player and justify the gift (perhaps the other player had a good idea, told a funny joke, performed an action that saved someone's life, and so on).

Alternatively, the player can refuse the GM intrusion. If he does so, he doesn't get the 2 XP from the GM, and must instead spend 1 XP he had previously earned. If the player has no XP to spend, he can't refuse the intrusion.

The GM can also give players XP between sessions as a reward for making discoveries during an adventure. Discoveries are interesting facts, wondrous secrets, powerful artifacts, answers to mysteries, or potential solutions to problems (such as learning where the kidnappers are holding their victim or finding the map to an ancient treasure vault outside Dragon City's walls). As a rule, player characters don't earn XP for killing foes or overcoming standard challenges in the course of play.

Experience points are used primarily for character advancement (for details, see Chapter 3: Creating Your Character), but a player can always spend 1 XP to reroll any die roll and take the better of the two rolls.

Magic Items

Player characters have opportunities to find, purchase, and steal magic items during game play. Magic items are important as they improve characters' existing capabilities or grant new ones. Magic items come in three different forms: **cyphers**, **artifacts**, and **trinkets**.

A cypher is a magic item that has but a single use. A character can carry a certain number of cyphers and use them during the game. In *Shotguns & Sorcery*, cyphers take the form of words of power, magic potions, and items of fleeting energy. Characters find new cyphers frequently in the course of play, so players shouldn't hesitate to use them. Because cyphers are always different, the characters always have new special powers to try.

Artifacts are longer-lasting items that can be used repeatedly. They are less common than cyphers and are acquired infrequently or for a great cost.

Trinkets are items of minor power that rarely, if ever, provide characters who find them with significant power or capabilities. Trinkets are quite common.





Part 2: Character Creation



Chapter 3: Creating Your Character

You need a character to play *Shotguns & Sorcery*, and this chapter explains how to go about making your own. You might have an idea of the kind of person you want to play, or you might not. Either way, you'll be making several big decisions about your character: decisions that shape what your character can do and reveal the areas in which your character excels. This chapter provides an overview of the character-creation process.

Character Statistics

Player characters have three broad statistics, typically called "stats," to define their capabilities: Might, Speed, and Intellect.

Might: A representation of strength and durability, Might describes how strong you are and how much physical punishment you can take. Might isn't relative to size; instead, it's an absolute measurement. An elephant has more Might than the mightiest tiger, which has more Might than the mightiest rat, which has more Might than the mightiest spider.

You use Might when you force open a door, walk for days without food, or stave off an infection after tromping through a sewer. Might also determines how much damage your character can sustain.

Speed: Embodying quickness, dexterity, and reflexes, Speed describes your overall swiftness and physical coordination. Speed comes into play when you dodge an attack, sneak into a place without being heard, or aim a bullet at a villain through a crowd of innocent people. You also use Speed when you want to move farther on your turn.

Intellect: Your character's intelligence, education, and charisma are all defined by your Intellect stat. The most diverse of the three stats, it reflects your ability to solve puzzles, stand fast in the face of fear or temptation, as well as your cunning and your charm. You use Intellect to remember facts, tell convincing lies, and draw upon your accumulated knowledge.

Characters also have an **Effort** score. Effort isn't a statistic unto itself: it represents your ability to exert yourself when you really need to accomplish a particular task using Might, Speed, or Intellect. You apply Effort in conjunction with actions that use one of the three primary stats.

Pool and Edge

Each statistic has two components: **Pool** and **Edge**. Pool represents raw, innate ability, and Edge represents knowing how to use that ability.

Your Pool and Edge for each statistic are determined by your race, type, descriptor, and focus. Within those guidelines, however, you have a lot of flexibility in how you develop your character.

Pool

For each stat, you have a Pool, which is expressed as a number of points. Most starting characters have 9 to 12 points in each of their three Pools. You spend points from a stat Pool to increase your chance of success when performing actions related to the stat. You also reduce your stat Pool when you take damage that would apply to the stat. As long as your stat Pool is at least 1, you suffer no drawbacks from reducing the number of points in that Pool. You don't want your stat Pools to fall to 0, because bad things start happening. If all three of your Pools are empty, you're dead.

Each stat's Pool is independent of the other stats (so if your Might pool is empty, you can't start spending points from your Intellect or Speed pools when performing Might actions, and vice versa). You generally spend points from your Pools to do the following things:

Special Abilities: Most actions, including making normal attacks and defending yourself, don't automatically require a point spend, even though every action that requires a die roll is associated with a statistic. However, some of your character's special abilities require you to spend at least 1 point from the Pool of the stat associated with that ability.

Decreasing the Difficulty: When you take an action that isn't guaranteed to be an automatic success, you can spend points from the Pool of the stat related to the action to decrease the difficulty. This is called applying Effort.

Damage: Taking damage causes you to lose points from one of your stat Pools. The nature of the attack determines which Pool loses points. Being struck by a sword reduces your Might Pool, a poison that makes you clumsy reduces your Speed Pool, and a mental assault from a colony rat swarm drains your Intellect Pool.

Recovery: You replenish the number of points in your Pools by resting. You can also recover points by using cyphers and special abilities.

For information on additional types of damage, see Damage Track, page 89, and Special Damage, page 88.

Edge

For each stat, you also have an Edge score. Most starting characters have 0 to 2 Edge for each stat. Edge represents your skill at using a stat, helping you use your raw ability more efficiently and reliably. Each stat's Edge is independent of the other stats. For example, you could have a Might Edge of 0, a Speed Edge of 2, and an Intellect Edge of 1.

Reduce Cost: Whenever you spend points from a particular Pool, you reduce the number of points you spend by the stat's Edge. Let's say that you're a wizard who has learned the Energy Ray spell. Each time you cast this spell, you must spend 1 Intellect point. If you have an Intellect Edge of 1, you get to reduce the cost of using Energy Ray by 1 – lowering it to 0, which results in you being able to cast the spell as often as you like.

A character with a low Pool but a high Edge has the potential to perform actions related to the stat consistently better than a character who has an Edge of 0 in that stat. The high Edge lets the character reduce the cost of spending points from the Pool, which means the character has more points to spend on applying Effort.

Applying Effort: When you apply Effort, you subtract your stat's Edge from the total cost of applying Effort.

Effort

You can spend points from your stat Pools to reduce the difficulty of an action or to increase the amount of damage you inflict with an attack. This expenditure of points is called applying Effort. Your Effort score tells you the maximum number of levels of Effort you can apply to an action.

Reducing the Difficulty

You can apply Effort to reduce the difficulty of an action you are about to attempt, but you must do so before you roll the die. Each level of Effort applied reduces the difficulty by one step.

Applying Effort in this way requires you to spend 3 points from the stat Pool related to the action being attempted. Each level of Effort after the first costs only 2 points from the stat Pool instead of 3. Applying two levels of Effort costs 5 points (3 for the first level plus 2 for the second level), applying three levels costs 7 points (3 plus 2 plus 2), and so on. The maximum number of levels you can apply is equal to your Effort score – and, of course, you can't spend more points than you have in your stat Pool.

Applying multiple levels of Effort is expensive, but your Edge in a given stat helps by reducing the overall (total) cost. For example, suppose that your character has a Speed Edge of 2. If your character tries to dodge a difficulty 3 attack (which requires a Speed defense roll) and you want to increase your chance for success, you could apply one level of Effort, which reduces the difficulty from 3 to 2. Normally this would cost 3 points from your Speed Pool, but your Speed Edge reduces that cost by 2, meaning you only have to spend 1 point from your Speed Pool to apply one level of effort. What if you applied two levels of Effort to the Speed roll instead of just one? That would reduce the difficulty of the task by two steps—to difficulty 1. Normally, this would cost 5 points from your Speed Pool, but after subtracting your Speed Edge of 2, it costs only 3 points.

Increasing Damage

You can apply Effort to increase the amount of damage you inflict with an attack. For each level of Effort you apply, you inflict 3 additional points of damage. This works for any kind of attack that inflicts damage, whether you use a sword, a crossbow, an Energy Ray, or something else.

When using Effort to increase the damage of an area attack, such as the explosion created by the wizard's Energy Ball spell, you inflict 2 additional points of damage instead of 3 points, but the extra damage applies to all targets in the area. Furthermore, even if some of the targets resist the attack, they still take 1 point of damage.

When applying Effort to melee attacks, you have the option of spending points from either your Might Pool or your Speed Pool. When applying Effort to physical ranged attacks, you may spend points only from your Speed Pool. With melee weapons you sometimes use brute force and sometimes use finesse, but with ranged weapons, it's always about careful targeting.



Multiple Uses of Effort and Edge

If your Effort score is 2 or higher, you can apply Effort to multiple aspects of a single action. For example, if you make an attack, you can apply Effort to your attack roll and also apply Effort to increase the damage. However, the total number of levels you apply can't be higher than your Effort score. If your Effort is 2, for instance, you could apply up to two levels of Effort. You could apply one level to an attack roll and one level to its damage, two levels to the attack and no levels to the damage, or no levels to the attack and two levels to the damage.

You can use Edge for a particular stat only once per action. For example, if you apply Effort to both a Might attack roll and to the damage of that same attack, you can use your Might Edge to reduce the cost of one of those uses of Effort, but not both. If you spend 1 Intellect point to cast Energy Ray and you apply one level of Effort to decrease the difficulty of the attack roll, you can use your Intellect Edge to reduce the cost of one of those things, not both.

Examples of Using Stats

A beginning character encounters a zombie while exploring an old cellar under Goblintown. She draws her pistol and fires. The zombie is a level 2 creature, so the GM assigns a difficulty of 2, which means that the target number is 6. However, the character stands on a crumbling wall and shoots down at the zombie, so the GM rules that the use of higher ground is a helpful tactic and grants the character an asset. The asset decreases the difficulty by one step (to difficulty 1), which lowers the target number to 3.

Attacking with a pistol is a Speed action; the character has a Speed Pool of 11 and a Speed Edge of 0. Before making the roll, the player decides to apply a level of Effort to decrease the difficulty of the attack. That costs 3 points from her Speed Pool, reducing the Pool to 8, but they appear to be points well spent since applying one level of Effort lowers the difficulty from 1 to 0, which means that no roll is needed and the attack succeeds automatically!

Another character attempts to convince a bureaucrat to let him into a private office so he can chat up an influential member of the Imperial Dragon's Guard. The GM rules this is an Intellect action and assigns the task a difficulty of 3, which makes the target number 9. The character has an Effort of 3, an Intellect Pool of 13, and an Intellect Edge of 1. Before making the roll, he must decide whether to apply Effort. He can choose to apply one, two, or three levels of Effort, or to conserve his Intellect Pool and apply no Effort at all. This action is important to him, so he decides to apply two levels of Effort, decreasing the difficulty by two steps. Thanks to his Intellect Edge, applying the Effort costs only 4 points from his Intellect Pool (3 points for the first level of Effort plus 2 points for the second level, minus 1 point for his Edge). Spending those points reduces his Intellect Pool to 9. Applying two levels of Effort reduces the difficulty from 3 (demanding) to 1 (simple) and lowers the target number from 9 to 3. The player rolls a d20 and gets an 8, which is a success! If the player had not applied Effort, the result would have been a failure because the result of the d20 roll (8) was less than the task's original target number (9).

Tiers and Benefits

Shotguns & Sorcery uses **tiers** to measure characters' power, toughness, and capability. Starting characters begin at the first tier and—with time and experience—can advance up to the sixth tier. Characters at higher tiers gain additional abilities, have higher Effort scores, and are able to increase their Edges and Pools.

First-tier characters are already quite capable, as the game assumes they've got some experience under their belt. Even the newest adventurer is already a highly competent person. Tier advancement represents the process of characters refining and honing their capabilities and knowledge. Advancing to higher tiers isn't intended to be a goal in and of itself: it's how characters progress in terms of the story.

Experience Points and Progression

Characters earn **experience points** (XP) by going on adventures, solving mysteries, and discovering new things. While characters can spend XP on many things in the game, one of the primary uses is to spend them to gain character benefits.

The following benefits cost 4 XP each, and may be purchased in any order. However, you can only purchase a particular benefit once per tier. When you have purchased all four benefits, you advance to the next tier (and can then purchase the benefits again).

Increasing Capabilities

Gain 4 points to add to your stat Pools, allocating them among the Pools however you wish.

Moving Toward Perfection

Add 1 to your choice of Might Edge, Speed Edge, or Intellect Edge.

Extra Effort

Your Effort score increases by 1.

Skill Training

Choose one skill other than attack or defense. You become trained in that skill. The skill you choose for this benefit can be anything you wish, such as climbing, jumping, persuading, or sneaking. You can also choose to be knowledgeable in a certain area of lore, such as history or geology. You can even choose a skill based on your character's special abilities. If you choose a skill you are already trained in, you become specialized in that skill instead.

Skill Alternatives

In lieu of Skill Training, you can instead choose one of the following benefits. Choosing this benefit counts as Skill Training for advancing to the next tier.

- Reduce the cost for wearing armor. This option lowers the Speed penalty for wearing armor by 1.
- Add 2 to your recovery rolls.
- Select a new type-based ability from your tier or a lower tier.

Descriptor, Race, Type, and Focus

Creating a character involves building a simple, descriptive statement to define your character's fundamentals. The statement takes this form: "I am a [fill in an adjective here] [fill in a noun here], a [fill in a noun here] who [fill in a verb here]." Thus: "I am an *adjective noun*, a *noun* who *verbs*."

Some example statements include "I am a Hardboiled Human, a Freelance who Packs Heat," and "I am a Mysterious Elf, a Wizard who Knows a Bit about Everything."

In the statement, the adjective is called your **descriptor**.

The first noun is your **race**.

The second noun is your **type**.

And the verb is your **focus**.

As you create your character, you choose each element of the statement, starting with the nouns. You start with your **race**, as it describes how your character fits into Dragon City, tells you something about your culture, and provides a foundation for your character's identity. It is the first noun in the sentence. You choose your race from the options presented in Chapter 4.

Next, you choose your **type**, which is the core of your character. It helps determine your character's place in the game and your character's relationship with other people in the setting. It's the second noun in the sentence. There are three character types to choose from in Chapter 5: freelance, veteran, and wizard.

Your **descriptor** defines your character—it flavors everything you do. Your descriptor places your character in the situation (the first adventure, which starts the campaign) and helps provide motivation. It's the adjective of the sentence "I am an *adjective noun*, a *noun* who *verbs*." You choose your descriptor from those presented in Chapter 6.

Skills

Sometimes your character gains training in a particular skill or task. For example, your focus might tell you that you're trained in sneaking, in climbing or jumping, or in social interactions. Other times, you might choose a skill in which you want to become trained. The game has no definitive list of skills. You can define a new skill that relates to any sort of task that you think you might face. Here are some examples:

Astronomy	Drive	Identifying	Machinery	Philosophy	Scientific Knowledge
Balancing	Escaping	Initiative	Magical Knowledge	Pickpocketing	Smashing
Carrying	Geography	Intimidation	Metalworking	Piloting	Sneaking
Climbing	Healing	Jumping	Occult Knowledge	Repairing	Streetwise
Deceiving	Hiding	Leatherworking	Perception	Riding	Swimming
Disguise	History	Lockpicking	Persuasion	Running	Woodworking

You can choose a skill that incorporates more than one of these areas (interacting might include deception, intimidation, and persuasion) or a more specific version of one (shadowing might be sneaking, but particularly as it relates to staying out of view when following someone). You can also make up more general, professional skills, such as baker, sailor, or lumberjack. If you want to choose a skill that's not on this list, it's probably best to run it by the GM first, but in general, the most important aspect is to choose skills that are appropriate to your character.

If you gain a skill in which you're already trained, you become specialized in that skill instead. Because skill descriptions can be nebulous, determining whether you're trained or specialized might take some thinking. For example, if you're trained in lying and later gain an ability that grants you skill with all social interactions, you become specialized in lying and trained in all other types of interactions. Being trained three times in a skill is no better than being trained twice; specialized is as good as it gets.

Only skills gained through character type abilities or other rare instances allow you to become skilled with attack or defense tasks. You can't call yourself a "duelist" simply to give yourself a benefit on your attack and defense rolls – but a duelist skill could apply to the rituals and social conventions around dueling, sizing up potential opponents, and so forth.

If you gain a special ability through your type, your focus, or some other aspect of your character, you can choose it in place of a skill and become trained or specialized in that ability. For example, if you know the Energy Ray spell, when it's time to choose a skill to be trained in, you can select Energy Ray as your skill, reducing the difficulty every time you use it. Each ability you have counts as a separate skill for this purpose. You can't select "all spells" as one skill and become trained or specialized in such a broad category.

Finally, fluency in a language is considered a skill. So if you want to speak Elvish, that's the same as being trained in biology or swimming.



Finally, **focus** tells you what your character does best. Focus gives your character specificity and provides interesting new abilities that might come in handy. Your focus also helps you understand how you relate with the other player characters in your group. It's the verb of the sentence, "I am an *adjective noun*, a *noun* who *verbs*."

There are many character focuses to choose from in Chapter 7, including Forges Wondrous Devices, Kills for Money, and Plunders Vaults.

The sentence that you build to describe your character also guides you through the steps of the process for building that character. The statement "I am an [adjective] [noun], a [noun] who [verbs] directs you to Chapter 6 (descriptor), Chapter 4 (race), Chapter 5 (type), and Chapter 7 (focus). You choose the nouns first, because they're the foundation of your character.

Special Abilities

Your character type and your focus grant special abilities at each new tier. Using these abilities usually costs points from your stat Pools; the cost is listed in parentheses after the ability name. Your Edge in the appropriate stat can reduce the cost of using the ability – but remember that you can apply Edge only once per action.

Sometimes the point cost for an ability has a plus (+) sign after the number. For example, the cost might be given as "2+ Intellect points." That means you can spend more points or more levels of Effort to improve the ability further, as explained in the ability description.

Many special abilities grant a character the option to perform an action that she couldn't normally do, such as projecting rays of cold or attacking multiple foes at once. Using one of these abilities is an action unto itself, and the end of the ability's description says "Action" to remind you. It also might provide more information about when or how you perform the action.

Some special abilities allow you to perform a familiar action—one that you can already do—in a different way. For example, an ability might let you wear armor more effectively, reduce the difficulty of Speed defense rolls, or add 2 points of fire damage to your weapon damage. These abilities are called *enablers*. Using one of these abilities is not considered an action. Enablers either function constantly (such as improving your ability to wear armor, which isn't an action) or happen as part of another action (such as adding fire damage to your weapon damage, which happens as part of your attack action). If a special ability is an enabler, the end of the ability's description says "Enabler" to remind you.

Some abilities specify a duration, but you can always end one of your own abilities anytime you wish.



Chapter 4: Race

When civilization collapsed as a result of the Ruler of the Dead's rise, peoples from all over the realm fled to the Dragon Emperor, who promised safety. They set aside their age-old differences to work together and secure their new home against the undead hordes clamoring for their flesh, blood, and brains. Before the apocalypse, orcs fought against elves, dwarves against goblins, and ogres against everyone. But when faced with a common enemy, they made peace, albeit an uneasy one.

Despite the shared challenges and dangers, despite having to live alongside one another, old grudges and animosity linger. Although all are subjects under the Dragon Emperor's rule, race divides the city's people still, with most living in communities of their own kind, doing their best to keep as far away from their ancestral enemies as possible. Elves live at the top of the city and goblins at the bottom, leaving the rest to carve up the middle into districts, neighborhoods, and tiny kingdoms to call their own.

The first choice you make for your character is race. It tells you where and how you fit into the city, as well as how other people perceive you. Each race includes some broad descriptions about its people's general appearance, behavior, attitudes, and outlooks. You can adopt these concepts for your character or not. They are suggestions, nothing more. Every individual is unique. If you want to be a generous elf or a pacifistic orc, that's your decision. Your race is the first noun in the sentence "I am an *adjective noun*, a *noun* who *verbs*."

In addition to the story elements, each race also determines your character's basic stat Pools and grants several features. These features largely represent the physiological differences between the races, but they also reflect how each race fits culturally and socially in Dragon City. Combined with your type, descriptor, and focus, your race's story and features help you envision and play your character in the world of *Shotguns & Sorcery*.

Pick your race from dwarf, elf, gnome, halfling, human, and orc.

Languages

The refugees finding homes in Dragon City brought their cultures and languages with them. The clash of tongues necessitated the development of a universal language that people call Common. This language incorporates words and phrases from a variety of tongues, making it difficult to learn, but fairly easy to master. Other languages one might encounter in the city include Dwarvish, the guttural tongue of the dwarves; Elvish, a fluid, musical language; and Greentongue, a harsh, grating noise issuing out of the mouths of orcs, goblins, and others of their kind.

Dwarf

The dwarves of the Stronghold, the most fortified of Dragon City's districts, settled here after being driven out from their mountain holdfasts and unearthed from their subterranean kingdoms. Their oaths to the Dragon Emperor make them subject to the tyrant's laws, but, more than anyone in the city, dwarves cling to their traditions. They prefer to keep the company of their own kind, but even among dwarves, any male who lacks the customary beard becomes a subject of great suspicion.

Short and Hairy: Dwarves take pride in their size and stature. Standing between three and four feet tall, they consider their height to be ideal, and therefore anyone taller or shorter than a dwarf is obviously at a disadvantage. Often as wide as they are tall, dwarves enjoy eating and drinking, which pads their muscular bodies with a thick layer of fat. Both male and female dwarves tend to have thick, luxurious hair, always worn long and often in braids. Male dwarves grow long luxurious beards, often decorated with rings of gold and silver. The longer the beard, the better, for there is nothing more shameful than a shorn dwarf.

Dwarves enjoy long lifespans, reaching maturity by their fifties and living three centuries or longer.

Dour and Suspicious: Although they were driven from their ancestral homes, dwarves cling to the customs of their peoples. For them, clan is most important, and dwarves consult their families before any great undertaking. Nearly all dwarves remain with their birth families until they settle down and start a family of their own.

Despite the long years spent living alongside the other refugees huddling behind Dragon City's walls, dwarves remain suspicious of other races. They regard others with a critical eye. A dwarf is quick to point out someone's shortcomings and eager to find fault in their actions, seeking proof that the dwarf's low expectations were correct all along.

Dwarves have a great fondness for drink and do most of their business over ale and stronger stuff. No discussion is complete without being deep in one's cups. For this reason, dwarves distrust anyone who won't drink with them and many an enterprise has gone sour when dwarves find themselves confronted with a teetotaler.

Honest and Direct: Dwarves despise subterfuge and deceit. They'd rather lay out the facts as they see them, to hell with the consequences. Their blunt nature can come off as offensive; after all, no one likes their flaws pointed out, especially in a loud voice in a crowded public place. As disarming as their honesty can be, dwarves are quite open about themselves, which can often veer into embarrassing and comical territory.



Home Underground: For centuries, dwarves toiled to pry gold and gems from the unyielding earth. After generations spent in lightless caverns, dwarves are most comfortable in the coolness of the depths with a stone roof over their heads. Dwarves are slowly adapting to their new environment and have begun to open the Stronghold a bit more to allow the flow of fresh air and gain a view of the open sky.

Dwarf Stat Pools

Stat	Pool Starting Value
Might	11
Speed	8
Intellect	9
You get 3 additional points to divide among your stat Pools.	

Dwarf Characteristics

As a dwarf, you have all the following features:

Low-Light Vision: You treat illumination as if it was one category brighter. You treat darkness as very dim light, you treat very dim light as dim light, and you treat dim light as normal illumination.

Durable: You add 1 to your recovery rolls.

Skill: You are trained in tasks related to mining and spelunking.

Skill: You are trained in the use of tools required to shape and mine stone.

Inability: You increase the difficulty of your Speed defense actions by one step.

Languages: You are fluent in Common and Dwarvish.

Elf

Far removed from the rabble crowding Dragon City, the elves shelter behind the security of the Stronghold Gate that grants access to the Elven Reaches, a sylvan paradise of deep woods shot through with paths that wend and weave between the trees. The elves accept that they must share the Dragon Emperor's beneficence with other peoples, but few elves have the patience or interest in sharing quarters with those peoples. To elves, the lesser races are as children, their lives fleeting, their desires immediate and changing, a mob of hungry mouths and endless complaints.

Immortal Beauty: Many people see in elves the embodiment of ideal beauty. Physically, they are without flaw or blemish, perfect in every way. Elves tend to be tall and slender, always appearing to be in the prime of their lives no matter how many years they accumulate. Elves live so long that they might as well be immortal.

Few in Number: Elves reproduce more slowly than other races. They might go decades or even centuries between children. While this makes elves value their children most of all, it means they have a tiny population compared to the other races living in Dragon City, a population that was diminished further during the rise of the undead hordes. Their small numbers and general disdain for other races keeps most elves confined to the Reaches. Only the young and rebellious have reason to explore the other districts of the city.



Visionary Thinkers: Longevity affords elves with the time to think. They weigh their decisions against every eventuality, spending whatever time they need to ensure a positive outcome. Where a human might make a snap decision about what to do with a problem, an elf spends days or even weeks coming to a conclusion. Their patience and foresight give elves opportunities to exploit the patterns in behavior they observe, letting them accumulate vast wealth, position themselves to increase their power and authority in the city, and make themselves secure against any threat, no matter how small.

Insufferable Arrogance: Elves are rather unpopular with the rest of the city. They live apart from the other races, in a place that's a veritable paradise compared to the slums of Goblintown and elsewhere, not to mention the air of superiority surrounding them. Attitudes toward elves range from jealousy to outright hatred, with people seeing them as little better than the Dragon Emperor's spoiled lickspittles—haughty and arrogant bastards that exploit the labors and lives of the shorter-lived races. Some elves live up to their people's reputation, but most simply don't care about the world outside the one in which they live. They see no point in changing things, especially not without long consideration, and they are content with their status and position as the city's leaders.

Reputation is Key: Long lives mean long memories, so elves do not forget when they've been slighted, insulted, or downright wronged. For this reason, elves work hard to live unimpeachable lives, to conduct themselves in a suitable manner, to ensure they make no mistakes, and to commit no wrongs. Mishaps linger in the minds of other elves, and damage to one's reputation is almost impossible to repair. Elves tend to be cautious and

guarded in their dealings with others. They consider their own actions so carefully that to many non-elves it may seem like elves make no decisions at all. As well, they tend to be controlling when it comes to their offspring, lest a child's antics or reckless behavior bring shame and dishonor to their house.

Elf Stat Pools

Stat	Pool Starting Value
Might	8
Speed	11
Intellect	9
You get 3 additional points to divide among your stat Pools.	

Elf Characteristics

As an elf, you have all the following features:

Skill: You have keen senses. You are trained in tasks that involve perception.

Skill: You are trained in initiative tasks.

Inability: You are not good at dealing with non-elves, even in peaceful social situations. You find it hard to mask your disdain for "lesser" people. You increase the difficulty of any task that involves social interaction with non-elves by one step, or by two steps if the interaction includes "greenies" such as orcs and goblins.

Languages: You are fluent in Common and Elvish.

Halfling

The incorrigible halflings of Big Burrow stand apart from nearly everyone else in Dragon City. Many people have come to see the refuge and protection offered by the Dragon Emperor as a prison, a place unchanging and inescapable thanks to the relentless tide of undead crashing against the city's walls. Halflings have none of these misgivings: They live for the moment and see life as one grand adventure no matter where it takes them.

Wee Folk: If halflings ever had a name other than the one given to them by humans, they don't recall what it was. Named for being half the size of a human, these people stand between two and three feet tall, looking in many ways like human children. In fact, many halflings do a brisk business filching purses while posing as a child in distress. They differ from humans in their slightly pointed ears and furred feet. Like dwarves, halflings have a great fondness for food and drink, leading many to become portly if not downright obese. They are prized as great cooks and brewers across the whole of the city, and even the haughty elves secretly enjoy feasts prepared by the finest halfling chefs.

Live for the Moment: Halflings exist only in the present. They know life is fleeting: they know the dangers waiting for them beyond the city walls, but rather than live in fear, they take what they've been given and make the most of it. This fearlessness manifests as great courage in some, and hilarious foolishness in others.

Larcenous Tendencies: Their willingness to do whatever they want, whenever they want often lands halflings in trouble with the law. Halflings bend the rules (or break them) to suit their needs. They aren't blindly impulsive, though: when they want to do something, they weigh the likely consequences of their



actions. If they can withstand the punishment their act will bring if they are caught, they don't spare another thought before doing it. This tendency unfairly paints halflings as scoundrels and rogues, prone to criminal behavior—when in truth, halflings just want to have fun.

Everyone's Friend: Dragon City is, for the most part, divided along racial lines. Dwarves don't mingle with elves, who shun the greenies in Goblintown, who think nothing of scrapping with humans and causing trouble. Halflings, while not universally loved, find tolerance most places they go. When they leave the Big Burrow, they don't find much trouble (at least, trouble they don't bring on themselves) from locals. A halfling is usually able to defuse a tense situation with a well-placed jest… but if that doesn't work, he won't hesitate to beat a quick retreat into a space where the larger folk can't follow.

Halfling Stat Pools

Stat	Pool Starting Value
Might	9
Speed	10
Intellect	9
You get 3 additional points to divide among your stat Pools.	

Halfling Characteristics

As a halfling, you have all the following benefits:

Skill: You are trained in Speed defense actions.

Skill: You are trained at hiding and sneaking.

Skill: You are trained in two of the following skills: deception, escaping, identification, lockpicking, persuasion, pickpocketing, and streetwise.

Inability: You increase the difficulty of your Might defense actions by one step.

Languages: You are fluent in Common.

Human

The most numerous people in Dragon City are the humans. Before civilization collapsed, humans had spread across much of the world, gobbling up resources, clearing forests to make way for farmland, and paving roads across the plains to link their settlements. When the world ended with the rise of the zombies, human societies caved in on themselves, and peoples from all across the continent fled from the milling herds of ravenous undead, seeking refuge wherever they could find it. The humans who reached Dragon City came from all kinds of ethnicities, cultures, and social standings, but in the face of so much adversity, they were forced to set aside their differences and become one people. Their descendants live in the Dragon City of today, a motley crowd struggling to survive under the Dragon Emperor's tyranny.

Diverse and Varied: Humans display more variation in appearance than any other race living in Dragon City. They can be tall or short, thin or heavy, with skin, hair, and eye colors running the gamut. Once, these differences might have divided humans from one another, but now they are celebrated as qualities that make each person unique and distinct.

Although they have short lifespans compared to dwarves and elves, humans reproduce quickly, which keeps their population in the city higher than the other races.

The Working Class: With greater numbers comes greater responsibility, so humans shoulder much of the work to keep the city fed, produce finished goods, and keep alive the flame of civilization. Those lucky few who display a penchant for magic might win a place among the wizards, but if not, humans can look forward to a life of toil and drudgery. Their adaptability, discipline, and work ethic ensure they live better than the orcs and goblins, but not by much.

Human Stat Pools

Stat	Pool Starting Value
Might	9
Speed	9
Intellect	9
You get 4 additional points to divide among your stat Pools.	

Human Characteristics

As a human, you have all of the following features:

Skill: You are trained in any two skills of your choice, other than attacks or defense.

Versatile: You can reduce the difficulty of any action by one step. You can use this feature a number of times per day equal to the tier you have attained, but no more than once per roll.

Languages: You are fluent in Common.



Orc

The orcs of Goblintown, the squalid district crowding the outer wall raised to keep the undead out of Dragon City, are among the most civilized members of the howling, unruly mob that calls the tangled neighborhood home. And that's not saying much. Barely tolerated and widely unwelcome anywhere else in the city, the orcs have risen to the top of the bottom.

Brutish and Savage: No one would mistake an orc for a human. Like the other savage peoples living in Goblintown, orcs have green skin, tending toward olive. They have bright eyes of yellow, orange, or red; jagged, dagger-like teeth in their wide mouths; and somewhat pointed ears, if they manage to keep them from being torn off during all their brawling. Orcs tower over humans: they are great, brutish slabs of walking muscle.

Hateful and Aggressive: Orcs are always one insult away from murder. Only fear of the Dragon Emperor or being cast out of the city keeps them in line, and they frequently explode in violence. Impatient and vicious, they possess a low, animalistic cunning that often takes their victims by surprise. Most orcs use their fists to solve disputes, thinking nothing of pounding an annoying goblin into a smear with a table or snapping an aggressive hobgoblin's arm. Circumstances have forced many orcs into tempering their hatred and channeling it into constructive uses when possible. A growing number of orcs have grown weary of being at the bottom. Some have even begun to make noises about organizing themselves into a political force to improve their conditions.



A History of Violence: The other races in Dragon City barely tolerate orcs and their ilk. If not for the Dragon Emperor, the other races likely would have forced the orcs out long ago, had they even bothered to open the doors to them in the first place. Elves and dwarves have long memories and recall the wars they fought against the "greenies," a slur used to describe the host of savage humanoids lurking in Goblintown, from goblins to trolls, orcs to ogres. Therefore, orcs don't find much welcome outside their own neighborhoods, and might be given an armed escort back to their dirty streets if they venture into the wrong places.

Despite all the prejudice they suffer, the fact that orcs and their kin found a place in the city should come as no real surprise. The undead horde preyed on elf and orc alike. With zombies as a common foe, the various races had to look past their old animosities if they wanted to survive. Orcs are quite adept at fighting, and when directed against the zombies, they have proven their worth time and time again.

Orc Stat Pools

Stat	Pool Starting Value
Might	11
Speed	9
Intellect	8
You get 3 additional points to divide among your stat Pools.	

Orc Characteristics

As an orc, you have all the following features:

Vicious: Your melee attacks inflict 1 additional point of damage.

Inability: You increase the difficulty of your Intellect defense rolls by one step.

Languages: You are fluent in Common and Greentongue.

Other Races

More than humans and elves and dwarves call Dragon City home. Walking through the districts and neighborhoods, one is bound to come across a menagerie of peoples. Tricky, malicious goblins haunt the alleyways of Goblintown, while the reclusive gnomes sequester themselves in Gnometown. Hobgoblin thugs gather into wild and destructive gangs, terrorizing communities, while brutish ogres are always in high demand thanks to their great strength and low intellect.

Although plenty of other races live in Dragon City, you won't find rules for playing such characters here. The races provided represent those most likely to produce individuals willing and able to carve their names in history through daring adventures or despicable deeds. This is not to say that a gnome couldn't overcome his mistrust of other peoples to mingle with humans or a hobgoblin couldn't curb her violent tendencies enough to make a suitable companion for a group of adventurers. Rather, such instances are rare.

If you want to play a race not described here, talk it over with your Game Master. Working together, use the following guidelines to create your racial characteristics.

Stat Pools: The race should divide 28 points between the three stat Pools. No Pool should be higher than 12 or lower than 7. The point allocation should reflect the race's prevailing characteristics. For example, an ogre race should have 12 points in the Might Pool since ogres are big and strong. Similarly, an ogre should have 7 points in their Intellect Pool as they are famously stupid. The remaining 9 points go into the Speed Pool.

In addition to the starting Pools determined by their racial characteristics, every character gets 3 points to distribute between the three Pools as they see fit. Humans, you'll note, can distribute 4 points. They are the exception to this rule.

Traits: A race should grant two to three traits, typically skills or a choice of skills that reflect the race's history, specialized knowledge, and place in the city. The skills ought not to apply to attacks or defenses, however.

Alternatively, you can grant a race a different kind of trait in place of a skill, like the dwarf's Low-Light Vision. These traits should be chosen to make sense for the race, not just because of the game-mechanical benefits they grant. For example, Gnomes might have Low-Light Vision, but ogres shouldn't, because ogres don't live underground.

You can grant a race an additional trait by taking an inability. The inability should increase the difficulty of a common task by one step. It's best not to give any race more than two inabilities.



Chapter 5: Type

Where race establishes your identity and your place in the world, type describes your character's capabilities in the broadest sense, and sets the stage for what sorts of activities your character is best at undertaking. It is the second noun in the sentence "I am an *adjective noun*, a *noun* who *verbs*."

Shotguns & Sorcery offers three types from which you'll choose: freelance, veteran, and wizard. Freelances are jacks-of-all-trades, scoundrels, and adventurers. Veterans are experienced warriors, the best at fighting. Wizards master the secrets of magic, growing their power as they grow their knowledge.

Freelance

Freelances choose their own paths, going where their interests and hearts take them. Typified by their wide range of skills, people of all motivations become freelances. Some work towards good ends, while others look out only for themselves. So varied are freelances, it might seem they have nothing in common, but regardless of the skills and talents they develop, all freelances demonstrate resourcefulness, ingenuity, and dumb luck.

As jacks-of-all-trades, freelances prefer not to specialize in any one thing. Rather, they develop a variety of techniques to help them overcome challenges they face on their road to success. They might pick up a few spells, they know the proper forms of etiquette when dealing with elves, they can tell you where to find dragon ale in a pinch, and they'll always know the best fence to sell off those goods they just purloined from a too-rich dwarf merchant.

Freelances in Dragon City: Treasure hunters and adventurers, private detectives and smugglers, dabblers in magic and street-savvy thieves: freelances in Dragon City can be all of these things and more. Freelances encompass the widest range of archetypes since they develop the particular set of skills they need to survive. They might be entertainers, informants, courtesans, or gamblers haunting the dragonfire dens in Goblintown.

As varied as their occupations and roles might be, so too are their motivations. Freelances develop their tricks for good reasons. They sometimes see themselves as agents of order in a city gone to pot, vigilantes doing the work the Imperial Dragon's Guard cannot, or investigators helping those who can't find justice anywhere else. They can also be killers, thieves, confidence artists, and rogues who put their own interests above everyone else's. Most freelances tend to fall somewhere between the two extremes of good and evil, making them the quintessential anti-heroes.

Freelances in Groups: Where veterans find glory in the thick of battle and wizards command vast magical power, freelances lurk somewhere in between. Since each freelance develops talents to suit their own needs, they can contribute to the group dynamic in a variety of ways, switching from one role to another as the situation demands. A freelance could be the face of the group, provide backup muscle in a fight, or recall a useful fact about a mysterious magical artifact when no one else can find the answer.

Freelances have the distinction of being adept in most situations, but they lack the focus to truly master them. Veterans outmatch them in combat and wizards have the benefit of extensive magical training to outgun them with spells. Freelances rely on their skills to keep them ahead of their rivals. The freelance knows how to pick a lock, the right thing to say to bluff a guard, and the best route to take through the tangled streets to evade the agents of the Black Hand.

Freelances and Magic Treasure: Being skill-focused encourages freelances to find magic items that open new avenues of development or that let them use their existing skills to greater effect. Sure, weapons are nice, but they'd rather have items that give them an edge: that special something they can keep in reserve for when they need it most. Freelances collect useful trinkets, favoring objects that let them move unseen, increase their mobility, or bypass the wards that would normally keep them out of the places they want to go.

Advanced Freelances: A varied group, freelances develop the techniques they need to excel at whatever endeavor they pursue. Some use magic to supplement their skills, while others favor combat training. Most do a little of both, improving their existing skills while developing new ones.

First-Tier Freelance

You have the following abilities:

Stat Pools: You get 3 points to divide between your stat Pools.

Effort: Your Effort is 1.

Versatile: Choose Might, Speed, or Intellect. You have Edge 1 in the chosen stat. You have Edge 0 in the other two.

Cypher Use: You can bear two cyphers at a time.

Practiced in Light and Medium Weapons: You can use light weapons and medium weapons without penalty. If you wield a heavy weapon, increase the difficulty of the attack by one step. Enabler.

Skill Training: Choose two skills in which you are not already trained (other than attacks or defense). You are trained in these skills. Enabler.

Tricks

You always have a trick up your sleeve. When you find yourself in a tight spot, your luck, diverse knowledge, or simple determination helps you get out of trouble. You begin with two tricks chosen from the ones described below, gaining more as you advance

Freelance Connections

Roll	Connection
1	You were orphaned at a young age, left to make your own way on Dragon City's unforgiving streets.
2	You dropped out of the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship, but not before learning a bit about magic.
3	You often slip out to plunder tombs and vaults in the ruins outside Dragon City.
4	You made ends meet by picking pockets and cutting purses.
5	You spent many years as a beggar, relying on the charity of others to survive.
6	You have amnesia and cannot remember anything about your past. You have a weird scar on your head that might explain your memory loss.
7	Someone crossed you years ago and you're itching for vengeance.
8	You are the black sheep in a wealthy and powerful family.
9	Your closest friends belong to a race different from yours. You spend most of your time among your adopted people.
10	You made a dangerous enemy. This person has made it his or her purpose to ruin you.
11	You harbor a secret love for a person of importance. The object of your affection is unaware of your feelings.
12	The crowded city makes you claustrophobic and you seize any opportunity to get out.
13	You crossed paths with the Black Hand assassins and made enemies of them. You're always looking over your shoulder for the inevitable attack.
14	Your brother vanished years ago and you've set out to learn his fate.
15	You recently made it to the city from a faraway land.
16	Accused of a crime, you were exiled from your home district and forced to live among another people.
17	You work as an informant for the Imperial Dragon's Guard.
18	You have found some success as an entertainer. You might be a singer, a musician, an actor, or a dancer.
19	You abandoned your team during an expedition beyond the city walls. You have no idea what happened to them and you are wracked with guilt for your cowardice.
20	You befriended a wizard in the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship.

You can choose an option from the following list, roll a d20 to determine your connection randomly, or make something up. This fact about your background tells you something about how your character fits into the world.

to higher tiers. Unless it says otherwise in the trick's description, you can choose each trick just once.

Additional Edge: Choose one stat for which you have Edge 0. You have Edge 1 in that stat.

Cantrip (1 Intellect point): From your extensive study of magic, you have learned a number of minor spells called cantrips. You can cast these spells to perform minor magical effects as you choose, though the effects cannot harm or damage creatures or objects. Possible uses of this ability include clearing a small area of dirt and dust, mending fractures or breaks in an object, preparing a tasty meal from raw food, tightening a tourniquet around an injured limb, causing an object to change color, producing a tiny flame in the palm of your hand, creating the illusory sound of bells chiming to fill the air, and so on. Effects that you create with a cantrip last only a few moments, though changes to the world are permanent (for example, food remains prepared and broken objects remain mended). Action.

Lightning Reflexes: When you're not wearing armor, you are trained in Speed defense actions. Enabler.

Danger Sense (1 Speed point): Reduce the difficulty of your initiative rolls by one step. Enabler.

Distract (2 Might points): When you successfully attack a creature, you reduce the difficulty of Speed defense rolls made by all others against the creature's attacks by one step until the end of the next round. Enabler.

Fast Hands (2 Speed points): When you successfully strike a creature with a melee weapon and you have a hand free, you can take one small item from that creature. The item must be small enough to fit in the palm of your hand. Enabler.

Fast Talk (1 Intellect point): You speak rapidly to one creature that can hear you. If it can understand you and isn't hostile to you, you convince the creature to take one reasonable action during the next round. The creature carries out the action provided that doing so does not put it or its allies into obvious danger and the action is something that creature would normally do. The GM decides if the action is reasonable. Otherwise, the creature acts normally. Action.

Practiced in All Weapons: You can use any weapon. Enabler.

Tumble (1 Speed point): You move a short distance, during which you can move through spaces occupied by other creatures. Until you take your next turn, you reduce the difficulty of your Speed defense rolls by one step. Action.

Second-Tier Freelance

At the second tier, you gain the following benefits.

Defense Training: Choose one type of defense task in which you are not already trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are trained in defense tasks of that type. You can select this ability up to three times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of defense task. Enabler.

Skill Expertise: Choose one skill in which you are not already specialized (other than attacks or defense). You are trained in this skill. If you are already trained in the skill, you become specialized instead. Enabler.



Tricks

You learn another trick, chosen from the ones described below or from a lower tier. In addition, you can exchange a trick gained from a lower tier with a different trick from a lower tier.

Escape (2 Speed points): You can slip your restraints, squeeze through bars, break the grip of a creature grabbing you, pull free from sucking quicksand, or otherwise get loose from whatever holds you in place. Action.

Eye for Detail (2 Intellect points): When you spend five minutes or so thoroughly exploring an area no larger than a typical room, you can ask the GM one question about the area, which the GM must answer truthfully. You cannot use this ability more than one time in any given area per twenty-four hours. Enabler.

Find an Opening (1 Intellect point): You size up your opponent to find a gap in its defenses. Make an Intellect roll against one creature within immediate range. If you succeed, you reduce the difficulty of your next attack against the target creature made before the end of the next round by one step. Action.

Get Away (2 Speed points): After you use an action on your turn, you can move up to a short distance or get behind or beneath cover within immediate range. Enabler.

Hand to Eye (2 Speed points): For one minute, you have an asset to one task that involves manual dexterity, such as picking pockets, opening locks, games involving agility, and so on. If you use this trick again before the first use ends, the benefits of the previous use end immediately. Action to initiate.

Impersonate (2 Intellect points): You spend a minute creating a disguise to make yourself look like someone else, either a specific individual (such as "Helmut the guard") or a generic person in a particular job (such as "a member of the Imperial Dragon's Auxiliary Guard"). You have an asset on rolls to maintain your disguise. The disguise lasts until you take it off or you are exposed to some environmental hazard that ruins it (fire, being submerged in water, or other effects as determined by the GM) or until you use this trick again. Action to initiate.

Feat Discovery: You gain one feat from the veteran's first-tier feats.

Practiced in Armor: You can wear armor for long periods of time without tiring and can compensate for slowed reactions from wearing armor. You can wear any kind of armor. You reduce the Speed cost for wearing armor by 1. You start the game with armor of your choice. Enabler.

Spell Knowledge: You learn one spell from the wizard's first-tier spells.

Third-Tier Freelance

At the third tier, you gain the following benefits.

Expert Cypher Use: You can bear three cyphers at a time.

Skill Expertise: Choose one skill in which you are not already specialized (other than attacks or defense). You are trained in this skill. If you are already trained in the skill, you become specialized instead. Enabler.

Tricks

You learn another trick, chosen from the ones described below or from a lower tier. In addition, you can exchange a trick gained from a lower tier with a different trick from a lower tier.

Backstab: If you successfully attack a creature from which you were hidden before making the attack, your attack inflicts 3 additional points of damage. Enabler.



Silent Moves: When you move no more than a short distance, you can move without making a sound, regardless of the surface you move across. Enabler.

Weapon Skill: Choose an attack with a type of weapon you know how to use, but with which you are not already trained. Example weapon types include: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, and heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler.

Convincing Bluff (3 Intellect points): You convince an intelligent creature that can understand you and isn't hostile of something that is wildly and obviously untrue. Action.

Skirmish (3 Speed points): You move a short distance and then make a melee attack or you make a melee attack and then move a short distance. The attack inflicts 2 additional points of damage. Action.

Vanish (3 Speed points): You step into an area of low visibility such as very dim light or move behind an object that covers at least three-quarters of your body. You become hidden from any creature that was observing you and remain hidden until you move out from the area or from behind the covering object, or until you do something to draw attention to yourself such as by making an attack. While you are hidden, other creatures are unaware of your presence. Action.

Feat Discovery: You gain one feat from the veteran's second-tier or lower feats.

Spell Knowledge: You learn one spell from the wizard's second-tier or lower spells.

Fourth-Tier Freelance

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Skill Expertise: Choose one skill in which you are not already specialized (other than attacks or defense). You are trained in this skill. If you are already trained in the skill, you become specialized instead. Enabler.

Tricks

You learn another trick, chosen from the ones described below or from a lower tier. In addition, you can exchange a trick gained from a lower tier with a different trick from a lower tier.

Ambusher: When you attack a creature that has not yet acted during the first round of combat, reduce the difficulty of your attack by one step. Enabler.

Experienced with Armor: The cost reduction from your Practiced in Armor ability improves. You now reduce the Speed cost by 2. Enabler.

Increased Effects: You treat rolls of natural 19 as rolls of natural 20 for either Might actions or Speed actions (your choice when you gain this ability). This allows you to gain a major effect on a natural 19 or 20. Enabler.

Fancy Footwork (2 Speed points): When you successfully attack a creature, you can immediately exchange places with one willing creature within an immediate distance. Enabler.

Outwit: When you make a Speed defense roll, you can use your Intellect in place of your Speed. Enabler.

Blather (2 Intellect points): You spew a stream of nonsense to distract a foe within immediate range. On a successful Intellect roll, reduce the difficulty of your defense roll against the creature's next attack before the end of the next round by one step. Action.



Feint (2 Speed points): You use misdirection to create an opening in the defenses of one creature that can see you. The next time you make an attack against that creature before the end of the next round, you decrease the difficulty by one step and the attack inflicts 4 additional points of damage. Action.

Feat Discovery: You gain one feat from the veteran's third-tier or lower feats.

Spell Knowledge: You learn one spell from the wizard's third-tier or lower spells.

Fifth-Tier Freelance

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Adroit Cypher Use: You can bear four cyphers at a time.

Skill Expertise: Choose one skill in which you are not already specialized (other than attacks or defense). You are trained in this skill. If you are already trained in the skill, you become specialized instead. Enabler.

Tricks

You learn another trick, chosen from the ones described below or from a lower tier. In addition, you can exchange a trick gained from a lower tier with a different trick from a lower tier.

Assassinate (5 Intellect points): If you successfully attack a creature from which you were hidden before making the attack, you inflict 9 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Defense Mastery: Choose one type of defense task in which you are trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are specialized in defense tasks of that type. You can select this ability up to three times. Each time you select it, choose a different type of defense task. Enabler.

Snipe (3 Speed points): Choose one creature you can see. The next time you attack that creature before the end of the next round, the difficulty of the attack roll is decreased by one step and the attack inflicts 4 additional points of damage. Action.

Uncanny Luck (4 Speed points): When you succeed on a roll for any task, roll again. If the second number rolled is higher than the first, you get a minor effect. If you roll the same number again, you get a major effect. Enabler.

Vigilant (5 Might points): You cannot be dazed or stunned (see Chapter 9 for details on these harmful effects). Enabler.

Feat Discovery: You gain one feat from the veteran's fourth-tier or lower feats.

Spell Knowledge: You learn one spell from the wizard's fourth-tier or lower spells.

Sixth-Tier Freelance

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Skill Expertise: Choose one skill in which you are not already specialized (other than attacks or defense). You are trained in this skill. If you are already trained in the skill, you become specialized instead. Enabler.

Tricks

You learn another trick, chosen from the ones described below or from a lower tier. In addition, you can exchange a trick gained from a lower tier with a different trick from a lower tier.

Exploit Advantage: Whenever you have an asset for a roll, the difficulty of the roll is reduced by two steps instead of one. (Assets can never reduce the difficulty of a roll by more than two steps in total, no matter how many you have.) Enabler.

Greater Weapon Skill: Choose an attack with a type of weapon you know how to use. Example weapon types include: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, and heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. If you are already trained, you become specialized instead. Enabler.

Action Surge (8 Speed points): You can take an additional action in a round in which you have already acted. Enabler.

Spring Away (5 Speed points): Whenever you succeed on a Speed defense roll, you can immediately move up to a short distance. You cannot use this ability more than once per round. Enabler.

Twist of Fate: When you roll a 1, you can reroll. You must use the new result, even if it's another 1. Enabler.

Feat Discovery: You gain one feat from the veteran's fifth-tier or lower feats.

Spell Knowledge: You learn one spell from the wizard's fifth-tier or lower spells.

Veteran

The most seasoned warriors found in Dragon City are known as veterans, for they have demonstrated the ability and grit needed to survive in battle. Their training sets them apart from other fighters, whether they learned their martial techniques as a member of a military force or on the mean streets of Goblintown. No matter how they began developing their skills, veterans bring their extensive experience to bear when confronting enemies, striking with speed and precision to dispatch a foe and engage the next in line. Members of the Imperial Dragon's Guard, gritty survivors of raids against the undead, toughs and enforcers from the fighting pits in the worst parts of town, and hard-bitten mercenaries might all be veterans.

Veterans focus their training on developing their combat skills, but they vary in the ways they fight and the weapons they wield. Some veterans favor heavy weapons, hacking and hewing through their enemies' ranks. Others are deadeye shots with pistols and rifles. Veterans may fight with their fists, slim-bladed rapiers, or whatever they can grab.

Veterans in Dragon City: In a world drowning in the walking dead, veterans play an important part in protecting civilization's last refuge. They are the first line of defense against the city's enemies. Some wade into the thick of battle, laying into their foes with axe and sword. Others seek out high ground, picking off their foes one at a time with a spell-charged rifle. Those veterans who defend the city earn respect from the people they help protect and are given a great deal of latitude by the law.

Of course, not all veterans use their talents to protect the innocent. Many sell their swords to the movers and shakers in the Underworld. Others keep the peace as members of the Imperial Dragon's Guard. The bravest (or most foolhardy) veterans hone their techniques by making forays beyond the relative safety of the city walls.

Most comfortable around their own kind, veterans seek out the company of other fighters, pugilists, and men-at-arms. Being focused on athleticism does not leave much time for intellectual pursuits, and most veterans have little experience with or knowledge of magic, scholarship, and the subtle art of diplomacy. There are, of course, exceptions: veterans come from all backgrounds, and some of the greatest generals are also scholars.

Veterans in Groups: Veterans typically provide the muscle in a party of adventurers. They can take punishment and dish it out. When a fight begins, the veterans are the best prepared and equipped to deal with enemies and quickly find themselves mixing it up with foes near and far.

Veterans and Magic Items: Many veterans find themselves fighting against strange and terrifying creatures, monsters against whom ordinary weapons have little effect. Therefore, veterans seek out magic items to supplement and enhance their fighting skills. Some save up the gold they earn to buy the devices from reputable wizards, while others brave the perils beyond the Great Circle to unearth treasures lost and forgotten.

As important as weapons and armor are to veterans, they also understand the value of items that can enhance their maneuverability. Being able to run farther, jump higher, or even soar through the air can provide significant tactical advantages. Thus, any item that augments a veteran's athletic ability is a welcome addition to their arsenal.

Advanced Veterans: Even as capable as they are at the start of their careers, veterans continue to grow their combat abilities as they progress. They strike with greater accuracy, speed, and force, can perform special maneuvers, and learn to coax a bit more protection from the armor they wear.

First-Tier Veteran

You have the following benefits:

Stat Pools: You get 3 points to divide between your stat Pools.

Effort: Your Effort is 1.

Battle-Scarred: You have a Might Edge of 1, a Speed Edge of 1, and an Intellect Edge of 0.

Cypher Use: You can bear two cyphers at a time.

Practiced in All Weapons: You can use any weapon. Enabler.

Physical Fitness: You are trained in two skills in which you are not already trained. Choose two of the following: balancing, climbing, jumping, running, or swimming. Enabler.

Feats

You stand apart from other warriors thanks to the astonishing acts of physical prowess you can perform. These acts are called feats and you gain three of your choice when you create your veteran, gaining additional feats as you advance to higher tiers. Some feats provide constant benefits, while others are more akin to stunts and maneuvers. Unless specified in the feat's description, you cannot choose the same feat more than once.

Canny Tactician: Your training and experience grant you an Intellect Edge of 1.

Endurance: You have incredible stamina. You double the time you can perform a physical activity continuously, such as holding your breath or force-marching, and you halve the duration of anything that would affect you physically, such as disease or poison. Enabler.

Lightning Reflexes: When you're not wearing armor, you are trained in Speed defense actions. Enabler.

Veteran Connections

Roll	Connection
1	For years, you stood guard on the Great Circle, the wall that protects the city. The endless numbers of zombies and the futility of your mission demoralized you, which caused you to desert your post.
2	You worked as the private guard for a wealthy family. When Black Hand assassins attacked, they incapacitated you and murdered the family. You survived, but the memory of your failure haunts you.
3	You worked on an airship for a time, protecting the shipments that come from the nearby high-altitude farms producing much of the foodstuffs on which Dragon City depends.
4	You are deep in debt to a bookie. You rough up his customers to pay down your debts.
5	You learned how to fight from an ancient warrior. You return a few times a year to continue your training and to look after your master, who has become your friend.
6	You battled in Goblintown's fighting pits for the amusement of the crowds. You made an enemy of an ogre after you somehow managed to defeat him.
7	You grew up on the streets. Learning to fight was the only way for you to survive.
8	You spent time in prison and learned how to take care of yourself.
9	You cracked heads for a crime lord. Your boss was murdered and the organization disbanded. You fear that your old boss's enemies may one day find you and take you out too.
10	You were a member of the Imperial Dragon's Guard, if you were an elf, or the Auxiliary, if you belong to a different race. You still have friends in the Guard.
11	You live in the shadow of disgrace cast by your parents. Servants of the Ruler of the Dead, they tried to sabotage the city's defenses.
12	Until recently, you were a member of an adventuring group. Your team was wiped out in a deadly dungeon and you are the lone survivor.
13	You have a sibling in the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship. You don't get along, but you might be able to convince him to help you if you really need it.
14	You were a great warrior, but your fondness for strong drink got the best of you. You climb out of the bottle from time to time, but you always go back.
15	You were a guard for drug dealer in Downtown. The work sickened you and you finally quit. Your former employer has made threats against you and you have even had to fight off some of her bullyboys.
16	You work as a bouncer at a popular tavern somewhere in the Big Burrow. You have plenty of friends there and never pay for your drinks.
17	You discovered an intelligent sword early in your career and it taught you how to fight. The sword was stolen and now you are determined to find it.
18	You have a wizard friend who gives you a discount on enchanted ammunition in exchange for delivering items and collecting payment from his other clients.
19	You came to the defense of an elf attacked by a gang of orcs in Goblintown. This elf has become a close friend, even though the relationship is scandalous.
20	Zombies murdered your family. You took up arms to fight the Ruler of the Dead and plan to destroy her.

You can choose an option from the following list, roll a d20 to determine your connection randomly, or make something up. This fact about your background tells you something about how your character fits into the world.



Martial Artist: Your unarmed attacks using your hands, feet, elbows, knees, or head all count as if you were using a medium weapon. Enabler.

Practiced in Armor: You can wear armor for long periods of time without tiring and can compensate for slowed reactions from wearing armor. You can wear any kind of armor. You reduce the Speed cost for wearing armor by 1. In addition, you start the game with a suit of armor of your choice. Enabler.

Shake it Off (2 Intellect points): You can catch your breath to restore 1 point to your Might pool. Then roll a d6. On an odd number, you can't use this feat again until after you rest. Action.

Aim (1 Intellect point): You take time to line up your shot with a ranged or thrown weapon. Choose one creature you can see. The next time you attack the target before the end of the next round with a ranged weapon, you reduce the difficulty by one step. Action.

Brute Strike (1 Might point): You put all your strength behind your attack with a melee weapon to inflict 1 additional point of damage. Action.

Overbearing Strike (1 Might point): You smash into your target with a melee weapon. The difficulty for your attack worsens by one step, but on a success, a target that is about your size or smaller falls to the ground. Action.

Overwatch (1 Intellect point): You keep watch over an area, preparing to attack the next creature you can see that enters it. The area you watch must fit inside a cube, a short distance on a side, such as a doorway, hall, or an area in a clearing. This action works like the Wait action, but you negate any benefit the target would have from cover, position, surprise, range, illumination, or visibility. Further, your attack inflicts 1 additional point of damage. You can remain on overwatch as long as you wish, though if you move or are moved from your position, the benefits end. Action.

Pinning Strike (1 Might point): Your attack with a melee weapon cuts off all avenues of the target's retreat. The target cannot move for one round. Enabler.

Precise Strike (1 Speed point): You thread your weapon through your opponent's defenses to land a telling blow, inflicting 1 additional point of damage. Action.

Staggering Strike (1 Might point): You strike with a melee weapon, hitting your target in a sensitive area. Reduce the damage from the attack by 1 point, but the difficulty of all actions the target takes worsens by one step, to its detriment. Action.

Second-Tier Veteran

At the second tier, you gain the following benefits.

Weapon Expertise: You are trained in weapon attacks. Enabler.

Feats

You gain a feat, chosen from the ones described below or from a lower tier. In addition, you can exchange a feat gained from a lower tier with a different feat from a lower tier.

Defense Training: Choose one type of defense task in which you are not already trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are trained in defense tasks of that type. You can select

this ability up to three times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of defense task. Enabler.

Charge (2 Might points): You abandon all caution, springing forward to attack your foe. You move a short distance toward a creature you choose. If you move within an immediate distance of that creature, you can attack it with a melee weapon. You take a –2 penalty to your attack roll. Action.

Pinpoint Shot (1 Intellect point): You use a ranged weapon or thrown weapon to attack with pinpoint accuracy. Your attack ignores any benefits your target would gain from cover, position, illumination, or visibility. Action.

Power Strike (2 Might points): You attack with a heavy melee weapon, using its weight to destroy your opponent. You take a –1 penalty to your attack roll and inflict 3 additional points of damage. Action.

Reaping Strike (2 Might points): You use a melee weapon to attack two targets with the same strike. Each target must be within an immediate distance of you. Make separate attack rolls for each foe, but both attacks count as a single action in a single round. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to both of these attacks. Action.

Successive Attack (2 Speed points): If you drop a creature with an attack using a melee or ranged weapon, you can make another attack during the same turn against a different creature as part of the same action. You must use the same weapon to make the second attack and the second target must be within your reach or the range of your weapon. Enabler.

Third-Tier Veteran

At the third tier, you gain the following benefits.

Expert Cypher Use: You can bear three cyphers at a time.

Feats

You gain a feat, chosen from the ones described below or from a lower tier. In addition, you can exchange a feat gained from a lower tier with a different feat from a lower tier.

Experienced with Armor: The cost reduction from your Practiced in Armor ability improves. You now reduce the Speed cost for wearing armor by 2. Enabler.

Quick Strike (2 Speed points): You dart in to land a blow against your opponent. You decrease the difficulty of the attack roll by one step, but the attack inflicts 1 less point of damage. Action.

Spray (2 Speed points): If a weapon has the ability to fire rapid shots without reloading (usually called a rapid-fire weapon, such as the submachine gun), you can spray multiple shots around your target to increase the chance of hitting. The difficulty of the attack roll is decreased by one step. If the attack is successful, it deals 1 less point of damage than normal. After you resolve the attack, roll a d6. On a 3 or less, you run out of ammunition. Action.

Twin Shot (2 Speed points): Using a ranged weapon that uses ammunition, you fire off two shots in short succession. You attack twice against the same target or once against two different targets. Make a separate attack roll for each attack, increasing the difficulty for each attack by one step. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to both of these attacks. Action.

Wild Strike (2 Might points): You lash out with a melee weapon, relying on luck to deliver a deadly strike. You increase the difficulty of the attack roll by one step, but the attack inflicts 4 additional points of damage. Action.

Fourth-Tier Veteran

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Feats

You gain a feat, chosen from the ones described below or from a lower tier. In addition, you can exchange a feat gained from a lower tier with a different feat from a lower tier.

Experienced Defender: When wearing armor, you gain +1 to Armor. Enabler.

Minor to Major: You treat rolls of natural 19 as rolls of natural 20 for Might attack rolls or Speed attack rolls (your choice when you gain this ability). This allows you to gain a major effect on a natural 19 or 20. Enabler.

Momentum: If you use an action to move, the next attack you make using a melee weapon before the end of the next round inflicts 2 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Capable Warrior: Your attacks deal 1 additional point of damage. Enabler.

Feint (2 Speed points): You use misdirection to create an opening in the defenses of one creature that can see you. The next time you make an attack against that creature before the end of the next round, you decrease the difficulty by one step and the attack inflicts 4 additional points of damage. Action.

Fifth-Tier Veteran

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Master Cypher Use: You can bear four cyphers at a time.

Greater Skill with Attacks: Choose one type of attack, even one in which you are already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. If you're already trained in that type of attack, you instead are specialized in that type of attack. Enabler.

Feats

You gain a feat, chosen from the ones described below or from a lower tier. In addition, you can exchange a feat gained from a lower tier with a different feat from a lower tier.

Defense Mastery: Choose one type of defense task in which you are trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are specialized in defense tasks of that type. You can select this ability up to three times. Each time you select it, choose a different type of defense task. Enabler.

Improved Success: When you roll a 17 or higher on an attack roll that deals damage, you deal 1 additional point of damage. For instance, if you roll a natural 18, which normally deals 2 extra points of damage, you deal 3 extra points instead. If you roll a natural 20 and choose to deal damage instead of achieve a special major effect, you deal 5 extra points of damage. Enabler.

Arc Spray (3 Speed points): If a weapon has the ability to fire rapid shots without reloading (usually called a rapid-fire weapon, such as the submachine gun), you can fire your weapon at up to three targets (all next to one another) as a single action. Make

a separate attack roll against each target. The difficulty of each attack is increased by one step. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to all of these attacks. Action.

Jump Attack (5 Might points): You attempt a difficulty 4 Might action to jump into the air as part of your melee attack. If you succeed, your attack inflicts 3 additional points of damage and knocks the target down. If you fail, you still make your normal attack roll, but you don't inflict the extra damage or knock down the opponent if you hit. Action.

Mastery with Armor: The cost reduction from your Practiced in Armor ability improves. When you wear any armor, you reduce the armor's Speed cost to 0. If you select this ability and you already have the Experienced with Armor ability, replace Experienced with Armor with a different third-tier ability because Mastery with Armor is better. Enabler.

Parry (5 Speed points): You can deflect incoming attacks quickly. For the next ten rounds, you reduce the difficulty of all your Speed defense rolls by one step. Enabler.

Sixth-Tier Veteran

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Feats

You gain a feat, chosen from the ones described below or from a lower tier. In addition, you can exchange a feat gained from a lower tier with a different feat from a lower tier.

Finishing Blow (5 Might points): If the target of your attack is prone, stunned, or somehow helpless or incapacitated when you strike, you inflict 8 additional points of damage on a successful hit. Enabler.

Shooting Gallery (5 Speed points): You stand still and make ranged attacks against up to five foes within range, all as part of the same action in one round. Make a separate attack roll for each foe. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to all of these attacks. Action.

Slayer (3 Might points): When you successfully strike a foe of level 5 or lower, make another roll (using whichever stat you used to attack). If you succeed on the second roll, you kill the target outright. If you use this ability against a PC of any tier and you succeed on the second roll, that character moves down one step on the damage track. Enabler.

Spin Attack (5 Speed points): You stand still and make melee attacks against up to five foes within reach, all as part of the same action in one round. Make a separate attack roll for each foe. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to all of these attacks. Action.

Weapon and Body (5 Speed points): After making a melee weapon or ranged weapon attack, you follow up with a punch or kick as an additional attack, all as part of the same action in one round. The two attacks can be directed at different foes. Make a separate attack roll for each attack. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to both attacks unless it is tied specifically to your weapon. Action.

Wizard

Wizards occupy a very specific place in Dragon City, having been trained at the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship. Such credentials open doors that might otherwise be closed to people of their race or social class. The wizard type encompasses these characters, as well as anyone else with formal magical training – self-taught sorcerers, dabblers in the dark arts, and healers who devote their studies to alleviating the suffering of others. Wizards display great variation in the magical knowledge they accumulate through study and practice, but they all access the field of energy permeating the world. Magic makes the impossible possible with the right incantation.

Magic is crucial to the workings of Dragon City. It underpins almost every convenience, from the flying carpets zipping over the city to the glowglobes that light the streets at night. In fact, magic's wonder has become almost commonplace and is something most people expect to encounter throughout their everyday life.

Wizards master the mystical energies that make these wondrous devices possible. Like anyone, they can make use of the magic treasures they discover, but they can also produce magical effects from the spells they've learned by expending some of their mojo or mana, the energy that powers spells.

Learning magic requires a sharp and insightful mind, so wizards tend to be educated, quick-witted, and brilliant. The strangeness of their art often leads them to unusual places, sometimes resulting in personality quirks and eccentricities, or, worse, addictions. Magical substances, such as dragonfire, lets wizards recover their mojo more quickly, and thus cast their spells more often and sometimes to a greater effect.

Wizards in Dragon City: Nearly all wizards learn the fundamentals of their trade by studying at the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship. Many who complete their training go on to become instructors, while others, especially those who excel in their techniques, pursue independent research from their elaborate, palatial homes in Wizards Way. As masters of magic, most people look to them as experts, inventors, and innovators, affording them the respect their knowledge is due. Wizards, however, prefer the company of their own kind and tend to avoid the rabble.

The rewards of magical research can be found throughout Dragon City, and wizards' efforts have helped make life in the city more bearable. Of course, those wizards have been well compensated for their work, and live lives of luxury far above the strife and conflict that defines the lower slopes of the mountain. While some wizards cloister themselves in their estates and towers, many work in a variety of different trades. Some use magic to help crops grow, to heal the sick and injured, to clear the mobs of undead away from the city gates, or to make repairs to malfunctioning magical devices.

Wizards in Groups: Becoming a wizard requires long hours of study, memorization, and practice, none of which leaves time for much in the way of exercise. Wizards tend to neglect their health and thus can't take the same kinds of punishment that veterans and freelances can. For this reason, when traveling beyond Wizards Way, they rely on others for protection, staying safely behind their allies while they let loose their spells from the back ranks.

Although their magic offers a great advantage to any adventuring group, wizards also possess knowledge about a wide range of subjects, lore that can help their companions solve problems and circumvent challenges. Wizards can usually identify the properties and characteristics of magic treasures and artifacts found during their travels. Perhaps not surprisingly, wizards are often the best at using these items as well.

Wizards and Magic Treasure: Wizards are better than anyone at finding and using cyphers and artifacts. They can locate enchanted swords, master minor spells, and reactivate dormant constructs.

For most wizards, magic treasure of any kind and function is welcome. Even the strangest devices are objects worthy of study and attention, for in them new secrets might be discovered, new power attained. Generally, wizards favor protective treasures, weapons usable at range, and anything that enhances their existing capabilities.

Advanced Wizards: Over time, wizards grow their power by adding spells to the ones they have learned, sometimes abandoning older spells in favor of new ones. While they might start their careers by hurling fiery bolts at a distant foe or fashioning a shield of blue force, experience lets them create earthquakes, travel to distant locations in an instant, or call up storms to pound the landscape with hail and lightning.

First-Tier Wizard

You have the following abilities:

Stat Pools: You get 3 points to divide between your stat Pools.

Effort: Your Effort is 1.

Studied: You have an Intellect Edge of 1, a Might Edge of 0, and a Speed Edge of 0.

Expert Cypher Use: You can bear three cyphers at a time.

Practiced in Light Weapons: You can use light weapons without penalty. If you wield a medium weapon, increase the difficulty of the attack by one step. If you wield a heavy weapon, increase it by two steps. Enabler.

Magical Training: You have studied the arcane arts, learning how to cast spells and call forth power from magic items. You are trained in magical knowledge, and in attempts to identify and use magic items. Enabler.

Wizard Connections

Roll	Connection
1	You received private instruction from a great and terrible wizard, an individual reviled by his peers for his recklessness and interest in the dark arts.
2	You recently completed your studies at the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship and are eager to test your training against the dangers in the world.
3	You created a minor magical device that sold well enough to let you buy a modest home on Wizards Way.
4	You come from a family of wizards. Your older sibling was a prodigy and you have stood in her shadow your entire life.
5	You accompanied your mentor on an expedition to recover a fabled manuscript. Your mentor died before the book was recovered, and you have vowed to complete the mission.
6	You drank an entire bottle of dragonfire and did something foolish. You woke up in prison and spent the next five years there. You have only just been released.
7	You were thrown out of the Academy for conduct unbecoming of a wizard. You had to complete your training on your own.
8	You used your magic to uncover a conspiracy that would have endangered the entire city. Many people remember your good deed, but others are looking to settle a score with you for your interference.
9	You are a magical prodigy. You completed your training at a very young age.
10	You discovered your magical talent late in life and are fighting to control the powers you never knew you had.
11	You had a torrid love affair with one of your teachers. The relationship ended badly and it damaged your reputation at the Academy.
12	You come from a family of powerful merchants. They bribed the faculty to give you an easy road through your training.
13	You found one of the rare and fabled dragon scales, and from it gained the ability to cast spells.
14	You were a servant in the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship and learned to cast spells from a wizard who took you under her wing.
15	You stumbled into magic. You discovered a cypher that wound up destroying a city block. You emerged unscathed, but now have strange powers you are just learning to control.
16	You learned magic from a disgraced wizard living in Goblintown. The wizard would only teach you if you brought him a little dragonfire to feed his addiction.
17	You have a wizard mark, a sign that sometimes appears on the gifted.
18	You accidentally killed a fellow student with a spell you were just learning to cast. No one else knows what you did, but the memory haunts you still.
19	You use magic for selfish ends, casting spells to help you take what you want from the world around you. You have a connection in the underworld that helps you get rid of the valuables you pilfer.
20	You joined a secret society of wizards. You gather to trade stories, share information, and gain advice from your peers.

You can choose an option from the following list, roll a d20 to determine your connection randomly, or make something up. This fact about your background tells you something about how your character fits into the world.

Cantrip (1 Intellect point): From your extensive study of magic, you have learned a number of minor spells called cantrips. You can cast these spells to perform minor magical effects as you choose, though the effects cannot harm or damage creatures or objects. Possible uses of this ability include clearing a small area of dirt and dust, mending fractures or breaks in an object, preparing a tasty meal from raw food, tightening a tourniquet around an injured limb, causing an object to change color, producing a tiny flame in the palm of your hand, creating the illusory sound of bells chiming to fill the air, and so on. Effects that you create with a cantrip last only a few moments, though changes to the world are permanent (for example, food remains prepared and broken objects remain mended). Action.

Spells

You know how to use your mojo—magical energy—to produce specific magical effects. You might have received an education at the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship or were just born with ability to shape magical power into useful forms.

Nearly all spells you can learn require you to cast them. Casting a spell involves the expenditure of 1 or more Intellect points. If you don't have a wand to focus your magic, increase the number of Intellect points you must spend to cast the spell by 1.

Some spells specify durations, but unless the spell description says otherwise, you can always end a spell you cast any time you wish without using an action to do so.

You start with two spells chosen from the ones described below. You cannot choose the same spell more than once unless its description says that you can.

Arcane Shield (2 Intellect points): You create a shield of blue magical energy to protect you from weapons. For one minute, you have +2 to Armor. Action to initiate.

Camouflage (2 Intellect points): You alter your appearance to blend in with your surroundings. For one minute, you have an asset on rolls made to become hidden. Action to initiate.

Energy Ray (1 Intellect point): A beam of energy leaps from your wand or hand at a creature within short range. The beam inflicts 4 points of damage. When you learn this spell, choose the form of energy the attack takes, such as cold, electricity, or fire. You can learn this spell multiple times, choosing a different form of energy each time. Action.

Fortify (2 Intellect points): Threads of magical energy fortify and strengthen one object within a short distance. For one hour, the object counts as being 2 levels higher for the purposes of damaging or breaking it. Action to initiate.

Light (1 Intellect point): One object you touch emits light until you use an action to touch the object again and dismiss the light. When you cast this spell, decide whether the object illuminates everything within short range or shines a focused beam of light along a 3-foot-wide path out to a long distance. Action to initiate.

Push (2 Intellect points): You push a creature or object an immediate distance in any direction you wish. You must be able to see the target, which must be your size or smaller, must not be affixed to anything, and must be within short range. The push is quick, and the force is too crude to be manipulated. For example, you can't use this to pull a lever or close a door. Action.



Slow Fall (2 Intellect points): You can arrest the rate at which you or a creature within short range falls so that you or the creature takes no damage on landing. For each level of Effort applied, you can affect another falling creature. Action.

Spider Climb (2 Intellect points): You can climb up, down, and across vertical surfaces, ceilings, and overhangs like a spider for ten minutes. Action to initiate.

Wizard Sight (2 Intellect points): Your eyes gleam with eerie light as you attune your sight to spot the magical auras around you. For one minute, you see creatures, objects, and areas within short range affected by magic as if they were faintly glowing. Your sight may also reveal clues about the nature of the magic at the GM's discretion. This spell does not reveal magic that is designed to hide, obscure, or otherwise conceal objects. Action to initiate.

Second-Tier Wizard

At the second tier, you gain the following benefits.

Spells

You learn a new spell, chosen from the ones described below or from a lower tier. In addition, you can exchange a spell learned from a lower tier with a different spell from a lower tier.

Adaptation (2+ Intellect points): You adapt to a hostile environment for twenty-four hours. As a result, you can breathe safely, and temperature cannot kill you (though it might be extremely uncomfortable or debilitating). In extreme environments, the GM might increase the cost of activating this ability to a maximum cost of 10 Intellect points. The cost should equal the amount of damage you would sustain in a given round. For example, if you enter a hostile environment that would normally deal 6 points of damage per round, using Adaptation to avoid that damage costs 6 points. You can protect other creatures in addition to yourself, but each additional creature costs the same number of Intellect points as it costs to protect you. Thus, if it costs 6 points to protect yourself, it costs 12 more to protect two other people. This ability never protects against quick, instantaneous threats, like an attack with a weapon or a sudden explosion of fire. Action to initiate.

Eldritch Net (4 Intellect points): Glowing tendrils explode and entrap a creature within short range for one minute. The eldritch net is a level 3 construct. The creature cannot move or be moved from its position, but it can attack and defend normally. The target can also spend its action attempting to break free. You can increase the level of the net or the number of creatures affected by 1 per level of Effort applied. Action.

Energy Burst (4 Intellect points): You create an explosion of energy at a point within short range, affecting an area up to immediate range from that point. You must be able to see the location where you intend to center the explosion. The blast inflicts 2 points of damage to all creatures or objects within the area. Because this is an area attack, adding Effort to increase your damage works differently than it does for single-target attacks: for each level of Effort applied in this way, the explosion inflicts 2 additional points of damage to each target, and even if you fail your attack roll, all targets in the area still take 1 point of damage. When you learn this spell, choose the form of energy the attack takes, such as cold, electricity, or fire. You can learn this spell multiple times, choosing a different form of energy each time. Action.



Enhance Senses (2 Intellect points): You enhance your senses so you can see all around yourself, much like many insects see. You have an asset for Perception rolls for one hour. Action to initiate.

Fetch (3 Intellect points): You cause an object to disappear and reappear in your hands or somewhere else nearby. Choose one object that can fit inside a 5-foot (2 m) cube and that you can see within long range. The object vanishes and appears in your hands or in an open space anywhere you choose within immediate range. Action.

Hover (2 Intellect points): You float slowly into the air. If you concentrate, you can control your movement to remain motionless in the air or float up to a short distance as your action; otherwise, you drift with the wind or with any momentum you have gained. This effect lasts for up to ten minutes. Action to initiate.

Mind Reading (4 Intellect points): You can read the surface thoughts of a creature within short range, even if the target doesn't want you to. You must be able to see the target. Once you have established contact, you can read the target's thoughts for up to one minute. If you or the target moves out of range, the effect ends. Action to initiate.

Paralyze (3 Intellect points): A creature your size or smaller that you can see and that is within short range freezes in place for one minute, unable to move or act. If the creature takes any damage, the effect ends immediately. Action.

Protective Field (3 Intellect points): You create an invisible energy barrier around a creature or object you choose within short range. The field moves with the creature or object and lasts for ten minutes. The target has +1 to Armor until the effect ends. Action to initiate.



Third-Tier Wizard

At the third tier, you gain the following benefits.

Adroit Cypher Use: You can bear four cyphers at a time.

Spells

You learn a new spell, chosen from the ones described below or from a lower tier. In addition, you can exchange a spell learned from a lower tier with a different spell from a lower tier.

Barrier (3+ Intellect points): You create an opaque, stationary barrier of magical force within immediate range. The barrier is 10 feet by 10 feet and of negligible thickness. It is a level 2 barrier and lasts for ten minutes. It can be placed anywhere it fits, whether against a solid object (including the ground) or floating in the air. Each level of Effort you apply increases the barrier's level by one. For example, applying two levels of Effort creates a level 4 barrier. Action.

Countermeasures (4 Intellect points): You immediately end one ongoing magical effect within immediate range. Alternatively, you can use this as a defense action to cancel any incoming magical ability targeted at you, or you can cancel any magic device or the effect of any magic device for 1d6 rounds. You must touch the effect or device to cancel it. Action.

Energy Protection (3+ Intellect points): Choose a type of energy that you have experience with (such as heat, thunder, electricity, and so on). You either gain +10 to Armor against damage from that type of energy for ten minutes or +1 to Armor against damage from that energy for twenty-four hours. Instead of applying Effort to decrease the difficulty of this ability, you can use it to protect more targets; each level of Effort applied affects up to two additional targets. You must touch additional targets to protect them. Action to initiate.

Sensor (4 Intellect points): You create an immobile, invisible sensor within immediate range that lasts for twenty-four hours. At any time during that duration, you can see, hear, and smell through the sensor, no matter how far you move from it. The sensor doesn't grant you sensory capabilities beyond the norm. Action to create; action to check.

Shelter (4 Intellect points): You create a dome of magical blue force that rises up from the ground in all directions within an immediate distance of you and remains in place for 24 hours or until you cast this spell again. The force is completely opaque such that creatures outside the dome cannot see into it. The force also hedges out environmental effects such as wind, rain, snow, odors, and the like, but creatures and objects can freely pass through it. The temperature inside it is comfortable regardless of the temperatures outside. Action to initiate.

Fourth-Tier Wizard

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Spells

You learn a new spell, chosen from the ones described below or from a lower tier. In addition, you can exchange a spell learned from a lower tier with a different spell from a lower tier.

Compel (6+ Intellect points): You touch one creature. If the creature is level 2 or lower, you control its actions for ten minutes. Once you have established control, you maintain mental contact with the target and sense what it senses. You can allow it to act freely or override its control on a case-by-case basis. Instead of applying Effort to decrease the difficulty, you can apply Effort to increase the maximum level of the target. For each level of Effort applied, you increase the maximum level by one. When the effect ends, the creature doesn't remember being controlled or anything it did while under your command. Action to initiate.

Invisibility (4 Intellect points): You become invisible for ten minutes. While invisible, you are specialized in hide and Speed defense tasks. This effect ends if you do something to reveal your presence or position—attacking, using an ability, moving a large object, and so on. If this occurs, you can regain the remaining invisibility effect by taking an action to focus on hiding your position. Action to initiate or reinitiate.

Sending (4 Intellect points): You project an image of yourself to any location you have seen or previously visited. Distance does not matter. The projection copies your appearance, movements, and any sounds you make for the next ten minutes. Anyone present at the location can see and hear you as if you were there. However, you do not perceive through your projection. Action to initiate.

Portal (6 Intellect points): You create a doorway through time and space. The shortcut manifests as a hole in reality large enough to accommodate you and creatures of your size or smaller. One side of the doorway appears anywhere within immediate range, and the other side opens at a spot you choose anywhere within long range. Any character or object moving into one side exits from the other. The portal remains open for one minute or until you use an action to close it. Action to initiate.

Slay (6 Intellect points): You gather disrupting energy in your fingertip and touch it to a creature. If the target is an NPC or a creature of level 3 or lower, it dies. If the target is a PC of any tier, that character moves down one step on the damage track. Action.

Fifth-Tier Wizard

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Master Cypher Use: You can bear five cyphers at a time.

Spells

You learn a new spell, chosen from the ones described below or from a lower tier. In addition, you can exchange a spell learned from a lower tier with a different spell from a lower tier.

Energy Ball (7 Intellect points): You cause energy to explode out from a point you choose within long range. The pulse extends up to short range in all directions, dealing 5 points of damage to everything in the area. Even if you fail the attack roll, targets in the area still take 1 point of damage. You can learn this spell multiple times, choosing a different form of energy each time. Action.

Conjuration (7 Intellect points): You produce, as if from thin air, a level 5 creature of a kind you have previously encountered. The creature remains for one minute and then returns home. While present, the creature acts as you direct, but this requires no action on your part. Action.

Create (7 Intellect points): You create something from nothing. You can create any item you choose that would ordinarily have a difficulty of 5 or lower (using the crafting rules discussed in Chapter 9). Once created, the item lasts for a number of hours equal to 6 minus the difficulty to create it. Action.

Know the Unknown (6 Intellect points): Tapping into a source of information beyond yourself, you can ask the GM one question and get a general answer. The GM assigns a level to the question, so the more obscure the answer, the more difficult the task. Generally, knowledge that you could find by looking somewhere other than your current location is level 1, and obscure knowledge of the past is level 7. Gaining knowledge of the future is impossible. Action.

Teleportation (6+ Intellect points): You instantaneously transport yourself to any location that you have seen or been to, no matter the distance. Instead of applying Effort to decrease the difficulty, you can apply Effort to bring other people with you; each level of Effort brings along up to three additional targets. You must touch additional targets to teleport them. Action.

Sixth-Tier Wizard

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Spells

You learn a new spell, chosen from the ones described below or from a lower tier. In addition, you can exchange a spell learned from a lower tier with a different spell from a lower tier.

Control Weather (10 Intellect points): You change the weather in your general region. If performed indoors, this creates minor effects, such as mist, mild temperature changes, and so on. If performed outside, you can create rain, fog, snow, wind, or any other kind of normal (not overly severe) weather. The change lasts for a natural length of time, so a storm might last for an hour, fog for two or three hours, and snow for a few hours (or for ten minutes if it's out of season). For the first ten minutes after activating this ability, you can create more dramatic and specific effects, such as lightning strikes, giant hailstones, twisters, hurricane-force winds, and so on. These effects must occur within 1,000 feet of your location. You must spend your turn concentrating to create an effect or to maintain it in a new round. These effects inflict 6 points of damage each round. Action.

Earthquake (10 Intellect points): You trigger an earthquake centered on a spot you can see within 1,000 feet. The ground within 250 feet of that spot heaves and shakes for five minutes, causing widespread damage to structures and terrain in the area. Buildings made of wood, stone, or brick collapse; walls topple; cliffs crumble; ceilings cave in; some areas of ground rise up; and other areas sink. Creatures inside collapsed buildings or beneath a crumbling cliff or falling wall are subject to a crush (3 points of damage) or a huge crush (6 points of damage) and may have to dig themselves free, as the GM decides. Furthermore, the force of the quake is sufficient to knock creatures to the ground and prevent them from standing until the shaking stops. Action to initiate.

Flight (4+ Intellect points): You can float and fly through the air for one hour. For each level of Effort applied, you can affect one additional creature of your size or smaller. You must touch the creature to bestow the power of flight. You direct the other creature's movement, and while flying, it must remain within sight of you or fall. In terms of overland movement, a flying creature moves about 20 miles per hour and is not affected by terrain. Action to initiate.

Move Mountains (9 Intellect points): You exert a tremendous amount of physical force within 250 feet of you. You can push up to 10 tons of material up to 50 feet. This force can collapse buildings, redirect small rivers, or perform other dramatic effects. Action.

Relocate (7 Intellect points): Choose one creature or object within immediate range. You instantly transport it to a new position within long range that you can see. The new position can be any direction from you, but it cannot be inside a solid object. Action.





Chapter 6: Descriptor

A descriptor adds a defining element to your character. In a way, it shapes everything your character does, showing how your personality, nature, or other factors affect the capabilities gained from your other choices. More importantly, descriptors individuate similar characters. A Hardboiled freelance is quite different from a Connected freelance, as each character might go about their activities in markedly different ways. Your descriptor is the adjective in the sentence, "I am an *adjective noun*, a *noun* who *verbs*."

When you choose your descriptor, you gain a suite of **abilities**, skills, and modifications to your stat Pools. Not all of a descriptor's offerings are positive. Some descriptors have inabilities, which increase the difficulty for certain tasks that a character isn't good at. These advantages and drawbacks, working together, help bring your character to life. Finally, descriptors offer a few suggestions on how characters join the group, though you are free to ignore these ideas and come up with something else.

You can pick any one of the twenty descriptors in this chapter, regardless of your character type.

Aggressive

You have always had a problem with anger. Your temper gets away from you, leading you into situations you later regret. You tend to overreact to things, lashing out over perceived slights, and resorting to violence when challenged. Your willingness to make things ugly gives you an edge when trying to get someone to back down, but it makes you look like a bully to everyone else.

You gain the following characteristics:

Brawn: Add 2 points to your Might Pool.

Imposing: You are trained in intimidating and menacing actions.

Temper: You are trained in all actions that involving smashing and breaking things.

Descriptors

Aggressive	Daring	Grizzled	Insightful	Perceptive	Seductive	Swift
Connected	Determined	Hardboiled	Learned	Resourceful	Stealthy	Vengeful
Cunning	Graceful	Honorable	Mysterious	Rich	Strong	

Inability: You lose your temper with little provocation. Increase the difficulty by one step for peaceful social interactions.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- You saw something that made you angry and stormed over to confront one of the PCs about it. You ended up joining the group after cooler heads prevailed.
- Another PC mentioned a problem and you took it upon yourself to sort it out for him.
- Your angry outburst dragged everyone into a bar brawl or another difficult situation.
- You beat the tar out of the wrong person and joined the group with hopes of making amends.

Connected

You know people. You have a network of contacts across Dragon City, people who owe you favors or whose friendship and trust you've earned. When you need something, you usually know just who to ask and, if not, your friends can direct you to where you need to go. As useful as your contacts can be, you have to be willing to keep the right wheels and palms greased. Sometimes this means taking on jobs you'd rather not do or accumulating favors you will one day have to make good on—at great cost to yourself.

You gain the following characteristics:

Charisma: Add 2 points to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You are trained in persuasion and streetwise actions.

Contacts: You have a number of contacts equal to 1 + your tier positioned around the city. Work with the GM to define these contacts, establishing who they are and what they do. The contacts can be based anywhere you choose in the city, but no more than two can come from the same district.

A contact can be any one of the following types: access, knowledge, or resource. An access contact can get you into a place normally forbidden to you. A knowledge contact is an expert at one skill (probably one your character lacks). A resource contact can keep you supplied with a certain good or service—such as toughs, weapons, or even coin. You decide what kind of contacts you make, but the GM specifies what they offer.

You can tap a contact once a month provided you are in Dragon City. An access contact might make it possible to gain an audience, visit a guarded area, or eavesdrop on a clandestine meeting. A knowledge contact gives you three useful pieces of information pertaining to his area of expertise. Finally, a resource contact loans you 1d20 gold worth of resources, such as hired soldiers, weapons, or passage on an airship.

You can attempt to tap a contact more frequently, though doing so requires an Intellect roll. The GM sets the difficulty based on the favor you ask, with 3 being a good starting point. On a success, the contact helps you as described above. On a failure, the contact becomes unfriendly to you and cannot be tapped again until you do something to make the contact friendly once more. You can repair relations with contacts by giving them gifts, doing them favors, or performing other actions as the GM decides.

Extrovert: You are at your best when in the company of friends. When you are alone, you increase the difficulty of all actions by one step.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- You failed to impress or win over a PC and you've become a little bit obsessed with finding out why.
- One of the PCs came to you for help and you leveraged your contacts to find a solution.
- A relationship with a contact went sour: your former friend has become an enemy. You joined up with the PCs for protection.
- You think the PCs are after something that will increase your standing in the city.

Cunning

Being several steps ahead of everyone around you gives you many advantages. You know the right thing to say to convince people to accept your way of thinking. You can read people and use what you learn to manipulate them into doing what you want, even when it's not necessarily in their best interest. Of course, not every interaction comes out with you on top. Sometimes you misjudge or give offense. Difficult situations are for other people to fret about, since you always have a contingency plan in place to get you out of trouble. Manipulating people helps you get what you want, but it makes it hard for you to make lasting friendships. People don't trust you. That's okay. You don't need friends; you need obedience.

You gain the following characteristics:

Devious: Add 2 points to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You are trained in social actions that involve bribery, deception, and manipulation.

Contingency Plans: At the start of each day, roll a d20 and note the number if it is anything other than a 19 or 20. This is your lucky number for the day. (If you rolled a 19 or 20, you don't have a lucky number today.) Whenever you roll a d20 and the die comes up matching your lucky number, treat it as if you had rolled a 19, which gives you a minor effect.

Inability: People find it hard to trust you, even if they wind up going along with your plans. You increase the difficulty of all social interactions by one step.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- You noticed one of the other PCs carrying out some scheme or mission. You figured out what was going on and decided to investigate further.
- You caught some rumors about interesting developments.
- You tricked one of the PCs into bringing you along.
- You organized the entire venture, using every trick you know to get the PCs into place.

More Descriptors

Looking for more descriptors? Be sure to check out the *Cypher System Rulebook* for more options to use in Dragon City. Before choosing an option from any source other than this book, however, make sure you clear your choice with your Game Master.



Daring

Caution is for others. No matter the challenge, no matter the risks, you're the first to act. You have little patience for planning and discussion. You would rather act and deal with the consequences later. You chalk up your willingness to stare danger in the eye as courage, though many think you a fool.

You gain the following characteristics:

Impetuous: Add 2 points to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You are trained in initiative actions.

Undaunted: You are trained in all actions that involve resisting or overcoming fear, terror, and intimidation.

Inability: You rarely think about the consequences before you act. You increase the difficulty of any task that involves patience, willpower, or self-control by one step.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- You saw one of the PCs in trouble and you leaped to his defense.
- Your own eagerness to act landed you in trouble, and the other characters had to pull you out of it.
- You heard about what the other PCs were doing and you wanted to be part of it.
- Your past exploits have landed you in trouble or created a problem that you feel obliged to fix. You believe the PCs' mission will help you make things right.

Determined

Some might call you stubborn, but you take pride in your independence and willingness to go your own way. You know what you want and how to get it. You'll be damned before you let someone get in your way. You might entertain advice or counsel, but you trust your instincts above the opinions of others. And if you choose wrong, you'll know better next time.

You gain the following characteristics:

Resolute: Add 4 points to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You are trained in actions that involve recognizing illusions for what they are, seeing through deceptions, and anticipating tricks played on you.

Inability: You're oblivious to how your actions and words might affect others. You increase the difficulty of tasks involving empathy and perception by one step.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- You decided what you wanted to do and dragged the rest of the group with you.
- One of the PCs didn't listen to your advice and so you stepped up to get him out of trouble.
- Your stubbornness got you into trouble and you had to reach out to one or all of the other PCs for help.
- A previous pursuit wound up costing you a lot of money. Strapped for coin, you've signed up for the mission.

Graceful

You have a perfect sense of balance. You speak and move with grace and beauty. You're quick, lithe, flexible, and dexterous. Your body is perfectly suited to dance, and you use that advantage in combat to dodge blows. You might wear garments that enhance your agile movement and sense of style.

You gain the following characteristics:

Agile: Add 2 points to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You're trained in actions that involve balance, hand-eye coordination, and careful movement.

Skill: You're trained in actions that involve physical performing arts.

Skill: You're trained in Speed defense actions.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- Against your better judgment, you joined the other PCs because you saw that they were in danger.
- One of the other PCs convinced you that joining the group would help you attract the attention of a potential patron.
- You were watching when one of the PCs did something especially graceful (and you were curious or jealous) or especially clumsy (and you were amused or scornful). You wanted to find out more about them.
- You have a dream of starting your own performing arts group or theater. You're going to need a lot of money to pay for everything, so you accepted this job.



Grizzled

You're a survivor. It's what you do best and you have the scars to show for it. Some might chalk up your success to dumb luck, but you know deep down it is more than that. You have keen instincts. You sense trouble before it starts, taking your cue to make your exit. It doesn't always work, as that old bullet wound scar reminds you, but your gut has been right so often that you pay attention when it grumbles.

You gain the following characteristics:

Tough as Nails: Add +1 to Armor.

Skill: You are trained in actions that involve climbing, jumping, running, and swimming.

Skill: You are trained in Might defense actions.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- You survived a dangerous journey with one of the PCs and joined the group for old times' sake.
- One of the PCs saved your life and you owe that character a debt.
- You drank away all your money so you signed up for the reward. Cash only, please.
- One of the PCs seemed foolish but likeable. You joined up to keep that character alive.

Hardboiled

It's an ugly world you live in, a place where life is cheap and people sometimes have to do bad things to make it through the day. You've been in the gutter so long, you've become accustomed to the violence and are rarely surprised by moral failures in the people around you. Your cynicism masks a desire for a better world, one not so grubby, not so flawed. Sometimes, this desire leads you to make decisions against your better judgment, which usually winds up confirming your bitter opinion about how the world works.

You gain the following characteristics:

Resilient: Add 2 points to your Might Pool and 2 points to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're trained in actions that involve interrogation, intimidation, and knowing when someone is lying to you.

Skill: You're trained in Might defense actions.

Inability: You're acerbic and bitter. You increase the difficulty of pleasant social interactions by one step.

Inability: You secretly want people to be better, and sometimes find yourself unable to resist other people's charms. You increase the difficulty of Intellect defense actions involving charm or seduction by two steps.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- You knew the PCs' hearts were in the right place, but you could tell that they were doomed to fail without your help.
- Something about the PCs' mission appealed to you enough for you to set aside your cynicism and join the group.
- One of the PCs reminds you of someone you loved and lost. These old feelings compel you to lend a hand.
- You are having trouble paying your bills and the mission involves a reward.

Honorable

You are trustworthy, fair, and forthright. You try to do what is right, to help others, and to treat people the way you want to be treated. Lying and cheating are no way to get ahead—these things are for the weak, the lazy, and the despicable. You spend a lot of time thinking about your personal honor, how best to maintain it, and how to defend it if challenged. In combat, you seek a fair fight and offer quarter to any foe who yields.

You gain the following characteristics:

Stalwart: Add 2 points to your Might Pool.

Skill: You're trained in pleasant social interactions.



Skill: You're trained in discerning people's true motives and seeing through lies.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- You respect the PCs' goals (or one of their patrons). You want them to succeed.
- You sense significant danger in the mission and feel it is your duty to protect one or all of the other characters.
- You have a reputation for being reliable and trustworthy, which led to your being recruited for the mission.
- You witnessed (or perhaps participated in) a duel of honor. One of the other PCs was present. Afterwards, you asked politely if you could join the group.

Insightful

You have always found it easy to connect with other people. You have a knack for seeing things from their point of view, which usually endears them to you. Your insight helps you understand how others see the world and frame your words in such a way as to make even your opponents understand your position. As useful as your empathy can be, it also means you feel things more strongly than others. Sometimes you can be manipulated by unscrupulous characters.

You gain the following characteristics:

Empathic: Add 2 points to your Intellect Pool.

Anticipation: Your keen instincts help you avoid attacks. You are trained in Speed defense actions.

Insight: You are trained in actions that involve seeing through deception and ascertaining people's true motives.

Inability: You experience emotions more strongly than others. Increase the difficulty by one step when resisting effects that would alter your emotions.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- You heard something about another PC's background and it moved you enough to volunteer your help.
- One of the PCs helped someone connected to you. You owe that character a debt.
- A PC convinced you to help them under false pretenses. You are only now realizing that you were duped.
- You gave away everything you owned to the poor and now can't feed yourself. This mission is your best chance to recoup your losses.

Learned

You have studied, either on your own or with an instructor. You know many things and are an expert on a few topics, such as history, magic, geography, mythology, nature, or any other area of study. You probably carry a few books around with you and spend your spare time reading.

You gain the following characteristics:

Smart: Add 2 points to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're trained in any three areas of knowledge.

Inability: You have few social graces. You increase the difficulty of any task involving charm, persuasion, or etiquette by one step.

Additional Equipment: You have two reference books on topics of your choice. On appropriate tasks, the GM may rule that one of these books counts as an asset.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- One of the PCs asked you to come along because of what you know.
- Tuition is expensive! You need the money to further your studies.
- You believe the task will reveal secrets and advance your knowledge.
- You owe a favor to a teacher or a professional colleague (perhaps you borrowed an especially rare book and something happened to it) and joined the mission to repay that debt.

Mysterious

The dark figure lurking silently in the corner? That's you. No one really knows where you came from, or what your motives are—you play things close to the vest. Your manner perplexes and confounds others, but that doesn't make you a poor friend or ally. You're just good at keeping things to yourself, moving about unseen, and concealing your presence and identity.

You gain the following characteristics:

Skill: You are trained in all hiding and sneaking actions.

Skill: You are trained in resisting interrogation or tricks to get you to talk.

Confounding: You pull talents and abilities seemingly out of nowhere. When you attempt a task in which you are not trained, you can treat that task as if you were trained. Once you use this ability, you cannot use it again until you make a recovery roll.

Inability: People never know where they stand with you. The difficulty of any task involving getting people to believe or trust you is increased by one step.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- You just showed up one day.
- You convinced one of the other PCs that you had invaluable skills.
- Some equally mysterious figure told you where to be and when (but not why) to join the group.
- Something you can't explain—a feeling, a dream—guided you to one of the other PCs. You don't know the reason, but you're determined to find out.

Perceptive

You don't miss much. You pick out the small details in the world around you, and are skilled at making deductions from the information you find. Your talents make you an exceptional detective, a brilliant researcher, or a talented scout.

As adept as you are at finding clues, you have no skill at noticing social cues. You don't realize how uncomfortable your scrutiny can make the people around you. You tend to dismiss others' insights and observations as obviously inferior to your own, which avails you little when you need a favor.

You gain the following characteristics:

Smart: Add 2 points to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You have a knack for spotting even the tiniest inconsistencies. You are trained in any action that involves finding or noticing small details.

Skill: You know a little about everything. You are trained in any action that involves identifying objects or calling to mind a minor fact or bit of trivia.

Skill: Your skill at making deductions can be imposing. You are trained in any action that involves intimidating another creature.

Inability: Your confidence comes off as arrogance to people who don't know you. Increase the difficulty by one step for any action you attempt that involves positive social interactions.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- You overheard the other PCs discussing their mission and they were obviously going about it all wrong. You immediately volunteered your services.
- One of the PCs asked you to come along, believing your talents would be invaluable to the mission.
- You believe the PCs' mission is somehow related to one of your own investigations.
- A third party recruited you to follow the PCs and see what they were up to.

Resourceful

You have always had an abundance of common sense, and it's helped you make your way in the world. You have a knack for seeing things as they really are and coming up with practical solutions to your problems. Whether you're faced with a steep wall to climb or a tricky lock barring access to a place you need to go, you can usually figure out some way to overcome the obstacle.

You gain the following characteristics:

Clever: Add 2 points to your Intellect Pool.

Trickery: When you would spend points from your Might Pool or Speed Pool, you can spend points from your Intellect Pool instead. However, doing this increases the number of points you must spend by 2. You can use your Intellect Edge to reduce the total cost, but not if you're already using another Edge.

Ingenuity: When you attempt an action that involves a skill in which you are neither trained nor specialized, you can use this ability to gain an asset for the task. If you fail, you cannot use this ability again for 24 hours.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- You were in the right place at the right time, so you took up with the other PCs.
- You convinced the other PCs you had a skill they needed.
- You idolize one PC and follow that character wherever she goes.
- You figured out what the PCs were up to and went with them to see if you were right.

Rich

You can't remember a time when you wanted for anything. You have always had money: you live a life of comfort and plenty. You might be stingy with your wealth, hiding your abundance lest others try to steal it from you. Or you might be magnanimous, giving to all who are in need.

The source of your funds is up to you. Maybe you inherited your vast fortune from a relative. A sudden windfall could have made you flush with funds, and given you a life you never dreamed of. You might be a successful merchant or entrepreneur, making your fortune through hard work and determination.

You gain the following characteristics:

Fancy House: You have a nice house somewhere in the best part of the district in which you live. You have servants to prepare your meals and keep your house in order. You also have four level 2 guards who keep out the riffraff. If you lose a guard, you can hire another 2 weeks later. You pay for your house and staff through the income earned from your inheritance and businesses.

Additional Starting Equipment: You have 50 gold.

Money Is No Object: You can buy items valued at 1 silver or less wherever they are available without having to track the expenditure. It's just pocket change.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- You crave a life of adventure. You hired all the other PCs for your expedition.
- Having wealth only creates an appetite for more. You joined the other PCs to grow your fortune, advance your business interests, or take out a rival.
- You want to do good works with your wealth, and you see the PCs' mission as an opportunity to help people.
- The source of your wealth—a relative, a business, or your position in the community—controls your life, and you have begun to feel stifled. You disguise your identity and accompany the PCs for a chance at the freedom your fortune denies you.



Seductive

Looks are important, of course, but really, it's all about attitude—you have the presence, charisma, and will to turn heads. People find you irresistible and want to be around you, do things for you, and make you happy… all in the hope that you will simply acknowledge their existence. As useful as your talents are for getting others to do what you want, you must remain ever cautious, for love can turn to hate in an instant.

You gain the following characteristics:

Alluring: Add 2 points to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You are trained in pleasant social interactions. If the GM decides that a particular person or group would be especially attracted to you, then you are specialized in pleasant social interactions when dealing with them.

Resistant to Charms: You're aware of how others can manipulate and charm people, and you notice when those tactics are used on you. Because of this awareness, you are trained in resisting any kind of persuasion or seduction (if you want to resist).

Paramours: You have up to three lovers with whom you share a special bond. Each of these lovers must have a different social status. For example, one might be a member of the Imperial Dragon's Guard, and another could be a member of a feared gang. Work with the Game Master to determine the details about your lovers (who they are, where they live, what resources they have access to, and so forth). Your lovers remain friendly to you and can provide you with assistance and resources, so long as you spend time keeping the relationships intact. You may change your lovers between adventures, although the GM might decide that spurning a lover causes story complications or embroils you in a scandal.

Inability: Your wiles don't work on people who aren't at least a little bit attracted to you. You don't gain any benefits from being trained or specialized in social interactions when dealing with such people. If they would find you downright unattractive, increase the difficulty of social interactions by one step.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- You were in a relationship with one of the PCs and a chance encounter with the character rekindled some of those old feelings.
- You coaxed information about the mission from one of the characters. You believe that you will improve your own circumstances by helping.
- One of the PCs invited you along in the hopes of impressing you and winning your favor.
- You used your talents to get one of the PCs out of trouble and now you need that character's help to get out of your own difficulty.

Stealthy

You're sneaky, slippery, and fast. These talents help you hide, move quietly, and pull off tricks that require sleight of hand. Most likely, you're wiry and small. However, you're not much of a sprinter—you're more dexterous than fleet of foot.

You gain the following characteristics:

Quick: Add 2 points to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You're trained in hiding and sneaking actions.

Skill: You're trained in all interactions involving lies or trickery.

Skill: You're trained in all special abilities involving illusions or trickery.

Inability: You're sneaky but not fast. The difficulty of all movement-related tasks is one step higher for you.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- You attempted to steal from one of the other PCs. That character caught you, and forced you to come along with her.
- You were trailing one of the other PCs for reasons of your own, which brought you into the action.
- An NPC employer secretly hired you to get involved in the mission.
- You overheard the other PCs talking about a topic that interested you, so you decided to approach the group.



Strong

You're extremely strong and physically imposing, and you use these qualities well, whether through acts of violence or feats of prowess. You likely have a brawny build and impressive muscles.

You gain the following characteristics:

Very Powerful: Add 4 points to your Might Pool.

Skill: You're trained in all actions involving breaking inanimate objects.

Skill: You're trained in all carrying and lifting actions.

Additional Equipment: You have an extra medium weapon or heavy weapon.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- You learned what the PCs were doing and knew they needed extra muscle.
- You are very protective of one of the PCs and go along to keep that character safe.
- One of the PCs goaded you into joining.
- You see the mission as a chance to test yourself.

Swift

You move quickly, able to sprint in short bursts and perform dexterous work with your hands. You're great at crossing distances quickly but not always smoothly. You are likely slim and muscular.

You gain the following characteristics:

Fast: Add 4 points to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You're trained in initiative actions.

Skill: You're trained in running actions.

Inability: You're fast but not necessarily graceful. The difficulty of any task you attempt that involves keeping your balance or other acrobatic feats is increased by one step.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- Against your better judgment, you joined the other PCs because you saw that they were in danger.
- You broke something valuable, and you need money to pay for its replacement or repair.
- Because of your speed, you sometimes work as a courier. You were hired to deliver a message to one of the PCs, or to escort the PCs to meet with someone.
- You were involved in a foot race around the city, and you crashed into one of the other PCs (or they crashed into you). You lost the race but made a new friend.

Vengeful

One moment changed everything for you. One dreadful encounter, one betrayal, or one horrific tragedy altered your course and made you who you are today. Looking back at that time, you often wonder how your life would have unfolded if not for the event that ruined everything. The life you imagine you should have had haunts you and feeds your appetite for revenge, until vengeance is the only thing you have left.

To be vengeful, you must have someone or something you want revenge against, and someone or something to avenge. Work with your GM to determine what happened that affected you so strongly. Maybe undead wiped out your family. A corrupt official stole your family's savings or otherwise brought ruin to you and your loved ones. Perhaps a rival destroyed your romance by sullying your name. Death, finances, love: any of these can support your motivation.

In addition, consider to what lengths your character will go to gain vengeance. Will you compromise your values to destroy the ones who wronged you? Will you sacrifice your companions to get what you want? Can you imagine a life after you get revenge, or will you spend your last breath to punish the people who wronged you?

You gain the following characteristics:

Tireless Hunter: Add 2 points to your Might Pool.

Skill: The fires of your hatred make you an imposing figure. You're trained in actions that involve intimidation, threats, or inflicting pain through torture.

Skill: You will chase your enemies to the ends of the earth. You're trained in actions that involve finding and following tracks.

Skill: You're trained in Speed defense actions.

Additional Equipment: You have an additional medium weapon.

Character Hook: Use one of the following options to explain how your character joined the group.

- You believe that the mission will help you get resources or information that you need to enact your plans for revenge.
- You believe one of the PCs knows something about your enemy (or might be an agent of that enemy). You accompany the group to find out what that character knows.
- One of the PCs survived the event that caused you to become vengeful. You travel with that character to protect him or her.
- You drew everyone together to help you get revenge against your enemies.





Chapter 7: Focus

If race and type establish your identity, and descriptor explains the way you do what you do, focus describes what you do best. It's the thing that sets you apart from other characters, and what makes you special and unique. Since it is such a defining part of your character, each player in your group should choose a different focus. In the sentence, "I am an *adjective noun*, a *noun* who *verbs*," your focus is the verb.

Your focus grants you a special connection to one or more of your fellow PCs, a first-tier ability, and perhaps additional starting equipment. A few foci offer slight alterations of other special abilities, so all benefits gained from the various choices you make mesh into a thematic whole. Your focus also offers suggestions for possible effects or consequences of really good or really bad die rolls. (The minor and major effect suggestions for each focus are just that, suggestions. You can use them as written, propose something else to the GM, or ask the GM to describe the effect for you.)

Each time you progress to a higher tier, your focus grants additional abilities. An ability is sometimes labeled Action or Enabler. Action abilities require you to take an action to use them. Enabler abilities don't, and instead improve other actions or offer some other kind of benefit. Thus, an ability that lets you hurl a fireball is an action, while an ability that increases the damage your attacks inflict is an enabler. Unlike actions, enablers are "always on," and their effects apply when you do something that they modify. Benefits that increase your stat Pools or improve your Edges are neither actions nor enablers: they just grant you the listed benefit, permanently.

Each tier's benefits are independent of and cumulative with benefits from other tiers (unless indicated otherwise). For example, if your first-tier ability grants you +1 to Armor and your fourth-tier ability also grants you +1 to Armor, when you reach fourth tier, you have a total of +2 to Armor.

Brawls Like an Animal

Forms, stances, style? That stuff gets you dead. When a fight breaks out – and, if we're being honest, they break out around you all the time – you become a flurry of fists and feet, hurling yourself at your opponents and beating them to a pulp with your bare hands.

While you lack the grace and finesse of more practiced warriors, you easily hold your own in combat. You use your hands, feet, elbows, and knees as weapons, and you use them well. You might have had some experience duking it out in a fighting pit or figuring out how to take care of yourself on the city's mean streets.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- You think the character has a smart mouth. One of these days, you're going to knock his teeth out.
- He always seems to get in your way and one of these days is going to get hurt as a result. If the character is within immediate range when you make an unarmed attack and the GM rules that you struck someone other than your intended target, the PC gets hit instead.
- You saved the character from some thugs who were looking to kick his ass. You feel that he owes you a debt. (He might not agree, but you don't care.)

Additional Equipment: A set of brass knuckles.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You punch the target so hard, he falls prone and can't stand up for 1 round.

Major Effect Suggestion: You clock the target on the head, leaving him stunned for 1 round.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefits.

Brute: You are trained in Might defense tasks. Enabler.

Iron Fists: Your unarmed attacks inflict 2 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefits.

Brawler: You are trained in unarmed attacks. Enabler.

Disarm (2 Speed points): When you make an unarmed attack against one creature your size or smaller, increase the difficulty by one step. If you hit, you inflict damage as normal and you tear a weapon that the target is wielding from its hands. You either take the weapon, or you knock it away so that it lands somewhere within 10 feet of you. Action.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Unfettered Movement (3 Speed points): You move a short distance. For the next minute, the difficulty of your attacks and Speed defense rolls is decreased by one step. Action.

Foci

Brawls Like an Animal
Carries a Quiver
Commands the Dead
Conjures Monsters
Crafts Illusions
Crafts Unique Objects
Entertains
Evokes the Elements
Explores Dark Places
Fights Dirty
Fights with Panache
Fights with Two Weapons
Knows a Bit About Everything
Leads
Lives Beyond the Wall
Looks for Trouble
Masters Defense
Masters Weaponry
Moves Like a Cat
Murders
Never Says Die
Packs Heat
Performs Feats of Strength
Rages
Separates Mind from Body
Slays Undead
Solves Mysteries
Throws with Deadly Accuracy
Works the Back Alleys

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Tough as Nails: While you aren't wearing medium or heavy armor, you have +1 to Armor. Enabler.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Haymaker (4 Might points): You make an unarmed attack against one creature. If you hit, the attack inflicts no damage, but the target becomes stunned for one round. Action.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Master Brawler: You are specialized in unarmed attacks. If you are already specialized in unarmed attacks, your unarmed attacks inflict 2 additional points of damage. Enabler.

GM Intrusions

Delivering a solid hit could injure you.
Reckless attacks might leave you exposed to attack.
A wild swing might deliver a glancing blow.

Carries a Quiver

Extensive training with a bow has helped you become a skilled and deadly combatant. With a keen eye and quick reflexes, you eliminate foes at range before they reach you. As part of your training, you learned how to make bows and arrows so you are never without your preferred weapon.

Although firearms have widely replaced the use of bows, some continue to use them as they are fast, quiet, and accurate. You can use this focus with crossbows instead of bows.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- The character gave you the excellent bow you now use as a token of your friendship. Secretly pick a second PC (preferably one who is likely to get in the way of your attacks). When you miss with a bow and the GM rules that you struck someone other than your intended target, you hit the second character, if possible.
- You've known her for a while and the two of you used to do an act where you shot an apple out of her mouth. One time you missed and hit her in the cheek. She may or may not still bear a physical or mental scar from this experience. Either way, you have not performed the trick since "the accident."
- The character is interested in studying archery and is a quick learner. If you spend one hour teaching him a few of your secrets, you each gain a +1 bonus to any die rolls made while fighting the same foe using your bows.

Additional Equipment: A well-made bow and two dozen arrows.

Minor Effect Suggestion: Your projectile strikes a tendon or muscle, causing the target to take 2 points of Speed damage as well as normal damage.

Major Effect Suggestion: The target is pinned in place with an arrow.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefits.

Archer: You have a keen eye and steady hand. You can spend points from either your Speed Pool or your Intellect Pool to apply levels of Effort to increase your damage with attacks made using a bow. Enabler.

Fletcher: You are trained in making arrows. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefits.

Bowyer: You are trained in making bows. Enabler.

Covering Fire (1 Speed point): In a round during which you attack with a bow, if you fire an additional arrow, the difficulty of the next attack or special ability used by the target before the end of the next round is increased by one step. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefits.

Master Fletcher: You are specialized in making arrows. Enabler.

Trained Archer: You are trained in using bows. If you are already trained with these weapons, you instead inflict 1 additional point of damage with bow attacks. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Master Bowyer: You are specialized in making bows. Enabler.

Quick Shot: If you roll a natural 17 or higher with a bow attack, instead of adding damage or having a minor or major effect, you can make another attack with your bow. This attack reuses the same Effort and bonuses (if any) from the first attack. Enabler.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Phenomenal Archer: You are specialized in using bows. If you are already specialized with these weapons, you instead inflict 1 additional point of damage with bow attacks. Enabler.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Powerful Shot (2 Might points): You inflict 3 additional points of damage with all bow attacks you make as part of a single action. The Might points spent to use this ability are in addition to any Speed points spent on the attack action. Enabler.

GM Intrusions

Arrows that miss their target strike unwanted targets. Bowstrings break.



Commands the Dead

Beyond Dragon City is a world drowning in undead, a land whose beauty and vitality has been lost to the endless legions raised up by the Ruler of the Dead. These abominations seek one end: the annihilation of all living things.

You have power over the undead, an ability to control their actions and even undo them. You might have gained your abilities after studying necromancy, or you might have discovered the power within you, perhaps you were touched in some way by the magic the Ruler of the Dead used to create her armies. No matter how you came by your talents, people who learn of your abilities either fear you, believing you to be in cahoots with the enemy, or seek to exploit your powers to combat the menace lurking outside the city's walls.

You likely wear somber clothes, favoring funerary garb and cosmetics that make you look dead, all reflecting your preoccupation with undead. You might also carry a skull, make fetishes from the bones of dead animals, or have an air of the grave around you.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- The character watches you all the time. You're not sure if she fears you or is fascinated by you.
- A relative or a friend of the character died and rose up as a zombie. You were the one who destroyed it.
- The character makes you uncomfortable, either because you are attracted to her or she frustrates you. While you are within an immediate distance of the character, you increase the difficulty of all actions by one step.

Additional Equipment: You carry a memento of someone close to you who died and became undead. It might be a locket, a ring, a letter, a coin, or something similar.

Dark Magic: If you know how to cast spells, whenever you cast a spell, it is accompanied by an audible moaning, sighing, or shrieking sound. Alternatively, shadows might play about your person or the bones of dead things within an immediate distance twitch and dance for a few moments.



Minor Effect Suggestion: The target becomes frightened, increasing the difficulty of all its actions by one step until the end of its next turn.

Major Effect Suggestion: The target panics and must use its next action to flee from you.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefits.

Halt Undead (1 Intellect point): You cause one undead creature within short range to freeze in place. The target is unable to move from its space for one round. Action.

Sense the Dead (2 Intellect points): You close your eyes and immediately know the location of each dead or undead creature within short range. Action.

Second Tier

At second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Repel the Dead (3 Intellect points): You release a pulse of dark energy that spreads a short distance out from you. Each undead creature in the area must use its next action to move away from you. For one minute, any affected creature that attacks you increases the difficulty by one step. Action.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Command the Dead (3+ Intellect points): You take control of one undead creature within short range. The target obeys your mental commands, which lets you decide what it does on each of its turns. Your control lasts for one minute or until you become unconscious, at which point the creature acts normally. For each level of Effort applied, you can take control of an additional undead creature. Action to initiate.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Corpse Eyes (3 Intellect points): You can see and hear from the location of an undead under your control as if you were that creature, provided you are within one mile of it. The special sense lasts for ten minutes. Action to initiate.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Call the Dead (5 Intellect points): You cause a dead creature you can see within a short distance to rise up and become level 4 undead creature. The creature obeys your mental commands, which lets you decide what it does on each of its turns. Your control lasts for one minute or until you become unconscious, at which point the creature falls to the ground, dead. Action to initiate.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Destroy the Dead (7+ Intellect points): A wave of dark energy spreads a long distance out from you. The energy inflicts 7 points of damage to each undead creature in the area. Even on an unsuccessful attack, a target in the area still takes 3 points of damage. If you apply Effort to decrease the difficulty, it applies to all targets in the area. If you apply Effort to increase the damage rather than to decrease the difficulty, you deal an additional 2 points of damage per level of Effort (instead of 3 points) and targets in the area take an additional 1 point of damage even if you fail the attack roll. Action.

GM Intrusions

All undead creatures within a short range make you their only target. An undead creature is immune to your commands and it counts as being one level higher for the purposes of resisting its attacks.

Conjures Monsters

You possess the knowledge and talent required to cause creatures to appear and obey your commands. The creatures you conjure aren't real; rather, they are constructs created by weaving threads of magical energy into forms you choose. Once the power peters out, the threads unravel and the conjured creatures disappear.

You probably favor colorful clothing and accentuate your spells with puffs of smoke and flashing lights.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- Creatures you conjure distort and waver when within an immediate distance of the character, revealing that the conjurations aren't real creatures.
- You once conjured a creature to scare off some thugs who had him cornered.
- You learned your techniques from one of the character's relatives. Decide on the relationship you had with your teacher.

Additional Equipment: A bestiary that you use for inspiration when designing your conjurations. This tome is filled with illustrations of strange creatures.

Conjuration Magic: When you cast spells, you sometimes cause tiny creatures to appear and fade away moments later. Butterflies, spiders, mice, and the like all appear in or around the target of your spell, but they are harmless.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You restore 3 points of health to a creature you conjured.

Major Effect Suggestion: One creature you conjured moves an immediate distance and attacks.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefit:

Conjure Lesser Creature (2+ Intellect points): You cause a level 1 creature that is half your size to appear in an open space within immediate range. You decide what the creature looks like. For each level of Effort you apply when conjuring the creature, increase its level by 1. The creature obeys your spoken commands and remains for one minute or until destroyed, at which point it fades away. Action to initiate.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Durable Conjuration: Creatures you create with your conjuration abilities have +1 to Armor. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Conjure Creature (4+ Intellect points): You cause a level 3 creature that is about your size to appear in an open space within immediate range. You decide what the creature looks like. For each level of Effort you apply when conjuring the creature, increase its level by 1. The creature obeys your spoken commands and remains for one minute or until destroyed, at which point it fades away. Action to initiate.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Vicious Conjuration: Creatures you create with your conjuration abilities attack as if they were one level higher. Enabler.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Conjure Massive Creature (6+ Intellect points): You cause a level 5 creature that is twice your size to appear in an open space within immediate range. You decide what the creature looks like. For each level of Effort you apply when conjuring the creature, increase its level by 1. The creature obeys your spoken commands and remains for one minute or until destroyed, at which point it fades away. Action to initiate.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Flying Conjuration: Creature you create with your conjuration abilities can fly. Enabler.

GM Intrusions

A creature you conjured vanishes, ignores your commands, or even turns against you and your friends.

Crafts Illusions

You use magic to bend light and shape sound into believable illusions, as if you could alter reality to match your imagination. You might create an illusion of a phantasmal monster to harry your foes or mislead searchers by throwing your voice so it sounds like it comes from somewhere else. Illusions never inflict direct harm or exert real force, but cleverly crafted illusions can fool creatures, changing opinions and even behaviors.

Illusionists, as they're sometimes called, typically learn magic from the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship and focus their studies on creating illusions. Many illusionists find work outside the usual arcane circles. Their spells and powers are useful for criminal enterprises, entertainment, and, surprisingly, security.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- The character is never fooled by your illusions and is never affected by the trickery of your other special abilities. You choose whether you know this fact.
- Choose a second PC for a total of two characters. If they're willing, they become your trained assistants. Whenever you use Minor Illusion and both characters are within immediate range, they can assist you, together decreasing the difficulty of your action by one step.
- The character's face intrigues you in a way you don't understand. Your illusions of people sometimes take on his appearance, even when you didn't intend for them to.

Psychedelic Spells: If you cast spells, they take on flamboyant visual and auditory qualities in a manner you choose. This alteration changes nothing other than the appearance of the effects.

Minor Effect Suggestion: Your illusion has a special quality to it—perhaps an observer sees an image of something from his past.

Major Effect Suggestion: The illusion lasts for one hour, or if it already lasts that long, it lasts for twenty-four hours.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefit.

Minor Illusion (1 Intellect point): You create a single image of a creature or object within immediate range. The image must fit inside a 10-foot cube of space. The image can move (for example, you could make the illusion of a person walk or attack), but it can't leave the area defined by the cube. The illusion includes sound but not smell. It lasts for ten minutes, but if you want to change the original illusion significantly—such as making a creature appear to be wounded—you must concentrate on it again (though doing so doesn't cost additional Intellect points). If you move beyond immediate range of the cube, the illusion vanishes. Action to create; action to modify.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Disguise (2+ Intellect points): You appear to be someone or something else, roughly of your size and shape, for up to one hour. Once created, the disguise requires no concentration. For each additional Intellect point you spend, you can disguise one other creature. All disguised creatures must stay within sight of you or lose their disguise. Action to create.



Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Major Illusion (3 Intellect points): You create a complex scene of images within immediate range. The entire scene must fit within a 100-foot cube. The images can move, but they can't leave the area defined by the cube. The illusion includes sound and smell. It lasts for ten minutes and changes as you direct (no concentration is needed). If you move beyond immediate range of the cube, the illusion vanishes. Action to create.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Illusory Selves (4 Intellect points): You create four illusory duplicates of yourself within short range. The duplicates last for one minute. You mentally direct their actions, and the duplicates aren't mirror images—each one can do different things. If struck violently, they either disappear permanently or freeze motionless (your choice). Action to create.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Terrifying Image (6 Intellect points): You reach into the minds of creatures you choose within long range to discover what images would appear terrifying to them. Those images appear within the area and menace the appropriate creatures. Make an Intellect attack roll against each creature you want to affect. Success means the creature flees in terror for one minute, pursued by its nightmares. Failure means the creature ignores the images, which do not hamper it in any way. Action.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Grandiose Illusion (8 Intellect points): You create a fantastically complex scene of images that fit within a 1-mile cube that you are also within. You must be able to see the images when you create them. The images can move in the cube and act in accordance with your desires. They can also act logically (such as reacting appropriately to fire or attacks) when you aren't directly observing them. The illusion includes sound and smell. For example, armies can clash in battle, with air support from machines or flying creatures, on and above terrain of your creation. The illusion lasts for one hour (or longer if you continue to concentrate on it). Action.

GM Intrusions

Obviously, illusions of things that someone has never seen before are not likely to be believable. An NPC might realize that an illusion is false at just the wrong moment.

Crafts Unique Objects

Tinker, builder, crafter, artificer, armorer, magineer: whatever you call yourself, you have a special talent for taking raw materials and spare parts and assembling them into useful forms. You owe your talents to your magical training, having learned how to infuse objects with magical power to make them sturdier and bestow onto them unusual properties.

You likely carry a wide array of tools and spare parts wherever you go. Your work apron is probably a mainstay of your wardrobe, its pockets and loops brimming with the instruments of your trade. Your calloused fingers might be stained with grease and will never be completely clean, but these marks are badges of honor.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- The character commissioned you to create something for him. You've already been paid but you have yet to complete the work.
- The character has an extra item of regular equipment, of that player's choice, that you made for her.
- The character has in her possession an object that you made for someone else a long time ago.

Additional Equipment: You have a bag of light tools, which you need to make your first-tier crafts, and one normal item (of level 1 or 2) that you can make with your skills.

Minor Effect Suggestion: Any rolls you make involving an artifact that you just used gain a +1 bonus for twenty-four hours.

Major Effect Suggestion: Any rolls you make involving an artifact that you just used gain a +2 bonus for twenty-four hours.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefits.

Crafter: You are trained in the crafting of two kinds of items. Enabler.

Master Identifier: You are trained in identifying the function of any kind of device. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefits.

Quick Work (3+ Intellect points): One use of any artifact (or one minute of its continuous function) is increased by one level if you use it within the next minute. If you spend 4 additional Intellect points, the use is increased by two levels if you use it within the next minute. Action.

Tinkerer: You enhance artifacts you own. If you spend at least one day tinkering with an artifact you own, it functions at one level higher than normal, but only for you. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Master Crafter: You are trained in the crafting of two more kinds of items, or you are specialized in crafting two kinds of items that you are already trained in. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Cyphersmith: All cyphers you use function at one level higher than normal. If you spend a week working with tools, special ingredients, and spare parts, you can tinker with a cypher you own, transforming it into another cypher of the same type that you had in the past. You and the GM should collaborate to ensure that the transformation is logical—for example, you probably can't transform a potion into a helmet. Enabler.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Innovator: You can modify any artifact to give it different or better abilities, as if that artifact were one level lower than normal. Doing so takes half the normal time to modify a device. Enabler.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Inventor: You can create new artifacts in half the time, as if they were two levels lower, by spending half the normal XP. Enabler.

GM Intrusions

Although created devices can break, tinkering with an artifact can lead to catastrophic failure, cause explosions, summon deadly monsters, or anything else you decide.

Evokes the Elements

You possess a shard of magical power within you that grants you the ability to command one of the classical elements of air, earth, fire, or water. You might have sought out your talent, studying ancient magic to increase your abilities, or it might have lain dormant, waiting for a moment of stress before awakening. No matter how you came by your abilities, the element proves a useful ally. You infuse your attacks with the element, and you draw upon the element to protect yourself.

Wizards are most likely to seek control over elemental power, having the resources and talents required to shape the element effectively. Freelances might stumble into the talent, having recovered an ancient tome or item of great magical power that imparted the ability to them. Veterans rarely command elemental power, though when they do, they effectively combine their combat training with magic.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- You noticed the character watching you when you command the power of your element. You're not sure if he is simply curious or afraid.
- You accidentally harmed the character with your power. She survived, but you don't think she'll ever trust you again.
- The character is a relative of someone you met while learning to master your magic. Is this person someone you respect, or someone you despise?
- You find the character distracting, maybe because you're attracted to him or you find him incredibly annoying. Whenever you cast a spell while the character is within an immediate distance, increase the difficulty by one step.

Elemental Spells: If you cast spells, they reflect the element you chose for your elemental power ability: flashing with bursts of flame, leaving trails of dust, or causing the ground to shake. Distant thunder could answer your magic or rain might fall around you. Typically, these manifestations occur when you attack with magic, but they might happen in any instance in which you call upon your power.



Minor Effect Suggestion: You experience a surge of elemental power. The next time you use one of your abilities gained from your focus, you decrease the difficulty by one step.

Major Effect Suggestion: Fire, dust, wind, or water rushes out from the target, inflicting 2 points of damage to everything and everyone within an immediate distance.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefits.

Elemental Power: Choose one of the following elements: air, earth, fire, or water. Your choice affects the abilities you gain from this focus. Enabler.

Elemental Defense (1 Intellect point): Your chosen element surrounds and protects you for one minute. Action to initiate.

- Air: Wind swirls around you, granting you an asset on Speed defense rolls.
- Earth: Rocks, dirt, and sand sheathe your body, granting you +1 to Armor.
- Fire: Flames dance across your body. The flames harm neither you nor your possessions, but other creatures can feel the heat emanating from you. You emit light out to a short distance. When a creature within an immediate distance successfully attacks you, the flames surrounding you inflict 1 point of damage to that creature.
- Water: A sheath of water covers your body that halves any ambient damage you take (round down). You also have an asset for swimming actions.

Shape Element (1 Intellect point): You can shape and move your chosen element. Action.

- **Air:** You stir the air inside a cube of space, 10 feet on each side, within a short distance. You clear dust, fog, and harmful vapors from the area.
- **Earth:** You cause earth and stone inside a cube, 5 feet on a side, within an immediate distance to assume whatever shape you choose.
- **Fire:** You cause one fire that you can see to move a short distance. The size of the fire must be no larger than a cube, 5 feet on a side. If the fire moves across a non-flammable surface, it immediately gutters out.
- **Water:** You cause water inside a cube, 5 feet on a side, to either evaporate, turning to mist that spreads out 15 feet in all directions, or to freeze into a block of ice.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Elemental Missile (2 Intellect points): You fling a missile formed of your chosen element at a creature within short range. The missile inflicts 3 points of damage and has an additional effect depending on the element you chose. Action.

- **Air:** Buffeting winds moves a target of your size or smaller an immediate distance.
- **Earth:** A chuck of rocks knocks the target to the ground.
- **Fire:** A fiery missile inflicts 1 additional point of damage.
- **Water:** Ice forms on the target, preventing it from moving from its space for one round.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Elemental Ball (4+ Intellect points): You hurl a ball formed of your chosen element to a point within long range. When the ball reaches that point or impacts against a solid surface, it explodes in a 10-foot radius sphere and inflicts 3 points of damage to everything in the area. Even on an unsuccessful attack, a target in the area still takes 1 point of damage. If you apply effort to decrease the difficulty, it applies to all targets in the area. If you apply Effort to increase the damage rather than to decrease the difficulty, you deal an additional 2 points of damage per level of Effort (instead of 3 points) and targets in the area take an additional 1 point of damage even if you fail the attack roll. Action.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Elemental Protection (4 Intellect points): You extend the benefits of your Elemental Defense ability to each target you designate within immediate range. The effects last for one hour. Action to initiate.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Elemental Wall (7+ Intellect points): A level wall appears on a solid foundation within short range. The wall is 1 foot thick and up to 20 feet by 20 feet in size, though it conforms to its space. The wall remains for ten hours. The material from which the wall is made depends on your element. Action to initiate.

- **Air:** The wall is made from howling wind, which deafens creatures within short range for as long as they remain within this range. The winds extinguish flames and disperse fog, gas, smoke, harmful vapors, and dust within this range. It takes a successful Might action to pass through the wall. Failure results in being blown back and knocked to the ground. Ranged weapon attacks made through the wall automatically miss.
- **Earth:** The wall is made from granite. If you apply three levels of Effort when creating the wall, it becomes permanent until destroyed.
- **Fire:** The wall is made of flames that inflict 4 points of ambient damage to anything passing through the wall. Flammable objects that pass through the wall catch fire. At the end of each round, each creature within an immediate distance of the wall takes 2 points of ambient heat damage.
- **Water:** The wall is a cascading waterfall. Any non-magical fire or burning object that passes through the wall is extinguished. It takes a successful Might action to pass through the wall. Failure results in being pushed back and knocked to the ground. Ranged weapon attacks made through the wall automatically miss. The difficulty of movement actions within a short range of the wall is increased by one step, as the rushing water knocks creatures off their feet and makes the terrain slippery.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Elemental Servant (6 Intellect points): A construct made from your chosen element appears in an open space on a solid surface within short range and remains for 10 minutes. The construct is a level 5 creature of your size. You can use an action to give it a command, provided you are within long range of it. If you don't give it a command, it acts as it was previously directed, or does nothing if you haven't given it any instructions. The construct has other abilities based on your element. Action to initiate.

- **Air:** The construct can fly.
- **Earth:** The construct has Armor 3.
- **Fire:** The construct inflicts 1 additional point of fire damage with its attacks.
- **Water:** The construct can swim and extinguishes any flames within an immediate distance of it.

GM Intrusions

The element you command slips from your control, bursting from you to inflict 2 points of damage to creatures within an immediate distance. Wind can damage fragile objects, fire can spread in unexpected directions, earth can damage structures, and water can create slippery or icy patches.

Entertains

You are an entertainer: a singer, dancer, poet, storyteller, or something similar. You perform for the benefit of others. Although you are naturally charismatic and talented, you have also studied to master your art. You know all the old poems, songs, jokes, and stories, and you're skilled at creating new ones, too.

Entertainers are in high demand in Dragon City as they can help people forget their troubles, if only for a night. With the hordes of undead clamoring outside the city walls, death and undeath are constant concerns.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- The character is your worst critic. Your abilities to help or inspire others don't function for her.
- The character seems to really enjoy your attempts to entertain, and this brings out the performer in you. It's up to that player to decide whether his appreciation is real or if he is just being polite.
- The character is so inspired and put at ease by your stories or other forms of entertainment that when you use your Levity ability she gains +2 to her recovery rolls instead of +1.

Additional Equipment: You have a musical instrument or other implements necessary for your performances.

Minor Effect Suggestion: The target becomes enamored with you for as long as you focus all your attention on keeping it that way. While enamored, the target cannot attack you and the difficulty of any pleasant social interaction task to interact with the target is decreased by one step.

Major Effect Suggestion: The target is forever favorably disposed toward you.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefit.

Levity: Through wit, charm, humor, and grace, you are trained in all social interactions other than those involving coercion or intimidation. During rests, you put friends and comrades so much at ease that they gain +1 to their recovery rolls. Enabler.

Second Tier

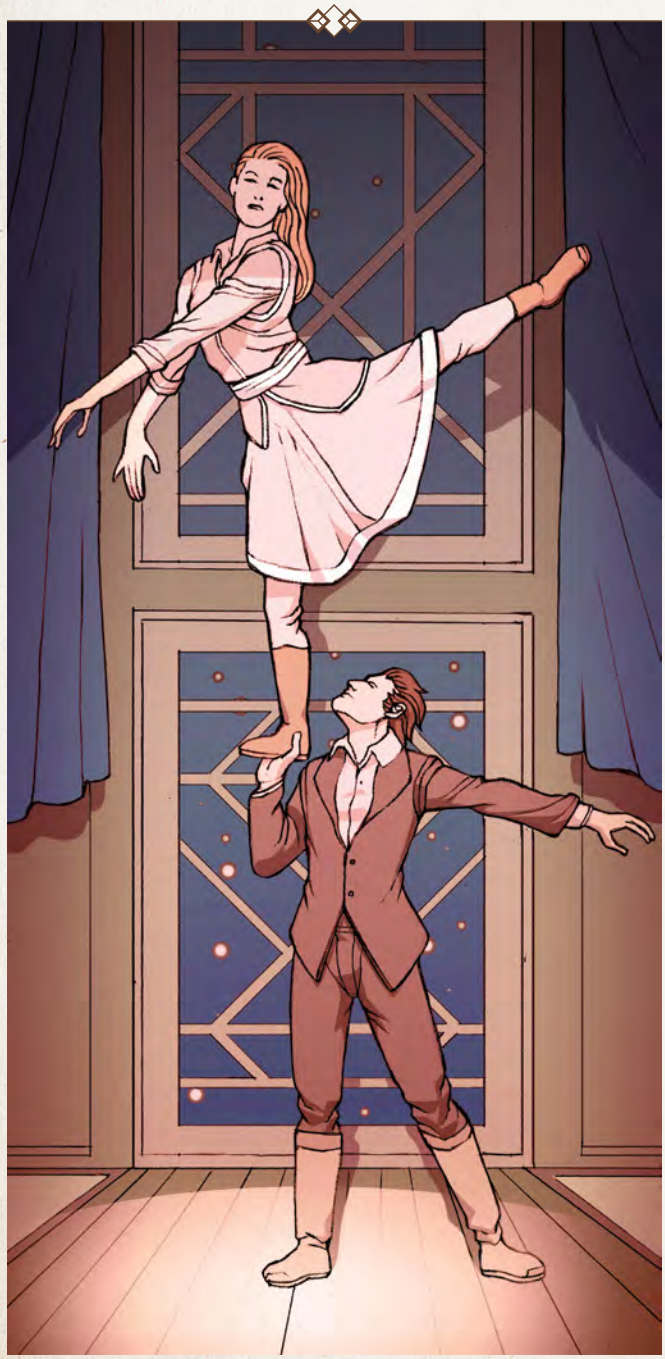
At the second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Inspiration: Through stories, songs, art, or other forms of entertainment, you inspire your friends. After spending twenty-four hours with you, once per day each of your friends can decrease the difficulty of a task by one step. This benefit is ongoing while you remain in the friend's company. It ends if you leave, but it resumes if you return to the friend's company within twenty-four hours. If you leave the friend's company for more than twenty-four hours, you must spend another twenty-four hours together to reactivate the benefit. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Knowledge: Your stories and songs contain truth. You are trained in two areas of knowledge of your choosing. Enabler.



Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Calm (3 Intellect points): Through jokes, song, or some other art, you prevent a living foe from attacking anyone or anything for one round. The effect ends if the target is attacked or takes damage. Action.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Able Assistance: When you help someone with a task, you always reduce the difficulty of the task by one step regardless of your own skill at that task. Enabler.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Master Entertainer: Your Inspiration ability works more effectively, allowing your friends to decrease the difficulty of a task by two steps rather than one step. Enabler.

GM Intrusions

Failing to entertain can be worse than not having tried, as you often end up annoying or offending your audience. Musical instruments break, paints dry in their pots, and the words to a poem or song, once forgotten, never return.

Explores Dark Places

You explore foreboding ruins, mysterious locales of ancient times, deep dungeons, and dark caverns—trained in such activities by those who have gone before you. You're the archetypical treasure hunter, scavenger, and finder of lost things. You spend so much of your time in the dark that you slowly adapt to it, almost becoming a creature of the gloom yourself. Even in civilized areas, you prefer to keep to the shadows.

The lands outside Dragon City are littered with ancient ruins, tombs, and dungeons all waiting to be explored. You likely make frequent forays beyond the wall, risking encounters with undead and other monsters, to plunder these dangerous vaults for fabulous treasures.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- The character has been your adventuring partner in previous expeditions, and the two of you work so well together that you both gain +1 to any die rolls when you collaborate on the same task, fight the same foe, and so on.
- You think you once saw the character through a keyhole doing something illegal. You can choose whether or not to share that information with the player of the chosen character. That player can choose whether it was really their character (it could have been someone who looked similar), and they may or may not share that information with you in return.
- The character always seems to hear you, no matter how stealthy you try to be.

Additional Equipment: You carry an explorer's pack with rope, two days' rations, a bedroll, and other tools needed for outdoor survival.

Shadow Spells: When you cast spells, they make almost no sound when you cast them. Also, whatever visual displays they

produce are dark and shadowy. These alterations change nothing other than the appearance of the effects. Examples include an Energy Ray that is a braided beam of shadows, or a Barrier that appears as a mass of shadowy wisps.

Minor Effect Suggestion: The target is also dazed for one round, during which time the difficulty of all tasks it performs is increased by one step.

Major Effect Suggestion: The target is also stunned and loses its next turn.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefit.

Trained Explorer: You are trained in searching, listening, climbing, balancing, and jumping actions. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefits.

Eyes Adjusted: You can see in extremely dim light as though it were bright light. You can see in total darkness as if it were extremely dim. Enabler.

Trained Infiltrator: You are trained in tinkering with devices and picking locks. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Escape Artist: You are trained in escaping from bonds, fitting into tight spaces, and other contortionist actions. Thanks to your experience, you also are trained in Speed defense tasks while wearing light armor or no armor. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Resilient: In your explorations of dark places, you've been exposed to all sorts of terrible things and have developed a general resistance. You gain +1 to Armor and are trained in Might defense tasks. Enabler.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Dark Explorer: You ignore penalties for any action (including fighting) in extremely dim light or in cramped spaces. Combined with your Eyes Adjusted ability, you can act without penalty even in total darkness. You are also trained in sneaking tasks while in dim or no light. Enabler.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Blinding Attack (3 Speed points): If you have a source of light, you can use it to make a melee attack against a target. If successful, the attack deals no damage, but the target is blinded for one minute. Action.

GM Intrusions

Sometimes items fall out of pockets or bags in the dark, never to be found again—at least, not by the one who lost them.

Fights Dirty

You know one thing: the only important element of a fight is who wins. How? Why? These questions are inconsequential. Your willingness to do anything to win a fight leads many to say you have no honor, no class, or some other foolish statement, but they're missing the point. You come out on top in a battle—and that's all that matters.

You bite, scratch, kick, and trip. You tangle foes in draperies, push them down stairs, and throw dirt in their eyes. You trick them into looking the wrong way, call them names, and say terrible things about their mothers.

Maybe you learned your methods while living on the streets, or maybe you barely survived a particularly horrific battle in a military campaign. Perhaps you simply have never bought into the idea of rules or honor when your life is on the line.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- The character is a good fighter, but if you could teach him a few of your tricks, he'd really excel. If either of you attacks the same foe that the other one attacked on his or her last turn, you gain a +1 bonus to any die rolls made.
- The character doesn't seem to approve of your methods. You're each determined to outdo the other in battle to prove that you're right.
- Long ago, the two of you were on opposite sides of a fight. You won, using your particular tactics. Now she's interested in a (friendly) rematch at some point and claims to be ready for you.

Additional Equipment: You have a weapon that is easily hidden and a dose of level 3 poison that inflicts 6 points of damage.

Minor Effect Suggestions: You manage to make your foe trip and fall prone.

Major Effect Suggestions: You tangle something around your foe's legs, and he not only falls down but also loses his next turn.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefits.

Liar: You are trained in all forms of deception. Enabler.

Taking Advantage: When your foe is weakened, dazed, stunned, moved down the damage track, or disadvantaged in some other way, the difficulty of your attacks against that foe is decreased by one step beyond any other modifications due to the disadvantage. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Eye Gouge (2 Speed points): You make an attack against a creature that has at least one eye. The difficulty of the attack is increased by one step, but if you hit, the creature has trouble seeing for the next hour. During this time, the difficulty of the creature's tasks that rely on sight (which is most tasks) is increased by one step.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefits.

Betrayal: Any time you convince a foe that you are not a threat and then suddenly attack it (without provocation), the attack deals 4 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Spot Weakness: If a creature that you can see has a special weakness, such as a vulnerability to fire, a negative modification to perception, or so on, you know what it is. (Ask and the GM will tell you.) Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Mind Games (3 Intellect points): You use lies and trickery against a foe that can understand you. If successful, the foe is stunned for one round and cannot act, and it is dazed in the following round, during which time the difficulty of its tasks is increased by one step.

Tooth and Nail: If, during a melee combat, you are willing to literally bite and claw at a foe in addition to attacking with your normal weapon, you inflict 1 additional point of damage each time you strike with your standard attack. Some creatures (such as automatons or incorporeal creatures) might not be subject to this and attempting to bite some creatures might be dangerous. Enabler.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Exploit the Environment (4 Intellect points): You find some way to use the environment to your advantage in a fight. For the next ten minutes, the difficulty of your attack rolls and Speed defense rolls is decreased by one step. Action to initiate.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Twisting the Knife (4 Speed points): In the round after successfully striking a foe with a melee weapon, you can opt to automatically deal standard damage to the foe with that same weapon without any modifiers (2 points for a light weapon, 4 points for a medium weapon, or 6 points for a heavy weapon). Action.

GM Intrusions

People look poorly upon those who "cheat" or fight without honor. They may join the fight against you or aid your foes. Sometimes a dirty trick backfires, and you end up with a handful of dirt in your eyes instead.

Fights with Panache

You know that style is at least as important as substance. Defeating foes is secondary to looking good while doing it. Some might call you a swashbuckler or daredevil. You leap through the air, make a flourish with your weapon, and attack, usually with a clever, biting show of wit. Your enemies hate you, but your allies adore you. Just watching you fight is entertaining.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- You're always trying to impress the character with your skill, wit, appearance, or bravado. Perhaps she is a rival, perhaps you need her respect, or perhaps you're romantically interested in her.
- The character seems to anticipate your next move almost before you even begin it. When he collaborates with you on the same task or fights the same foe, you gain +1 to any die rolls.
- You fear that the character is jealous of your abilities and worry that it might lead to problems down the road.

Additional Equipment: A set of extremely stylish clothes and a jeweled weapon.



Minor Effect Suggestions: The target is so dazzled by your style that it is dazed for one round, during which time the difficulty of its tasks is increased by one step.

Major Effect Suggestions: Make an additional attack with your weapon on your turn.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefit.

Attack Flourish: With your attack, you add stylish moves, entertaining quips, or a certain something that entertains or impresses others. Choose any number of creatures within short range who can see you; each of them gains a +1 bonus to its next die roll. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Quick Block: While you are wielding a light or medium melee weapon, the difficulty of your Speed defense actions is decreased by one step. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Acrobatic Attack (3 Speed points): You leap into the attack, twisting or flipping through the air. This motion decreases the difficulty of your attack by one step. If you roll a natural 17 or 18, you can choose to have a minor effect rather than deal extra damage. You can't use this ability if your Speed is modified from wearing armor. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Mobile Fighter (3 Speed points): As part of your attack, you can leap on or over obstacles, swing from ropes, run along narrow surfaces, or otherwise move around the battlefield at your normal speed as if such tasks were routine (difficulty 0). You can't use this ability if your Speed is modified from wearing armor. Enabler.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Block for Another: While you are wielding a light or medium melee weapon, you can block attacks made against an ally near you. Choose one creature within immediate range. You decrease the difficulty of that creature's Speed defense actions by one step. You can't use Quick Block while using Block for Another. Enabler.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Agile Wit: When attempting a Speed task, you instead can roll (and spend points) as if it were an Intellect action. If you apply Effort to this task, you can spend points from your Intellect Pool instead of your Speed Pool. Enabler.

GM Intrusions

Looking silly, clumsy, or unattractive can be the swashbuckler's greatest fear. You trip, fall, drop your weapon, or otherwise embarrass yourself, increasing the difficulty of your next action as onlookers laugh. Perhaps your misstep emboldens your foe, decreasing the difficulty of its next action against you.

Fights with Two Weapons

You favor complex fighting techniques that involve wielding two weapons at the same time. You might grip a sword and dagger, pistol and cutlass, or some other combination of weapons. Although this is a difficult style to learn, you have proven equal to the challenge and developed effective tactics to overcome your enemies.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- You have trained with the character so much that if you stand back-to-back in a fight, you both gain a +1 bonus to Speed defense tasks.
- The character always seems to inadvertently foil your actions, or at least make them more difficult. While the PC is within immediate range, the difficulty of any action you take related to this focus is increased by one step.
- You used to loathe the character, but as you have gotten to know him, you find your hostile feelings soften to the point you're growing fond of him… against your better judgment, of course.

Additional Equipment: One light weapon.

Minor Effect Suggestion: The target becomes intimidated and must use its next action to flee.

Major Effect Suggestion: Immediately make an attack with a weapon you're wielding.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefit.

Two-Weapon Attack: While you are wielding two light weapons, you make an attack with each weapon as a single action. The amount of Effort you can apply to a single action is unchanged. As well, the target's Armor applies to each attack. Anything that modifies your attack or damage modifies both attacks unless the effect is specific to a particular weapon. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Double Strike (3 Might points): You must be wielding two weapons to use this ability. Make one attack roll against a single target that is within range of both weapons you're wielding. If you hit, you inflict damage from both weapons plus 2 additional points of damage. The target's Armor applies just once. Action.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Improved Two-Weapon Attack: You may also use your Two-Weapon Attack ability when wielding a light weapon and a medium weapon or two medium weapons. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Dual Defense: While you are wielding two weapons, you are trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Dual Distraction (4 Speed points): Use this ability when you make one or more attacks against a single target while wielding two weapons. The difficulty of all your attacks made as part of

the action is reduced by one step. The next melee attack made by the creature you attacked is hindered (even if the creature attacks someone other than you). As a result, the difficulty of any defense roll against that creature's attack is reduced by one step. Enabler.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Whirling Dervish: When you wield two weapons, you can attack up to six times in one round as a single action, but you must make each attack against a different foe. Make a separate attack roll for each attack. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action, and because you make separate attacks, Armor applies to each of them. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to all attacks (positively or negatively), unless it's specifically tied to one of the weapons, in which case it applies to only half of the attacks. Enabler.

GM Intrusions

With so many strikes and slices, it's easy to imagine a blade snapping in two or a weapon flying loose from its bearer's grip.

Knows a Bit About Everything

A life of research and scholarship has enriched your mind with all kinds of information. You've delved into histories, learned about the world that was, dabbled in the sciences, discovered a bit about magic, and so much more. As much as you have absorbed, you're always eager to add to your store of knowledge and rarely pass up the chance to dig into a previously undiscovered tome.



Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- The character seems impressed by your vast knowledge. You never pass up a chance to weigh in on any topic she happens to be discussing.
- You find the character's lack of education appalling.
- Something about the PC or her actions reminds you of someone you read about a while back. You can't remember who just yet, but you're sure it will come to you.

Additional Equipment: Six books on a variety of subjects.

Minor Effect Suggestions: You use your considerable knowledge to reduce the difficulty of your next action by one step.

Major Effect Suggestions: You can make a free, no-action recovery roll.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefit.

Knowledge Is Power: Choose two noncombat skills in which you are not trained. You are trained in those skills. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Enriched Mind: Add 5 points to your Intellect Pool.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Apply Knowledge: You can assist in any action undertaken by another character and reduce the difficulty by one step. Action.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Advanced Knowledge: Choose two noncombat skills. You are trained in those skills. If you're already trained in those skills, you become specialized in those skills instead. Enabler.

Trivia (5 Intellect points): If you have ten minutes to consult some of your books, you can ask the GM one question and get a general answer. The GM assigns a level to the question, so the more obscure the answer, the more difficult the task. Typically, knowledge that you could find by looking somewhere other than your current location is level 1, and obscure knowledge of the past is level 7. Action.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Smarter Every Day: Add 5 points to your Intellect Pool.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Advanced Knowledge: Choose two noncombat skills. You are trained in those skills. If you're already trained in those skills, you become specialized in those skills instead. Enabler.

Towering Intellect: You are trained in Intellect defense tasks. If you are already trained, you are specialized instead. Enabler.

GM Intrusions

Books burn, get wet, or get lost.
Sometimes books are in error or are misleading.

Leads

Using your natural charisma and perhaps some training, you command others, who follow you willingly. You are a politician, a captain, a leader, or a manager. Your skills allow you to make people do what you want, but you also have the wisdom to know what actions would be best for your followers and allies.

Since you need the respect of others, you probably dress and carry yourself in such a way that inspires, endears, or intimidates. You have a voice suited to barking orders that can be heard even on a noisy battlefield.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- The character was once a follower of yours, but you have since come to think of her as a peer.
- The character introduced you to someone who has become a true friend and trusted ally. That NPC becomes the follower you gain at tier 2.
- Independent and stubborn, the character is not affected by your abilities. You find this fact intriguing, refreshing, or frustrating, as you see fit.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The next time you attempt to command, captivate, or otherwise influence the same foe, the difficulty of the task is decreased by one step.

Major Effect Suggestions: The foe is influenced, captivated, or otherwise affected by your ability for twice as long as normal.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefits.

Good Advice (1 Intellect point): You have a clear mind for determining the best way to proceed. When you give another character (whether PC or NPC) a suggestion involving his next action, that character is trained in that action for one round. Action.

Natural Charisma: You are trained in all social interactions, whether they involve charming someone, learning a person's secrets, or intimidating others. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Follower: You gain a level 2 NPC follower who is completely devoted to you. You and the GM must work out the details of the follower.

You'll probably make rolls for your follower when he takes actions. A follower in combat usually doesn't make separate attacks but helps you with yours. On your action, if the follower is next to you, he serves as an asset for one attack you make on your turn.

If the follower dies, you gain a new one after at least two weeks and proper recruitment. Enabler.

A creature's level determines its target number, health, and damage, unless otherwise stated. So, a level 2 follower has a target number of 6 and a health of 6, and it inflicts 2 points of damage. A level 3 follower has a target number of 9 and a health of 9, and it inflicts 3 points of damage. And so on.



Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefits.

Capable Follower: Your first follower increases to level 3. Enabler.

Command (3 Intellect points): Drawing on all your charisma, you issue a simple command to a single living creature, which attempts to carry out your command as its next action. The creature must be within short range and be able to understand you. The command can't inflict direct harm on the creature or its allies, so "commit suicide" won't work, but "flee" might. In addition, the command requires the creature to take only one action, so "unlock the door" might work, but "unlock the door and run through it" won't. Action.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Capable Follower: Your first follower increases to level 4. Enabler.

Captivate or Inspire: You can use this ability in one of two ways. Either your words keep the attention of all non-hostile NPCs that hear them for as long as you speak, or your words inspire all NPCs (of your choosing) that hear them to function as if they were one level higher for the next hour. Action.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Band of Followers: You gain six level 2 NPC followers who are completely devoted to you. (They are in addition to the follower you gained at second tier.) You and the GM must work out the details of these followers. If a follower dies, you gain a new one after at least two weeks and proper recruitment. Enabler.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Capable Followers: Your first follower increases to level 5. Each of your level 2 followers increases to level 3. Enabler.

Mind of a Leader (6 Intellect points): When you develop a plan that involves your followers, you can ask the GM one very general question about what is likely to happen if you carry out the plan, and you will get a simple, brief answer. Action.

GM Intrusions

Followers fail, betray, lie, become corrupted, get kidnapped, or die.

Lives Beyond the Wall

You dwell in the wilds. You probably have done so most if not all of your life, and have come to understand the mysteries of nature, weather, and survival.

The lands beyond Dragon City are quite dangerous thanks to the roving bands of undead. Living outside the city frees you from the authority of the Dragon Emperor, but it exposes you to nearly constant danger. You develop your abilities to help you survive the countless terrors lying in wait for you.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- The character must be one that lives in the city. You can't help but feel a little contempt for that character and her "civilized" ways, which show disdain for all things natural and (to your mind) true.
- The character is one of the few people that you are completely comfortable being around, and you are often surprised at how easily you let down your guard near him.
- The character once saved you from an uncomfortable social situation, and you still feel grateful.

Additional Equipment: You have an extremely reliable compass.

Minor Effect Suggestions: A foe that is a natural creature flees rather than continue to fight you.

Major Effect Suggestions: A foe that is a natural creature stops fighting you (or does not turn hostile) and instead becomes warily passive.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefits.

Wilderness Life: You are trained in climbing and swimming. Enabler.

Wilderness Lore: You are trained in wilderness navigation and in identifying plants and creatures. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Living off the Land: Given an hour or so, you can always find edible food and potable water in the wilderness. You can even find enough for a small group of people, if need be. Furthermore, since you're so hardy and have gained resistance over time, the difficulty of resisting the effects of natural poisons (such as those from plants or living creatures) is decreased by one step for you. You're also immune to natural diseases. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefits.

Animal Senses and Sensibilities: You are trained in listening and spotting things. In addition, most of the time, the GM should alert you if you're about to walk into an ambush or a trap that is lower than level 3. Enabler.

Wilderness Explorer: While taking any action (including fighting) in the wild, you ignore any penalties due to natural causes such as tall grass, thick brush, rugged terrain, weather, and so on. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Wilderness Awareness (4 Intellect points): Your connection to the natural world extends to a degree that some would call supernatural. While in the wilderness, you can extend your senses up to a mile in any direction and ask the GM a very simple, general question about that area, such as "Where is the ghoul-infested tomb?" or "Is my friend Max still alive?" If the answer you seek is not in the area, you receive no information; otherwise, the GM must answer truthfully. Action.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

The Wild Is on Your Side (5 Intellect points): While you're in the wilderness, foes within short range are tripped by rocks, tangled in vines, bitten by insects, and distracted or confused by small animals. The difficulty of any tasks performed by those foes is increased by one step. This effect lasts for ten minutes. Action to initiate.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Master of the Wild: While you're in the wilderness, your Might Edge, Speed Edge, and Intellect Edge increase by 1. When you make a recovery roll in the wilderness, you recover twice as many points. Enabler.

One with the Wild (6 Intellect points): For the next ten minutes, natural animals and plants within long range will not knowingly harm you or those you designate. You cannot use this ability if you are already in combat with the animals or plants in question. Action to initiate.

GM Intrusions

People in cities and towns sometimes disparage those who look (and smell) like they live in the wilds, believing them to be ignorant or barbaric. A natural terrain feature or plant that you thought was safe turns out to be hazardous, or a natural creature suddenly becomes hostile.

Looks for Trouble

You are a fighter. A scrapper. You like nothing more than to take off the kid gloves and confront your opposition in the most direct way possible. You don't hide, and you don't shirk. You take things head-on in a physical way. Your friends all likely feel better about going into danger with you at their side or watching their back.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- Due to past experiences, you watch over the character. She is your default charge regarding your Protector ability if you have not actively named someone else as your charge.
- If the character is within immediate range when you're in a fight, sometimes she helps, and sometimes she accidentally hinders (50% chance either way, determined per fight). When this character helps, you gain a +1 bonus to all attack rolls. When she hinders, you suffer a –1 penalty to attack rolls.
- You used to be in a relationship with the character, but it's long since over. One or both of you might still feel something for the other, though...

Additional Equipment: A melee weapon of your choice.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The target is dazed for one round, during which time the difficulty of all tasks it performs is increased by one step.

Major Effect Suggestion: You destroy a piece of equipment worn or held by your opponent.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefits.

Brawler: You inflict 1 additional point of damage in melee (including with your bare fists). Enabler.

Wound Tender: You are trained in healing. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefits.

Protector: Designate one character to be your charge. Each round, you can designate a different character to be your charge, but you can have only one at a time. As long as that charge is within immediate range, he gains an asset for Speed defense tasks because you have his back. Enabler.

Straightforward: You are trained in one of the following actions (choose one): breaking things, climbing, jumping, or running. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Lethal Battler: Choose one type of attack in which you are not already trained: light bashing, light bladed, medium bashing, medium bladed, heavy bashing, or heavy bladed. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Knock Out (5 Might points): You make a melee attack that inflicts no damage. Instead, if the attack hits, make a second Might-based roll. If successful, a foe of level 3 or lower is knocked unconscious for one minute. For each level of Effort used, you can affect one higher level of foe, or you can extend the duration for an additional minute. Action.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Epic Fighter: Choose one type of attack in which you are already trained: light bashing, light bladed, medium bashing, medium bladed, heavy bashing, or heavy bladed. You are specialized in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Juggernaut: Add 5 points to your Might Pool. You inflict 1 additional point of damage with melee attacks. Enabler.

True Healer: You are specialized in healing. Enabler.

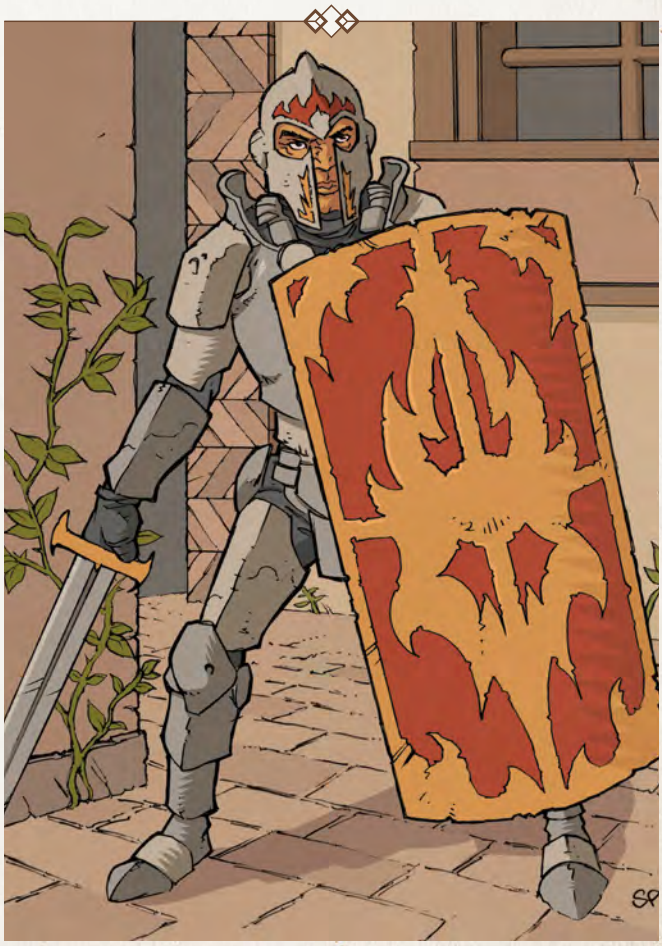
GM Intrusions

Weapons break or fly from even the strongest grip. Brawlers trip and fall. Even the battlefield can work against you, with things falling or collapsing.

Masters Defense

Protecting yourself is obviously important in dangerous situations, and you are particularly good at it. Cautious and prudent, you know a vast number of techniques to defend against all kinds of attacks, both physical and mental. The winner is often the last person standing, and you've done all you can to ensure that person will be you.

You probably carry a shield and wear the best armor you can find.



Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- The character protected you from harm recently and you feel indebted to him for saving your life.
- You once fought the character in a battle. Perhaps she was able to break through your defenses with an unexpected stratagem, or perhaps her confidence was misplaced and you easily warded off her attacks. Either way, it gives you something to talk about.
- The character is your jinx. Whenever she is next to you, the difficulty of your defense tasks is increased by one step. However, you're the opposite for her—when you're next to her, the difficulty of her defense tasks is decreased by one step.

Additional Equipment: A shield and a fine suit of light or medium armor.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You gain a +1 bonus to Intellect, Might, or Speed defense rolls for one round.

Major Effect Suggestion: You gain a +2 bonus to Intellect, Might, or Speed defense rolls for one round.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefit.

Shield Master: When you use a shield, in addition to the asset it gives you to Speed defense tasks, you can act as if you are trained in Speed defense tasks. However, in any round in which you use this benefit, the difficulty of your attacks increases by one step. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefits.

Armor Expert: When you wear any armor, you reduce the Speed cost for wearing armor by 1. Enabler.

Sturdy: You are trained in Might defense tasks. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Dodge and Resist (3 Speed points): You can reroll any of your Might, Speed, or Intellect defense rolls and take the better of the two results. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Armor Master: When you wear any armor, you reduce the Speed cost for wearing armor by 1. This stacks with your Armor Expert benefit. Enabler.

Tower of Will: You are trained in Intellect defense tasks. Enabler.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Nothing but Defend: If you do nothing on your turn but defend, you are specialized in all defense tasks for that one round. Action.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Defense Master: Every time you succeed at a Speed defense task, you can make an immediate attack against your foe. Your attack must be the same type (melee weapon, ranged weapon, or unarmed) as the attack you defend against. If you don't have an appropriate type of weapon ready, you can't use this ability. Enabler.

GM Intrusions

Shields break when hit, as do weapons used to parry. Armor straps break.

Masters Weaponry

You have worked long and hard to master one kind of weapon, such as swords, axes, daggers, whips, or something else. You outmatch all rivals through your superior understanding of fighting techniques with the weapon you favor.

When you select this focus, you must also choose one group of weapons to master. All abilities you gain from this focus apply to weapons of the chosen group.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- If the character is within immediate range when you're in a fight, sometimes she helps, and sometimes she accidentally hinders (50% chance either way, determined per fight). When she helps, you gain +1 to all attack rolls. When she hinders, you suffer a –1 penalty to attack rolls.
- You once saved the character's life, and he clearly feels indebted to you. You wish he didn't; it's all just part of the job.
- The character recently mocked your combat stance. How you deal with this (if at all) is up to you.

Additional Equipment: You have a high-quality weapon of your choice.

Weapon Spells: If you cast spells, your attacks always look like your chosen weapon. For example, a force blast appears to be a large weapon made of force. These alterations change nothing other than the appearance of the effects.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The target is so dazzled by your expertise that it is dazed for one round, during which time the difficulty of all tasks it performs is modified by one step to its detriment.

Major Effect Suggestions: Make an immediate additional attack with the weapon as part of your turn.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefit.

Weapon Master: You deal 1 additional point of damage with your chosen weapon. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Weapon Defense: While you hold your chosen weapon, you are trained in Speed defense rolls. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Rapid Attack (3 Speed points): Once per round, you can make an additional attack with your chosen weapon. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Never Fumble: If you roll a natural 1 when attacking with your chosen weapon, you can ignore or countermand the GM's intrusion for that roll. You can never be disarmed of your chosen weapon, nor will you ever drop it accidentally. Enabler.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Extreme Mastery (4 Might points): When using your chosen weapon, you can reroll any attack roll you wish and take the better of the two results. Enabler.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Damage Dealer: You deal 2 additional points of damage with your chosen weapon. This is on top of the damage from the Weapon Master ability, giving you a total of 3 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Death Dealer (5 Might points): If you strike a foe of level 3 or lower with your chosen weapon, you kill the target instantly. Action.

GM Intrusions

Weapons break. Weapons can be stolen. Weapons can be dropped or forced out of your hand.



Moves Like a Cat

You are extremely dexterous. Your speed and agility make you almost a thing of wonder. Your body is lithe, flexible, and graceful. Your training—and perhaps a bit of magic—allows you to move quickly and smoothly, land safely when you fall, and avoid danger.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- The character irritates you constantly with his clumsiness and loud behavior.
- The character comes from the same place you do, and you knew each other as children. You suffered an accident or injury that the other character witnessed or avoided.
- You aid the character with advice and a helping hand when she needs it. Any time the two of you are next to each other, the difficulty of balancing, climbing, and jumping tasks is decreased by one step for her.

Minor Effect Suggestion: Restore 2 points to your Speed Pool.

Major Effect Suggestion: You can take a second action this round.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefits.

Balance: You are trained in balancing. Enabler.

Reflexes: Add 3 points to your Speed Pool.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefits.

Nimble Moves: You are trained in climbing and jumping. Enabler.

Safe Fall: You reduce the damage from a fall by 5 points. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefits.

Greater Reflexes: Increase your Speed Edge by 1.

Hard to Touch: You are trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Quick Strike (4 Speed points): You make a melee attack with such speed that it is hard for your foe to defend against, and it knocks him off balance. The difficulty of making the attack is decreased by two steps. If the attack hits, the targeted foe is dazed, increasing the difficulty of all its tasks by one step for the next round. Action.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Phenomenal Reflexes: Add 5 points to your Speed Pool.

Slippery: You are trained in escaping any kind of bond or grasp. Enabler.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Burst of Action (6 Speed points): You can take two separate actions this round. Enabler.

GM Intrusions

Even a cat can be clumsy sometimes, especially when overconfident. A well-calculated jump isn't quite as easy as it looks. An escape move is so overzealous that it sends the character right into harm's way.

Murders

The murderous assassin is a master of dealing death. No one is better at sneaking into a location, eliminating a target, and slipping out again. Obviously, a professional killer is not likely to have a lot of friends.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- The character knows your real identity, profession, and background. To all others, the truth about you is a closely guarded secret.
- You were recently approached by someone who wanted to hire you to kill the character. You haven't yet decided whether to take the job or warn her that her life's in danger.
- Pick a second PC. One night after too much celebrating, you loudly claimed responsibility for a murder you didn't commit. The two characters were the only ones who heard. Whether they believe you or not is up to them.

Additional Equipment: You start with a disguise kit and three doses of a level 2 blade poison that inflicts 5 points of damage.

Minor Effect Suggestion: No one but the foe notices that you made the attack.

Major Effect Suggestion: If you have poison amid your belongings, you applied it just before the strike, adding the poison's effects to the normal attack damage.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefits.

Surprise Attack: If you attack from a hidden position, or before an opponent has taken an action in combat, you reduce the difficulty of your attack by one step. On a successful hit with this surprise attack, you inflict 2 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Trained Assassin: You are trained in stealth and disguise tasks. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Quick Death (2 Speed points): You know how to kill quickly. Make a melee or ranged attack. If it hits, the attack deals 4 additional points of damage. You can't use this ability in two consecutive rounds. Action.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefits.

Poison Crafter: You are trained in crafting, sensing, identifying, and resisting poisons. Enabler.

Trained Infiltrator: You are trained in all interactions involving lies or trickery. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Improved Surprise Attack: When you use your Surprise Attack ability, the difficulty of your attack is reduced by two steps instead of one, and you deal 4 additional points of damage instead of 2. Enabler.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Slayer (5 Speed points): With a swift and sudden attack, you strike a foe in a vital spot. Make a melee or ranged attack. If you hit, and the target is level 3 or lower, it is killed outright. Action.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Escape Plan: When you kill a foe, you can attempt a sneaking action to immediately hide from anyone around, assuming a suitable hiding place is nearby. Enabler.

GM Intrusions

Most people do not react well to a professional killer.

Never Says Die

You are as stalwart, hardy, and driven as can be imagined. When others are ready to quit, you're just getting started. You are tough and durable, quick with your fists, and always willing and able to take the punishment needed to get the job done. You might be rough by necessity, having grown up in a seedy, dangerous part of town. Or, you might have a heart of gold and strive to do the right thing even when doing so is bad for your health.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- You feel the overwhelming need to impress the character, although you're not sure why.
- The character seems quite capable, but in your mind, his spirit needs motivating. You're constantly trying to convince him to keep trying, go the distance, and fight the good fight.
- You feel very protective of the character and don't want to see her harmed.

Minor Effect Suggestion: Restore 2 points to your Might Pool.

Major Effect Suggestion: The difficulty of your next action is decreased by two steps.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefits.

Push on Through (2 Might points): You ignore the effects of terrain while moving for one hour. Enabler.

Rapid Recovery: Your ten-minute recovery roll takes one action instead, so that your first two recovery rolls take one action, the third takes one hour, and the fourth takes ten hours. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Ignore the Pain: You ignore the impaired condition of the damage track and treat the debilitated condition as impaired. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Hidden Reserves: When you make a one-action recovery roll, you also add 1 to your Might Edge and Speed Edge for ten minutes thereafter. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Increasing Determination: If you fail at a noncombat physical task (pushing open a door or climbing a cliff, for example) and then retry the same task, the difficulty is reduced by one step. If you fail again, you gain no additional benefits. Enabler.

Outlast the Foe: If you have been in combat for five full rounds, the difficulty of all your actions for the remainder of that combat is decreased by one step, and you deal 1 additional point of damage per attack. Enabler.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Throw Off Affliction (5 Might points): If you are affected by an unwanted condition or affliction (such as disease, paralysis, mind control, broken limb, and so on, but not damage), you can ignore it and act as if it does not affect you for one hour. If the condition would normally last less than an hour, it is entirely negated. Action.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Not Dead Yet: When you would normally die, you instead fall unconscious for one round and then awaken. You immediately gain 1d6 + 6 points (total) to restore your stat Pools and are treated as if debilitated (which for you is like being impaired, thanks to your Ignore the Pain ability) until you rest for ten hours. If you die again before you take your ten-hour recovery roll, you are truly dead. Enabler.

GM Intrusions

Even if you never give up, sometimes your equipment, weapons, or allies do.

Packs Heat

You're a damned fine shot with a gun. You have a keen eye and steady hand, hitting the hardest targets. All the time you spent practicing with your weapon also gave you nerves of steel, so you don't lose your head when the bullets start flying.

Firearms are common enough in Dragon City that just about anyone might be packing heat. You might be a member of the Guard, a gin-soaked private detective, or someone who's only comfortable when carrying.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- Not long ago, you found yourself in a gunfight and accidentally shot the character. The player should decide whether his character resents, fears, or forgives you.
- He always seems to get in the way when you're trying to pick out a target. If the character is within immediate range of your target when you make an attack with a firearm and the GM rules that you struck someone other than your intended target, the PC gets hit instead.
- From what you have seen so far, the character needs some advice on how to handle a firearm.

Additional Equipment: A pistol with ammunition.

Minor Effect Suggestion: A glancing shot to the target's head causes it to become deafened for a few minutes.

Major Effect Suggestion: You hit the target in a vulnerable spot, causing it to bleed or suffer some other injury that causes it to take 1 point of damage each round for the next three rounds.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefits.

Steady Hand: You inflict 1 additional point of damage with guns. Enabler.

Practiced with Guns: You can use all types of guns without penalty. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Careful Shot: You can spend points from either your Speed Pool or your Intellect Pool to apply levels of Effort to increase your gun damage. Each level of Effort adds 3 points of damage to a successful attack. If you spend a turn lining up your shot, each level of Effort instead adds 5 points of damage to a successful attack. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you may choose either Firearm Training or Spray as a benefit.

Firearm Training: You are trained in attacks using guns. Enabler.

Spray (2 Speed points): If a weapon has the ability to fire rapid shots without reloading (usually called a rapid-fire weapon, such as the automatic pistol), you can spray multiple shots around your target to increase the chance of hitting. The difficulty





of the attack roll is decreased by one step. If the attack is successful, it deals 1 less point of damage than normal. After you resolve the attack, roll a d6. On a 3 or less, you run out of ammunition. Action.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Snap Shot: You can make two attacks with the same firearm as a single action, but the difficulty of the second attack is increased by two steps. Enabler.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you may choose either Firearm Specialization or Arc Spray as a benefit.

Firearm Specialization: You are trained in attacks using guns. If you are already trained with guns, you are specialized instead. Enabler.

Arc Spray (3 Speed points): If a weapon has the ability to fire rapid shots without reloading (usually called a rapid-fire weapon, such as the submachine gun), you can fire your weapon at up to three targets (all next to one another) as a single action. Make a separate attack roll against each target. The difficulty of each attack is increased by one step. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to all of these attacks. Action.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Trick Shot: When you hit a target with your gun attack, you can choose to reduce the damage by 1 point but hit the target in a precise spot. Enabler.

Some of the possible effects of this ability include (but are not limited to):

- You can shoot an object out of someone's hand.
- You can shoot the leg, wing, or other limb that the target uses to move, reducing its maximum movement speed to immediate for a few days or until it receives expert medical care.
- You can shoot a strap or buckle holding a backpack, armor, or similarly strapped-on item so that it falls off.

GM Intrusions

Misfire or jam! The attack fails and the action is lost, plus an additional action is needed to repair the weapon.

Performs Feats of Strength

A lifetime of physical training has rewarded you with incredible power. Your muscles ripple beneath your skin, evident in your extraordinary build and frame, and you can do things others would not dream possible. You can haul incredible weight, hurl your body through the air, and punch through doors.

Superior strength can manifest in many ways. You could have the physique of a bodybuilder, almost godlike in its perfection, or you might be a lumbering, hulking monster of a person, as heavy with fat as you are with muscle. Then again, you could be short and wiry, your strength belied by your slight frame.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- You have been friends with the character for as long as you can remember. You often heed her advice and guidance. Around her, you are a gentle giant.
- For some reason—nerves, perhaps, or attraction—the character makes you feel weak in the knees. You prefer if he stays out of immediate range when you're in combat.
- You once carried the character from combat after he was wounded. Whether he feels embarrassment, gratitude, or something else is up to him.

Additional Equipment: You have a heavy weapon.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You knock the target to the ground.

Major Effect Suggestion: You send the target flying through the air so that it lands on the ground in a heap 1d20 feet away from you.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefits.

Athlete: You are trained in carrying, climbing, jumping, and smashing. Enabler.

Strong: Increase your Might Edge by 1.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Feat of Strength (1 Might point): The difficulty of any task that depends on brute force is decreased by one step. Examples include smashing down a barred door, tearing open a locked container, lifting or moving a heavy object, or striking someone with a melee weapon. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefits.

Iron Fist: Your unarmed attacks deal 4 points of damage. Enabler.

Throw (2 Might points): When you deal damage to a creature of your size or smaller with an unarmed attack, you can choose to throw that creature up to 1d20 feet away from you. The creature lands prone. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Powerful: Add 5 points to your Might Pool.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Brute Strike (4 Might points): You deal 4 additional points of damage with all melee attacks until the end of the next round. Enabler.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Unstoppable (5 Might points): Until the end of the next round, you can move through solid objects such as doors and walls. Only 2 feet of wood, 1 foot of stone, or 6 inches of metal can stop your movement. Enabler.

GM Intrusions

A strong character might not realize her own strength and accidentally damage or destroy a delicate object she handles.

Rages

Your anger is as a living thing inside you, a monster that howls to be released. When you lose control, even for a moment, the fury takes over, transforming you into a ferocious killer. As your anger builds, so does the destruction you create.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- The character knows a secret about your past that is tied to your Frenzy ability.
- The first time you went into a frenzy was in an attempt to save the character's loved one from an attack. You failed, partly because of your inexperience.
- The character is terrified by your rage and sometimes can't help but flee or cower at inopportune times.

Minor Effect Suggestion: When fighting multiple foes, you knock one into another, putting both off balance. As a result, treat both foes as one level lower for one round.

Major Effect Suggestion: Your foe is terrified of your rage and uses his next two actions to flee from you.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefit.

Frenzy (1 Intellect point): During combat, you can choose to enter a state of frenzy. While in this state, you can't voluntarily spend points from your Intellect Pool, but your Might Edge and your Speed Edge each increase by 1. This effect lasts for as long as you wish, but it ends if no combat is taking place within range of your senses. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefits.

Hardy: Add 5 points to your Might Pool. However, these additional points can be used only to absorb damage. You can't spend them to apply Effort to rolls.

Mobile Fighter: You are trained in climbing and jumping actions. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefits.

Powerful Strike (3 Might points): If you successfully attack a target, you knock it prone, in addition to inflicting damage. The target must be your size or smaller. You can knock down a target larger than you if you apply a level of Effort to do so (rather than to decrease the difficulty of the attack). Enabler.

Unarmored Fighter: While unarmored, you are trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Greater Frenzy (4 Intellect points): During combat, you can enter a state of greater frenzy. While in this state, you can't voluntarily spend points from your Intellect Pool, but your Might Edge and your Speed Edge each increase by 2. This effect lasts for as long as you wish, but it ends if no combat is taking place within range of your senses. You can use this ability or your first-tier Frenzy ability, but you can't use both at the same time. Enabler.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Attack and Attack Again: When you make an attack and roll a natural 17 or higher, rather than gaining additional damage or a minor or major effect, you may instead immediately make another attack. You may not use this ability a second time as part of the same action. Enabler.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Tough and Fast: Add 6 points to your Might Pool and 6 points to your Speed Pool.

GM Intrusions

It's easy for a berserker to lose control and attack friend as well as foe.

Separates Mind from Body

Your mind is to your body as a captain is to her ship. Your body obeys your commands, moving and behaving as you direct it, but at any time you choose, your mind can wriggle free from its container and explore the world freely. When projecting your mind, there are few places you cannot go, few secrets that remain hidden from you.



Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- Through a quirk of fate or careful cultivation of your awareness (your choice), you always know where the chosen character is in relation to you. You are always aware of the direction and distance you must travel to reach him.
- Pick a second PC. You believe that while using your Third Eye power, you once saw the two chosen characters engaged in something covert and possibly illegal. It's up to those characters whether one, both, or neither were actually involved.
- For reasons you do not understand, your focus abilities do not function when the chosen character is next to you and in your field of vision.

Additional Equipment: You possess a silvery ball about 3 inches in diameter. The ball's highly polished surface looks as if it reflects your surroundings but examining its surface reveals that it reflects the surroundings of another location, one you have not yet found. In the images shown on the ball, you see many strange and unsettling things.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You have an asset on any action that involves using your senses, such as perceiving or attacking, until the end of the next round.

Major Effect Suggestion: Your Intellect Edge increases by 1 until the end of the next round.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefit.

Third Eye (1 Intellect point): You visualize a place within short range and cast your mind to that place, creating an immobile, invisible sensor for one minute, or until you choose to end this ability. While using your third eye, you see through your sensor instead of using your normal visual abilities. You may perceive the area around your body using your other senses as normal. Action to initiate.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefits.

Open Mind (3 Intellect points): You open your mind to increase your awareness. The difficulty of any task involving perception is decreased by one step. While you have this asset and are conscious and able to take actions, other characters gain no benefit for surprising you. The effect lasts for one hour. Action to initiate.

Sharp Senses: You are trained in all actions involving perception. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Roaming Third Eye (3 Intellect points): When you use your Third Eye ability, you can place the sensor anywhere within long range. In addition, until that ability ends, you can use an action to move the sensor anywhere within short range of its starting position. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Sensor (4 Intellect points): You create an immobile, invisible sensor within immediate range that lasts for twenty-four hours. At any time during that duration, you can concentrate to see, hear, and smell through the sensor, no matter how far you

move from it. The sensor doesn't grant you sensory capabilities beyond the norm. If you already have the sensor ability from another source, it lasts for 48 hours when you create it. Action to create; action to check.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Improved Sensor (2 Intellect points): When you use Sensor, you can place the sensor anywhere you choose within long range. Enabler.

Psychic Passenger (6 Intellect points): You place your mind into the body of a willing creature you choose within short range and remain in that body for up to one hour. Your own body falls down and becomes insensate until this ability ends.

You see, hear, smell, touch, and taste using the senses of the character whose body you inhabit. When you speak, the words come from your defenseless body, and the character you inhabit hears those words in his mind.

The character you inhabit can use your Intellect Edge in place of his own. In addition, you and the character have an asset on any task that involves perception.

When you take an action, you use the character's body to perform that action if he allows it. Action to initiate.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Mental Projection (6+ Intellect points): Your mind fully leaves your body and manifests anywhere you choose within immediate range. Your projected mind can remain apart from your body for up to twenty-four hours. This effect ends early if your Intellect Pool is reduced to 0 or if your projection touches your resting body.

Your disembodied mind has a form that looks just like you. It has little physical substance, however, and its frayed edges trail off into nothingness. You control this body as if it were your normal body and can act and move as you normally would, with a few exceptions.

You can move through solid objects as if they weren't there, and you ignore any terrain feature that would impede your movement.

Your attacks deal half damage, and you take half damage from physical sources. Regardless of the source, however, you take all damage as Intellect damage.

Your mind can travel up to 1 mile from your body. Instead of applying Effort to decrease the difficulty, you can extend the range that you can travel by 1 mile for each level of Effort you apply.

Your physical body is helpless until this effect ends. You cannot use your senses to perceive anything. For example, your body could sustain a significant injury, and you wouldn't know it. Your body cannot take Intellect damage, so if your body takes enough damage to reduce both your Might Pool and your Speed Pool to 0, your mind snaps back to your body, and you are stunned until the end of the next round as you try to reorient yourself to your predicament. Action to initiate.

GM Intrusions

Reuniting mind and body can sometimes be disorienting. This may require the character to spend a few moments to get her bearings.

Slays Undead

Undead are the greatest threat to the world. They have overrun cities, conquered the countryside, and driven the survivors behind the walls of the few last great cities. If there is hope for the future, the undead must be eradicated—and you have pledged your life to accomplishing this goal.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- The character has had experiences with undead in the past, and you'd like to know more about them.
- The character doesn't understand just how dangerous and horrible undead can be.
- Undead are sometimes drawn to certain people. They always seem to attack them first and with more fervor. The character appears to be one such person.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You can immediately move up to a short distance after this action.

Major Effect Suggestion: You can immediately take a second action during this turn.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefits.

Return to the Grave: You inflict 2 additional points of damage when fighting undead. Enabler.

Undead Lore: You are trained in the names, habits, suspected lairs, and related topics regarding undead. Enabler.

Undead Tracker and Hunter: When tracking, looking for, interacting with, or hiding from undead, the difficulty of your actions is decreased by one step. This does not apply to attack or defense rolls. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefits.

Expert Combatant: Choose one type of attack in which you are not already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler.

Sense Undead (2 Intellect points): Through scent, specific signs, and past experience, you know whether undead are currently within long range, and for the next hour, you become aware of their general presence (but not their exact location) if any undead come within long range of you. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Horde Fighting: When two or more foes attack you at once in melee, you can use them against each other. The difficulty of your Speed defense rolls or attack rolls (your choice) against these foes is reduced by one step. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Improved Undead Fighter: You inflict 3 additional points of damage when fighting undead. Enabler.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Undead Slayer: When fighting undead, the difficulty of all your attack rolls and defense rolls is decreased by one step. Enabler.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Master Combatant: Choose one type of attack in which you are already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are specialized in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler.

GM Intrusions

Undead, even mindless ones, may possess abilities you don't know about. They sometimes hunt you instead of the other way around.



Solves Mysteries

You are a master of deduction. With a keen eye for detail and a quick wit, you can use a selection of clues to figure out what really happened when others are left scratching their heads. You might be a detective or an investigator, or you could be a professor or even an arcanist focused on magical mysteries.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- The character sought you out after learning about several fascinating cases that you wound up solving. Since then, he has become your constant companion and closest friend.
- The character does not seem to trust or like you, but you feel compelled to win him over by proving your intellectual superiority.
- The character is a good sounding board for your theories. After you talk to her for an hour, you gain an asset on any knowledge-based task you are trained in.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You discover an additional clue about the mystery you are attempting to solve.

Major Effect Suggestion: When you solve a mystery, the target of your revelation is stunned by your dazzling wit, unable to move or act for a round.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefits.

Investigator: You can spend points from your Might Pool, Speed Pool, or Intellect Pool to apply levels of Effort to any Intellect-based task. (You may not apply your Might or Speed Edge to the task, however.) Enabler.

Sleuth: Finding the clues is the first step in solving a mystery. You are trained in tasks involving perception and investigation. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Out of Harm's Way: Knowing how to survive is more than half the battle. You are trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

You Studied: You are trained in two areas of knowledge of your choosing (as long as they are not physical actions or combat related), or you become specialized in one area of knowledge in which you are already trained. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Draw Conclusion (3 Intellect points): After careful observation and investigation (questioning one or more NPCs on a topic, searching an area or a file, and so on) lasting a few minutes, you can learn a pertinent fact. This ability is a difficulty 3 Intellect task. Each additional time you use this ability, the task difficulty increases by one step. The difficulty returns to 3 after you rest for ten hours. Action.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Defuse Situation (3 Intellect points): During the course of an investigation, your questions sometimes elicit an angry or even violent response. Through dissembling, verbal distraction, or similar evasion, you prevent a living foe from attacking anyone or anything for one round. Action.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Seize the Initiative (5 Intellect points): Within one minute of successfully using your Draw Conclusion ability, you can take one additional, immediate action, which you can take out of turn. After using this ability, you can't use it again until after your next ten-hour recovery roll. Enabler.

GM Intrusions

Evidence disappears, red herrings confuse, and witnesses lie. Initial research can be faulty.

Throws with Deadly Accuracy

Sometimes you wonder if your hand and your mind's eye are connected in an intricate combination of timing and aim. Everything that leaves your hand goes exactly where you'd like it to and at the range and speed to make the perfect impact. Your expertise might be in carefully crafted throwing daggers and shuriken, or perhaps you use whatever's nearby.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- The character once saved you from a dangerous situation.
- You owe the character a significant amount of money.
- The character always seems to step in front of your projectiles at the worst possible moment. If the character is within immediate range of your target when you make an attack with a thrown weapon and the GM rules that you struck someone other than your intended target, the PC gets hit instead.

Additional Equipment: You have three throwing weapons of your choice.





Minor Effect Suggestion: You hit your target in the eye and blind him for one round.

Major Effect Suggestion: You strike your target in a limb, making that limb useless for the next minute.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefit.

Precision: You deal 2 additional points of damage with attacks using thrown weapons. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Careful Aim: You are trained in attacks with all thrown weapons. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Rapid Fire (2 Speed points): When you make an attack by throwing a light weapon, you can draw another light weapon and make another thrown attack against the same target or a different target as part of the same action. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Everything Is a Weapon: You can take any small object—a coin, a pen, a bottle, a stone, and so on—and throw it with such force and precision that it inflicts damage as a light weapon. Enabler.

Killer Accuracy: You are specialized in attacks with all thrown weapons. Enabler.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Spray Attack (5 Speed points): With a large handful of small objects—tiny knives, shuriken, stones, jagged bits of metal, coins, or whatever is on hand—you attack every creature in an immediate area within short range. You must make attack rolls against each target. The difficulty of each attack is increased by one step. You inflict 3 points of damage on targets you hit. If you apply Effort to increase the damage of this attack, increase the damage by 2 points per level of Effort applied (instead of 3 points). Action.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefits.

Force and Accuracy: You inflict 3 additional points of damage with attacks using thrown weapons. Enabler.

GM Intrusions

Missed attacks strike the wrong target.
Ricochets can be dangerous. Improvised weapons break.

Works the Back Alleys

The thief, the burglar, the pickpocket: these are the dangerous individuals who haunt the back alleys of every community. You are a thief in a city or town, making your livelihood at the expense of the wealthy. Your talents, however, prepare you for all kinds of pursuits, even when you're not crouching in an alley or climbing into a window.

Connection: Choose another PC and select one of the options below to describe your relationship with that character.

- The character knew you beforehand and convinced you to leave your life of crime for other pursuits—at least temporarily.
- A while back, you attempted to "borrow" something from the character, but she caught you in the act. You managed to convince her that it was a simple misunderstanding, but she may not entirely trust you.
- The character knows your real identity (if it's a secret) or that you work undercover (if it's a secret) and has kept the knowledge to herself so far. It's up to her whether she continues to do so.

Additional Equipment: You start with a bag of light tools.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You can immediately attempt to hide after this action.

Major Effect Suggestion: You can immediately take a second action during this turn.

First Tier

At the first tier, you gain the following benefit.

Thief: You are trained in actions involving stealth, pickpocketing, disabling or disarming traps and alarms, and picking locks. Enabler.

Second Tier

At the second tier, you gain the following benefit.

Underworld Contacts: You know many people in Dragon City who engage in illegal activities. These people are not necessarily your friends, and might not be trustworthy, but they recognize you as a peer. You and the GM should work out the details of your underworld contacts and what resources they can provide (information, access to special items or restricted places, and so forth). Your contacts are not generally willing to put themselves in harm's way on your behalf unless the circumstances are truly exceptional. The GM also determines what your contacts ask of you in return for their goods and services. Enabler.

Third Tier

At the third tier, you gain the following benefit.

Pull a Fast One (3 Intellect points): When you're running a con, picking a pocket, fooling or tricking a dupe, sneaking something by a guard, and so on, you treat the task as if it were one level lower. Enabler.

Fourth Tier

At the fourth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Master Thief: You are trained in climbing, escaping from bonds, slipping through narrow places, and other contortionist moves. Enabler.

Fifth Tier

At the fifth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Dirty Fighter (2 Speed points): You distract, blind, annoy, hamper, or otherwise interfere with a foe. For the next minute, the difficulty of all your defense rolls and attack rolls made against that foe is reduced by one step. Action.

Sixth Tier

At the sixth tier, you gain the following benefit.

Alley Rat (4 Intellect points): While you are in an urban environment, you find or create a significant shortcut, secret entrance, or emergency escape route where it looked like none existed. You and the GM should work out the details. Action.

GM Intrusions

When things go wrong for thieves, they end up in jail. Even when things go right, thieves can earn the enmity of powerful people, including criminals.





Chapter 8: Equipment

Dragon City stands at the crossroads of magic and technology. In fact, magic has long been the driving force behind technological innovation, so much so that many people take for granted the conveniences of glowglobes, flying carpets, and lifters that work like elevators in our own world.

This chapter highlights an assortment of items one might find for sale in Dragon City. More dangerous and magical items such as cyphers, artifacts, and oddities are covered in detail later in this book.

Starting Equipment

All characters start the game with all of the following equipment. You might also gain additional equipment from your focus and descriptor.

- Normal clothing
- A suit of light armor
- Any two weapons
- An explorer's pack
- Either a bag of tools or a set of lock picks
- Two cyphers chosen for you by the GM
- One trinket chosen for you by the GM

Currency

Dragon City uses many different forms of currency, though the gold coin is the standard. This coin typically bears a dragon on one side and the city's skyline on the other. Coins recovered from outside the city tend to be stamped with individuals and locations important to the people who minted them.

Dragon City also uses silver coins, copper coins, and the rare red-gold coins, even one of which is worth a fortune (most people will never see a red-gold coin in their lives). The exchange rate for the city's currency is:

1 red-gold = 100 gold | 1 gold = 10 silver | 1 silver = 10 copper

In addition to coins, many people trade goods and services. The exact value of these commodities depends on the demand for them and is something to be agreed upon by the trading parties.

Carrying Limits

Use common sense when it comes to determining how much your character can carry. Exact weights and measurements for the various items are not specified since they vary from item to item based on general size and materials. The game wouldn't be

made more fun if you had to assign a precise weight to every single item your character might possess. So, rather than using strict accounting, just assume that your character can carry a reasonable amount of equipment—something in each hand, clothing, perhaps a few sacks or pouches, and a roomy pack on your back filled to capacity. If you exceed these limits, or if a specific item would obviously be very heavy or bulky, the GM may decide you're carrying too much.



If a character wants to lift a heavy or bulky object for a short time, the GM may assign a difficulty to the task and call for a Might action. If a character carries a heavy or bulky object or is loaded down with a large number of objects for an extended period of time, the GM can assign the burden a Speed Effort cost and/or reduce the distance the character can move per turn as seems appropriate.

A burden should be classified as light, medium, or heavy. Typically, a light burden has no effect, a medium burden increases the cost of applying Speed Effort by 1 point per level of Effort, and a heavy burden increases the cost of applying Speed Effort by 2 points per level of Effort and also reduces the character's movement speed (for example, moving an immediate distance may take the character's entire turn, moving a short distance takes their entire turn and forces the character to make a roll to see if she slips, trips, or stumbles for trying to move so far while heavily encumbered). If the character is already wearing armor, simply add the Speed Effort increase from the burden to that of the armor. Benefits that reduce the penalty for wearing armor generally do not also reduce the penalty for carrying a burden, although the GM may rule otherwise if it makes sense for a particular situation.

Equipment Lists and Prices

In the following sections you'll find equipment commonly available in Dragon City. The listed prices represent the price to purchase a typical example of the item (in other words, most items available for purchase are of average quality). Of course, availability and craftsmanship vary from district to district and even from seller to seller. In some places, higher-quality or lower-quality items may be the norm; these items should cost more or less than the listed prices, as determined by the GM. A superior piece of equipment could grant a +1 bonus to die rolls or even count as an asset for appropriate tasks, while an inferior item would have correspondingly negative effects. You get what you pay for.

Adding Equipment

The equipment list in this chapter is by no means exhaustive and many other items of interest should be available. Dragon City's technology level is about the same as that found in the United States during the late 19th century. You'll typically find pistols and rifles in place of bows and crossbows; a character is more likely to pull out a box of matches than flint and steel.

Items that are powered by electricity in our world are powered by magic in Dragon City. The city's artificers have managed to produce many wondrous items whose capabilities match or exceed what would have been available on Earth.

To determine the price of items not listed here, look for an item of similar function and assign a similar value. You can also look online for historical Earth references and adapt them as needed: for example, it's not difficult to find *Sears Roebuck & Company* catalogues from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The game assumes that 1 gold coin has an equivalent purchasing power to that of 1 US dollar in the late 1890s.

Armor

The introduction of gunpowder changed how people fight, the equipment they use, and the armor they wear. Chainmail and plate armor have largely slipped into the past and are usually worn only for ceremonial occasions. However, some characters still master the use of armor; when worn by an expert or infused with proper magic, even the humblest covering may be able to stop a bullet.

Armor

Light (1 point of Armor)	Price
Leather Coat	1 gold
Hides and furs	5 silver

Medium (2 points of Armor)	Price
Brigandine	3 gold
Mail	4 gold

Heavy (3 points of Armor)	Price
Breast Plate	5 gold

Wearing Armor

You can only benefit from wearing one type of armor at a time—if you wear mail and a breastplate at the same time, for example, you gain the higher of the two Armor bonuses, not the sum.

However, Armor bonuses from different sources are cumulative. For example, if you benefit from a spell that gives you +1 to Armor and you have a cypher that grants another +1 to Armor, you have a total of +2 to Armor—and both of these bonuses may be applied on top of whatever physical armor you are wearing.

Effects of Wearing Armor

Anyone can wear armor, but it can be taxing if you don't know how to wear it properly. Wearing armor increases the cost of applying Effort when attempting a Speed-based action. So, if you're wearing light armor and want to use two levels of Effort on a Speed-based roll to run across difficult terrain, it costs 7 points from your Speed Pool rather than 5 (3 for the first level of Effort,

plus 2 for the second level of Effort, plus 1 per level for wearing light armor). Edge reduces the overall cost as normal.

The following table shows the additional Speed Effort cost associated with each type of armor. These costs assume that you are properly trained. If you wear armor that you don't know how to use correctly, you still gain the Armor benefit, but the listed Speed Effort cost is further increased by 1. Having experience with a type of armor is called *being practiced with the armor*.

Speed Effort

Armor	Additional Cost
Light	+1
Medium	+2
Heavy	+3

Weapons

Not all characters are familiar with all weapons. Veterans know their way around most types, but freelancers prefer light or medium weapons, and wizards usually stick to light weapons.

If you wield a weapon that you have no experience with, the difficulty of making an attack with that weapon is increased by one step. Having experience with a weapon is called *being practiced with the weapon*.

Using Weapons

All characters in *Shotguns & Sorcery* are practiced with one or more groups of weapons. Being practiced with a weapon means you know how to use it effectively. If you attack with a weapon in which you are not practiced, you increase the difficulty for the attack by one step. For each category of weapon higher than the category with which you are practiced, you increase the difficulty by one additional step. So, if you are practiced with light weapons and attack with a medium weapon, you increase the difficulty for that attack by one step. If you are practiced with light weapons and you attack with a heavy weapon, you increase the difficulty for that attack by two steps.

Light weapons inflict 2 points of damage, but they reduce the difficulty of the attack roll by one step because they are fast and easy to use. Light weapons include punches, kicks, knives, handaxes, darts, and so on. Any weapon that is small enough to conceal in one hand counts as a light weapon.

Weapons

Light Weapons (2 points of damage)	Notes	Price
Club		—
Dagger or knife	This weapon can be thrown up to short range	2 silver
Hatchet	This weapon can be thrown up to short range	1 silver
Light pistol or revolver	Long range, This weapon uses ammunition	5 gold
Machete		1 silver
Rapier		12 gold
Staff	This weapon is typically used wielding two hands	5 silver
Unarmed (punch, kick, head butt)		—
Whip		3 silver

Medium Weapons (4 points of damage)	Notes	Price
Axe		5 silver
Bow	Long range, This weapon uses ammunition	5 gold
Crossbow	Long range, This weapon uses ammunition	7 gold
Flail		1 gold
Hammer		5 silver
Heavy pistol or revolver	Long range, This weapon uses ammunition	10 gold
Javelin	Long range	2 silver
Mace		5 silver
Submachine gun	Rapid-fire weapon, This weapon uses ammunition	25 gold
Spear	This weapon can be thrown up to long range	5 silver
Sword		10 gold

Heavy Weapons (6 points of damage)	Notes	Price
Greatsword	This weapon is typically used wielding two hands	50 gold
Machine gun	Rapid-fire weapon, This weapon is typically used wielding two hands, This weapon uses ammunition	50 gold
Rifle	Long range, This weapon is typically used wielding two hands, This weapon uses ammunition	10 gold
Shotgun	Immediate range, This weapon uses ammunition	15 gold

Medium weapons inflict 4 points of damage. Medium weapons include battleaxes, maces, swords, crossbows, spears, pistols, submachine guns, and so on. Most weapons are medium. Anything that could be used in one hand (even if it's often used in two hands, such as a quarterstaff or spear) counts as a medium weapon. You might be able to conceal a medium weapon somewhere on your person, but not in your hand.

Heavy weapons inflict 6 points of damage and you must use two hands to attack with them. Heavy weapons are huge swords, great hammers, massive axes, halberds, heavy crossbows, rifles, shotguns, machine guns, and so on. Anything that must be used in two hands counts as a heavy weapon. It's very difficult, and often impossible, to conceal a heavy weapon.

Ammunition: Bows, crossbows, rifles, and shotguns all use ammunition. The cost of basic ammunition is included in the weapon's price. There's no need to track each arrow, bolt, or bullet: you either have ammunition or you don't. If you make an attack with a weapon that uses ammunition and the result is a GM intrusion, you run out of ammunition. You can replenish your stores of ammunition by paying 25% of the weapon's purchase price. (You might also be able to craft your own ammunition if you have the proper training and raw materials.)

Pieces of special ammunition must be tracked individually. Even if you have silver bullets, you don't have an unlimited supply: you need to make each shot count.

When the result of your attack roll is a GM intrusion, you run out of ammunition. You can replenish your stores of ammunition by paying 25% of the weapon's purchase price.

Further Information

Certain items require a bit more information to help you use them.

Mundane Equipment

Mundane equipment includes most common items one is likely to find for sale.

Adventurer's Pack: An adventurer's pack includes an assortment of tools and supplies to help travelers make their way through the wilderness. It typically includes a few days of rations, a coil of rope (50 feet), a waterskin, a spare set of clothes, a couple of torches, flint and steel, a hammer, a few spikes, and a small knife.

Bag of Tools: A bag of tools includes all the necessary equipment to perform a particular trade. A bag of tools for a carpenter would include a hammer, box of nails, bottle of glue, lathe, and similar equipment.

Brass Knuckles: Your unarmed attacks inflict 1 additional point of damage while you wear brass knuckles.

Crowbar: A crowbar provides an asset to rolls made to open locked or stuck doors or containers. It also makes a fine improvised weapon.

Disguise Kit: The kit contains cosmetics, prosthetics, and props used to create a reasonable disguise. Using this kit provides an asset for disguise rolls.

First Aid Kit: This medicine bag contains bandages, ointments, and other materials to tend wounds. Using a first aid kit provides an asset to healing tasks.

Equipment

Mundane Item	Price
Adventurer's pack	3 gold
Backpack	8 silver
Bag (carpet or duffel)	5 silver
Box of tools*	20 gold
Bedroll	1 gold
Blanket	2 silver
Booze (glass)	5+ copper
Booze (bottle)	2+ silver
Box of Matches (20)	5 copper
Brass Knuckles	1 silver
Camp Stove	3 silver
Canteen	1 silver
Clothes (includes footwear)	5+ silver
Clothing, cold weather	2+ gold
Clothing, explorer's	5 gold
Compass	2 gold
Crowbar*	5 silver
Deck of cards, gaming tiles, or dice	1 silver
Disguise kit*	5 gold
First aid kit*	15 gold
Flask of oil	1 silver
Folding knife	2 silver
Grappling hook	5 silver
Lantern*	1 gold
Lamp, miner's*	2 silver
Lock picks	4 gold
Magnifying glass*	3 gold
Manacles	1 gold
Meal, bare sustenance	1 copper
Meal, decent	1+ silver
Meal, extravagant	1+ gold
Mess kit	5 silver
Musical instrument	2+ gold
Pocket watch	5+ gold
Rations, travel (one day)	1 silver
Rope (100 feet)	5 silver
Sack or belt pouch	5 copper
Shield*	3 gold
Shovel, pick, or similar tool	5 silver
Spyglass	10 gold
Tent (2-person capacity)	15 gold
Torches (2)	5 copper

Magical Item	Price
Dragon Essence*	10 gold
Dragonfire*	1 gold
Glowglobe*	2 gold
Spotglow*	1 gold
Wand*	1 gold

* See Further Information for additional details about this item

Lantern: A lantern filled with oil provides light for four hours.

Lamp, Miner's: Designed to be worn on the head; filled with oil, it burns for two hours.

Magnifying Glass: Using a magnifying glass provides an asset to perception tasks that involve closely examining something.

Shield: While you have a shield equipped, it provides you with an asset for Speed defense tasks.

Spyglass: A spyglass magnifies objects viewed through it by five times. At the GM's discretion, it may provide an asset for perception tasks that involve seeing something far away.

Magical Equipment

Here is a selection of magical items readily available in Dragon City.

Dragon Essence: Ingesting these dragon scale shavings gives an intense magical boost that makes one feel charged and full of energy. A dose of essence increases your Intellect stat pool by 5 points. After one hour, your Intellect stat pool drops by 5 points (this can cause you to drop to 0 and become impaired or worse). Dragon essence is illegal in Dragon City and possessing it carries a penalty many times greater than its price.

Dragonfire: Whisky infused with dragon essence, dragonfire looks like brown liquor with sparks of blue flame circling through it. Wizards use this potion to restore their mojo. A draught of dragonfire grants you a recovery roll, but the points regained only apply to your Intellect stat pool. For one hour after you imbibe dragonfire, the difficulty of your Speed tasks increases by one step.

Glowglobes and Spotglows: These magical devices light up when touched and stay lit until tapped again. A glowglobe lights the entire area within short range, while a spotglow emits light out to a long distance along a 3-foot-wide path, similar to a flashlight.

Wand: Most wizards carry wands to help focus their magic. A wand increases the wielder's Intellect Edge by 1, but only for casting spells.





Part 3: Playing the Game



Chapter 9: Game Rules

Games of *Shotguns & Sorcery* take place within the imaginations of everyone playing. The GM sets the scene, the players state what their characters attempt to do, and the GM determines what happens next. The GM decides what happens and what doesn't, using the rules and the dice to advance the story when the outcome is not clear. The rules and the dice help make the game run smoothly, but it's the people, not the rules or the dice, that direct the action and determine the story—and the fun. If a rule gets in the way or detracts from the game, the players and the GM should work together to change it.

This is how you play Shotguns & Sorcery:

1. The player tells the GM what she wants to do. This is a *character action*.
2. The GM determines if that action is routine (and therefore works without needing a roll) or if there's a chance of failure.
3. If there is a chance of failure, the GM determines which stat the task uses: Might, Speed, or Intellect, and the task's difficulty—how hard it is on a scale from 1 (really easy) to 10 (basically impossible).
4. The player and the GM determine if anything about her character—such as training, equipment, special abilities, or anything else—can modify the difficulty up or down by one or more steps. If these modifications reduce the difficulty to less than 1, the action is routine (and therefore succeeds with no roll needed).
5. If the action still isn't routine, the GM uses its difficulty to determine the target number—how high the player must roll on a d20 to succeed at the action (see the Task Difficulty Chart on page 84). The GM doesn't have to tell the player what the target number is, but he can give her a hint, especially if her character would reasonably know if the action was easy, average, difficult, or impossible.
6. The player rolls a d20. If she rolls equal to or higher than the target number, her character succeeds.

That's it. That's how to do anything, whether it's identifying an unknown device, calming a raging drunk, climbing a treacherous cliff, or battling the Dragon Emperor. Even if you ignored all the other rules, you could still play *Shotguns & Sorcery* with just this information. The key features here are: character actions, determining task difficulty, and determining modifications.

Turns and Character Actions

During a round, each character present can take a turn. (The sequence in which characters take their turns is determined by initiative rolls, which are described under Time and Action, later in this chapter.) A character can do one thing—an action—on each of her turns. All actions fall into one of three categories: Might, Speed, or Intellect (just like the three stats). Many actions require die rolls—rolling a d20.

An action always involves a task—the thing to be accomplished—and each task has a difficulty set by the GM. The difficulty determines the number the die must equal or beat.

Most tasks are routine, which means they have a difficulty of 0, so the character succeeds automatically. Examples include walking across a room, opening a door, and throwing a stone into a nearby bucket. These are all actions, but none of them requires a roll.

Some tasks are inherently difficult, or become difficult due to the circumstances under which the character makes the attempt. Such actions have a difficulty greater than 0 and thus require a roll.

More powerful or complicated actions, like many of the character abilities granted by type or focus, require a character to expend points from a stat Pool. If the character cannot spend the minimum number of points needed to complete the action, the action automatically fails.

Determining Task Stat

Every task has an associated stat. Sometimes the rules tell you which stat, and other times the GM decides which stat applies based on the task. Here are some guidelines:

- **Might** tasks involve anything that requires strength, power, or endurance.
- **Speed** tasks involve anything that requires agility, flexibility, or fast reflexes.
- **Intellect** tasks involve anything that involves using force of will, memory, or mental power.

Key Concepts

Action: A significant task attempted by a character, such as punching a foe, leaping across a chasm, activating a magical object, or casting a spell. A character can typically take one action on his turn.

Character: Any creature in the game capable of acting, whether it is a player character (PC) run by a player or a nonplayer character (NPC) run by the game master (GM). In *Shotguns & Sorcery*, even bizarre creatures and magical constructs are characters.

Difficulty: A measure of how easy it is to accomplish a task. Difficulty is a number ranging from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). Altering the difficulty to make a task harder is referred to as *increasing the difficulty*. Altering it to make a task easier is referred to as *reducing* or *decreasing the difficulty*. All changes in difficulty are measured in steps. Difficulty often equates directly with level, so opening a level 3 locked door likely has a difficulty of 3.

Effort: The process of spending points from a stat Pool to reduce the difficulty of a task. A PC decides whether to apply Effort on his turn before the roll is made. NPCs never apply Effort.

Level: A way to measure the strength, difficulty, power, or challenge of something in the game. Everything in the game that is not a player character has a level. NPCs and objects have levels that determine the difficulty of any task related to them. For example, an opponent's level determines how hard she is to hit or avoid in combat. A door's level indicates how hard it is to break down. A lock's level determines how hard it is to pick. Levels are rated on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). PCs do not have levels; they have tiers. A tier goes from 1 to 6 and never determines a task's difficulty.

Natural #: A natural number is the number rolled on the die without adding or subtracting any other value. For example, you *roll a natural 20* when the number showing on the die is a 20.

Roll: A d20 roll made by a PC to determine whether an action is successful. Although the game occasionally uses other dice, when the text simply refers to "a roll," it always means a d20 roll.

Round: A length of time, roughly five to ten seconds long. There are about ten rounds in a minute. When it's important to track precise time, use rounds. A round represents the amount of time typically required to take an action in the game, but since everyone more or less acts simultaneously, all characters get to take an action each round.

Stat: One of the three defining characteristics for PCs: Might, Speed, or Intellect. Each stat has two values: Pool and Edge. Your Pool represents your raw, innate ability, and your Edge represents knowing how to use what you have. Each stat Pool can increase or decrease over the course of play—for example, you can lose points from your Might Pool when struck by an opponent, spend points from your Intellect Pool to cast a spell, or rest to recover points in your Speed Pool after a long day of marching. Anything that damages a stat, restores a stat, or boosts or penalizes a stat affects the stat's Pool.

Target Number: A number determined by the task's difficulty, a player needs to equal or beat the target number with a roll in order to succeed at a non-routine task.

Task: Anything a PC attempts to do in the game. A task is either routine or has a Difficulty, which is determined by the rules or the GM. In general, a task is something you attempt to do, and an action is when you attempt it. In most cases, they mean the same thing.

Turn: The part of the round when a creature takes its actions. For example, if a veteran and a wizard are fighting an orc, during each round the veteran takes an action on his turn, the wizard takes an action on her turn, and the orc takes an action on its turn. Some abilities or effects last only while a creature takes its turn, or end when a creature starts its next turn.

This means you can generalize tasks into three categories: Might tasks, Speed tasks, and Intellect tasks. You can also generalize rolls into three categories: Might rolls, Speed rolls, and Intellect rolls. The category of the task or roll determines what kind of Effort you can apply to the roll and may determine how a character's other abilities affect the roll.

Determining Task Difficulty

Sometimes the rules state a task's difficulty, but often the GM is left to set it, either modifying the difficulty of a task because of the circumstances in the game, or because the task lies outside what's covered in the rules. Determining task difficulty, then, is one of the most important and common things a GM does during the game.

The Task Difficulty table provides descriptive names for the varied difficulties, includes the target number, and offers general guidance about the difficulty.

Difficulty: A task's *difficulty* is a number ranging from 0 to 10, as shown on the table. Moving up or down on the table is called *increasing* or *decreasing the difficulty*, which is measured in *steps*.

For example, reducing a difficulty 5 task to a difficulty 4 task is referred to as *decreasing the difficulty by one step*. Most modifiers affect the difficulty rather than the player's roll.

Target Number: Each difficulty has a corresponding *target number*, which is the minimum number a player needs to get on a roll in order to succeed on the task. The target number is easy to remember: it's always three times the difficulty.

Modifying the Difficulty

Once the GM has assigned a difficulty and therefore a target number to a given task, the process of modifying the difficulty begins. Skills and assets, working together, and—perhaps most important—applying Effort, can all let a character decrease a task's difficulty by one or more steps, making the task easier – or even an automatic success if the difficulty is reduced to 0. (An exception is if the GM decides to use a GM intrusion on the task, in which case the player has to make a roll at the original difficulty.)

A character's tier never determines a task's difficulty. Fourth-tier characters don't deal only with level 4 creatures or difficulty 4 tasks (although a fourth-tier character has a better shot at success than a first-tier character does). Just because something is level 4 doesn't necessarily mean it's meant only for fourth-tier characters. Similarly, depending on the situation, a fifth-tier character could find a difficulty 2 task just as challenging as a second-tier character does. Therefore, when setting the difficulty of a task, the GM should rate the task on its own merits, not on the power of the characters.

There are three basic ways in which a character can decrease the difficulty of a task: skills, assets, and Effort. Each of them decreases the difficulty by at least one step—never in smaller increments.

Skills

Characters possess skills that make them better at certain tasks. The game measures proficiency in a skill as being *trained* in the skill or *specialized* in the skill. A character trained in a skill decreases the difficulty of any task related to that skill by one step. A character specialized in a skill decreases the difficulty of any task related to the skill by two steps. Being specialized in a skill replaces being trained in skill. Thus, skills never reduce the difficulty of a task more than two steps.

If a character has two or more skills that apply to a task, she uses the better of the skills. For example, if you are trained in two skills and specialized in one, and all three skills apply to the task, you count as if you were specialized.

Assets

An asset is anything that helps a character with a task, such as having a really good crowbar when trying to force open a door or being in a rainstorm when trying to put out a fire. Appropriate assets vary from task to task and the GM decides whether something is an asset or not. The perfect awl might help when woodworking, but it probably won't make a dance performance

Task Difficulty

Task Difficulty	Description	Target Number	Guidance
0	Routine	0	Anyone can do this basically every time.
1	Simple	3	Most people can do this task most of the time.
2	Standard	6	A typical task requiring focus, but one that most people can do.
3	Demanding	9	A task that requires full attention; most people have a 50/50 chance of succeeding.
4	Difficult	12	Trained people have a 50/50 chance to succeed.
5	Challenging	15	Even trained people often fail, though specialized people have a 50/50 chance to succeed.
6	Intimidating	18	A task beyond the abilities of most normal people.
7	Formidable	21	Impossible for those without skills or great effort.
8	Heroic	24	A task worthy of tales told for years afterward.
9	Immortal	27	A task worthy of legends that last lifetimes.
10	Impossible	30	A task that normal humans couldn't consider (but one that doesn't break the laws of physics).

better. An asset usually reduces a task's difficulty by one step, but an asset can never decrease the difficulty by more than two steps.

Assets from multiple sources are not cumulative. Only the best applies.

Effort

The character attempting a task can apply one or more levels of Effort to decrease the difficulty. For each level of Effort applied, the player must spend points from the stat Pool associated with the type of task or roll—Might points for a Might roll, for example. It costs 3 points from a stat Pool to apply one level of Effort. For each additional level beyond the first, it costs 2 additional points. So, it costs 3 points for one level of Effort, 5 for two, 7 for three, and so on.

Players are limited in the amount of Effort they can apply to a single task based on their tier.

Without applying levels of Effort, no task's difficulty can ever be reduced more than four steps. Being specialized in a task from a skill can reduce the difficulty by two steps, while an asset can reduce the difficulty by a maximum of two steps.

Rolling the Die

In *Shotguns & Sorcery*, players (not the GM) roll the dice. If a PC leaps out of a moving vehicle, the player rolls to see if she succeeds. If a PC searches for a hidden panel, the player rolls to determine whether she finds it. If a rockslide falls on a PC, the player rolls to try to get out of the way. If a PC and an NPC arm wrestle, the player rolls, and the NPC's level determines the target number. If a PC attacks a foe, the player rolls to see if she hits. If a foe attacks the PC, the player rolls to see if she dodges the blow.

As shown by the last two examples, the player rolls whether attacking or defending. Thus, something that improves a combatant's defenses might help or hinder the corresponding rolls. For example, if a PC uses a low wall to gain cover from attacks, the wall decreases the difficulty of the player's defense rolls. If a foe uses that same wall to gain cover from the PC's attacks, it increases the difficulty of the player's attack rolls.

Determining Success and Failure

As a player, you determine the success or failure of any task you attempt that is not a routine difficulty by rolling a d20. If the number on the die equals or exceeds the target number, the task is a success. Most of the time, that's the end of it—nothing else needs to be done. Occasionally, you might apply a small modifier to the roll. If you have a +2 bonus when attempting a specific action, you add 2 to the number rolled.

Bonuses: Sometimes you might be instructed to add a *bonus* to your roll. A bonus does not decrease a task's difficulty. You simply add the bonus to the d20 roll. Bonuses always add together, so if you get a +1 bonus from two different sources, you have a +2 bonus. If you get enough bonuses to add up to a +3 bonus for a task, discard the bonuses and treat them as an asset instead. Therefore, you never add more than +1 or +2 to a die roll.

For example, if a veteran has a +1 bonus to attack rolls from a minor effect, a +1 bonus to attack rolls from a special weapon



quality, and a +1 bonus to attack rolls from a special ability, she does not add 3 to her attack roll—instead, she reduces the difficulty of the attack by one step. So if she attacks a level 3 foe, she would normally roll against difficulty 3 and try to reach a target number of 9, but thanks to her asset, she rolls against difficulty 2 and tries to reach a target number of 6.

With bonuses, it's possible to get a result of 21 or 22, but if the GM determines that an action has no possibility for success—if not even rolling a natural 20 would be sufficient to accomplish the task—don't roll. The action automatically results in a failure.

The distinction between bonuses and modifiers is important when stacking skills and assets to decrease the difficulty of an action, especially since reducing the difficulty to 0 or lower means no roll is needed. For example, if the difficulty after all modifiers is 1 (with a target number of 3) and you have a +2 bonus, you still roll the d20 even though the result cannot be less than 3. This is because the die roll could result in a special roll. If the difficulty had been reduced to 0 instead of 1, your +2 bonus would not matter, because you never roll for a routine action.

Special Rolls

When you roll a natural 1, 17, 18, 19, or 20, special rules come into play.

Natural 1: GM Intrusion

The GM makes a free intrusion and doesn't award experience points (XP) for it. GM intrusion is explained in more detail in Chapter 20, but it means something occurs to complicate the character's life. The character may have fumbled or done something wrong. Or, an unexpected difficulty or something unrelated to the task changes the current situation.



For GM intrusion on a defense roll, a roll of 1 might mean that the PC takes 2 additional points of damage from the attack, indicating the opponent got in a lucky blow.

Natural 17: Damage Bonus

If the roll was a damage-dealing attack, it deals 1 additional point of damage. Otherwise, there is no additional effect.

Natural 18: Damage Bonus

If the roll was a damage-dealing attack, it deals 2 additional points of damage. Otherwise, there is no additional effect.

Natural 19: Minor Effect

A minor effect indicates an outcome that provides some slight benefit to the PC. For example, a climbing PC gets up the steep slope a bit faster, a repaired device works a bit better, or a character jumping down into a pit lands on her feet.

In combat, a minor effect can cause the attack to deal additional damage or do something else. For damage-dealing attacks, the easiest and most straightforward outcome is for the attack to deal 3 additional points of damage. Alternatively, you might use one of the following effects:

Strike a Specific Body Part: The attacker strikes a specific spot on the defender's body. The GM rules what special effect, if any, results. For example, hitting a creature's tentacle that is wrapped around an ally might make it easier for the ally to escape. Hitting a foe in the eye might blind it for one round. Hitting a creature in its one vulnerable spot might ignore Armor.

Knock Back: The foe is knocked or forced back a few feet. Most of the time, this doesn't matter much, but if the fight takes place on a ledge or next to a pit of lava, the effect can be significant.

Move Past: The character can move a short distance at the end of the attack. This effect is useful to get around a foe guarding a door, for example.

Daze or Distract: For one round, the difficulty of all tasks the foe attempts is modified by one step to its detriment.

Natural 20: Major Effect

A major effect indicates an outcome that provides a considerable benefit to the PC, such that a climbing character gets up the steep slope in half the time, a jumping character lands with such panache that those nearby are impressed and possibly intimidated, or a defending character makes a free attack against his foe.

For rolls other than attacks, the PC gets a major effect in addition to the normal results of the task. If the PC spent points from a stat Pool on the action, the character regains all spent points for that action.

In combat, a major effect can cause the attack to deal additional damage or do something else. For damage-dealing attacks, it's easiest for the attack to deal 4 additional points of damage. Alternatively, you might use one of the following effects:

Knock Down: The foe is knocked prone. It can get up on its turn if it wishes.

Disarm: The foe drops one object that it is holding.

Stun: The foe loses its next action.

Impair: For the rest of the combat, the difficulty of all tasks the foe attempts is modified by one step to its detriment.

Determining the Effect

Either the GM or the player can come up with a minor or major effect that fits the situation, but both must agree on what it should be. Don't waste a lot of time thinking of an effect, if nothing appropriate suggests itself. Sometimes, in cases where only success or failure matters, it's okay to have no minor effect. A major effect might offer the character a one-time asset (a modification of one step) to use the next time she attempts a similar action. When nothing else seems appropriate, the GM can simply grant the PC an additional action on her turn that same round.

Most times, the minor or major effect occurs automatically. For example, rolling a 19 against a relatively weak foe means it is knocked off the cliff. The effect makes the round more exciting, but the defeat of a minor creature has no significant impact on the story. Sometimes, however, the GM might rule an additional roll is needed to achieve the desired effect—the special roll only gives the PC the opportunity for a minor effect. This mostly happens when the desired effect is very unlikely, such as pushing a 50-ton battle construct off a cliff. If the player just wants to deal additional points of damage as the effect, no extra roll is needed.

Failure

If you fail at a task (whether it's climbing a wall, picking a lock, trying to figure out a mysterious device, or something else) you can attempt it again, but you must apply at least one level of Effort when retrying that task. A retry is a new action, not part of the same action that failed, and it takes the same amount of time as the first attempt did.

Sometimes the GM might rule that retries are impossible. Perhaps a character has one chance to convince the leader of a group of thugs not to attack, and after that, no amount of talking will stop them.

This rule doesn't apply to something like attacking a foe in combat because combat is always changing and fluid. Each round's situation is new, not a repeat of a previous situation, so a missed attack can't be retried.

Initial Cost

An *initial cost* occurs when the GM assigns a point cost to a task just for trying it, usually because the task is particularly taxing. For example, let's say a character wants to try a Might action to open a heavy iron door that is partially rusted shut. The GM says that forcing the door open is a difficulty 5 task, and there's an initial cost of 3 Might points simply to try. This initial cost is in addition to any points the character chooses to spend on the roll (such as when applying Effort), and the initial cost points do not affect the difficulty of the task. The character must spend 3 Might points to attempt the task at all, but that doesn't help her open the door. If she wanted to apply Effort to lower the difficulty, she'd have to spend more points from her Might Pool.

Edge helps with the initial cost of a task, just as it does with any expenditure from a character's Pool. In the previous example, if the character had a Might Edge of 2, she would have to spend only 1 point (3 points minus 2 from her Might Edge) for the initial cost to attempt the task. If she also applied a level of Effort to open the door, she couldn't use her Edge again—Edge applies only once per action—so applying Effort would cost the full 3 points. Thus, she'd spend a total of 4 points (1 for the initial cost plus 3 for the Effort) from her Might Pool.

Damage

Characters take damage from a variety of sources: attacks with weapons, blasts of fire, or from traveling through dangerous environments. Damage is always a specific amount determined by the attack. For example, a slash with a broadsword or a shot from a heavy pistol inflicts 4 points of damage. A wizard's Energy Ray inflicts 4 points of damage. Often, there are ways for the attacker to increase the damage. For example, a PC can apply Effort to deal 3 additional points of damage, and rolling a natural 17 on the attack roll deals 1 additional point of damage.

Damage affects characters differently, based on whether the character is a PC or an NPC.

PCs and Damage

When a PC takes damage, she subtracts the amount of damage from one of her three stat Pools. Unless the attack says otherwise, the damage always applies to the Might pool.

Intellect damage, which is usually the result of a mental attack, is always labeled as Intellect damage. Speed damage is often a physical attack, but attacks that deal Speed damage are rare.

NPCs and Damage

NPCs subtract damage from their *health*, a characteristic exclusive to NPCs and objects. For most NPCs, health equals the NPC's target number.

Some NPCs might have special reactions to, or defenses against, attacks that would normally deal Speed damage or Intellect damage, but unless the NPC's description specifically explains this, assume that all damage is subtracted from the NPC's health.

Objects are like NPCs: they have health instead of stat Pools.

Armor

Armor protects characters from taking certain forms of damage. Each time a character takes damage that is not Speed damage, Intellect damage, or ambient damage (see below), the character subtracts its Armor from the amount of damage. If the Armor reduces the damage to 0 or less, the character takes no damage. Any damage remaining applies to the character's Might Pool or health.

For example, if a veteran with 2 Armor is hit by a gunshot that deals 4 points of damage, he takes only 2 points of damage (4 minus 2 from his Armor). The veteran's 2 Armor protects him completely from all physical attacks that deal 1 or 2 points of damage.

The most common way to get Armor is to wear physical armor. All physical armor comes in one of three categories: light, medium, or heavy. Light armor gives the wearer 1 point of Armor, medium gives 2 points of Armor, and heavy gives 3 points of Armor.

Other effects can add to a character's Armor. If a character is wearing mail (2 points of Armor) and has an ability that covers him in a protective force field that grants 1 point of Armor, he has 3 Armor. If he also has a cypher that hardens his flesh temporarily for 1 point of Armor, his Armor becomes 4.

A creature may have a special bonus to Armor against certain kinds of attacks. For example, a protective suit made of a sturdy, fire-resistant material might normally give its wearer +1 to Armor, but count as +3 to Armor against fire attacks. An artifact worn as a helmet might grant +2 to Armor only against mental attacks.



Damage from Hazards

Source	Damage	Notes
Landing after a fall	1 point per 10 feet (3 m) fallen (ambient damage)	Assumes surface is hard and unyielding
Minor fire	3 points per round (ambient damage)	Torch
Major fire	6 points per round (ambient damage)	Engulfed in flames; lava
Acid splash	2 points per round (ambient damage)	—
Acid bath	6 points per round (ambient damage)	Immersed in acid
Cold	1 point per round (ambient damage)	Exposure to below freezing temperatures
Shock	1 point per round (ambient damage)	Often involves losing next action
Electrocution	6 points per round (ambient damage)	Often involves losing next action
Crush	3 points	Object or creature falls on character
Huge crush	6 points	Roof collapse; cave-in
Collision	6 points	Large, fast object strikes character

Ambient Damage

Some kinds of damage aren't direct attacks against a creature, but they indirectly affect everything in the area. Most of these are environmental effects such as freezing cold or a raging fire. Damage from these kinds of sources is called ambient damage. Physical armor usually doesn't protect against ambient damage.

Damage from Hazards

Characters can take damage from circumstances, mishaps, and their environments. A character likely takes damage on landing after a fall from a great height, being burned in a fire, or spending time in severe weather. The Damage from Hazards table includes the most common hazards characters face.

Harmful Effects

In the course of playing the game, characters face all manner of threats and dangers that can harm them in a variety of ways, only some of which are easily represented by points of damage.

Dazed and Stunned: Characters can be *dazed* when struck hard on the head, exposed to extremely loud sounds, or affected by a mental attack. When this happens, for the duration of the daze effect (usually one round), the difficulty of all tasks attempted by the character increases by one step. Similar but more severe attacks can *stun* characters. Stunned characters lose their turn (but can still defend against attacks normally).

Poison and Disease: When PCs encounter poison—whether from a serpent's venom or in a glass of wine—they typically make Might defense rolls to resist it. Failure can result in points of damage, moving down the damage track, or a specific effect such as paralysis, unconsciousness, disability, or something stranger. For example, some poisons affect the brain, making it impossible to say certain words, take certain actions, resist certain effects, or recover points to a stat Pool.

Diseases work like poisons, but their effect occurs every day, so the victim makes a Might defense roll each day or suffer the effects. Disease effects are as varied as poisons: points of damage, moving down the damage track, disability, and so on. Many diseases inflict damage that cannot be restored through conventional means.

Paralysis: Paralytic effects cause a character to drop to the ground, unable to move. Unless otherwise specified, the character can still take actions that require no physical movement.

Other Effects: Other special effects can render a character blind or deaf, unable to stand without falling over, or unable to breathe. Stranger effects might transport him to another place, render him out of phase, mutate his physical form, implant false memories or senses, alter the way his brain processes information, or inflame his nerves so he is in constant, excruciating pain. Each special effect must be handled on a case-by-case basis. The GM adjudicates how the character is affected and how the condition can be alleviated (if possible).

NPCs and Special Damage

The GM decides what harmful effects affect NPCs. Human NPCs usually react like characters, but nonhuman creatures might react very differently. For example, a tiny bit of venom is unlikely to hurt a gigantic dragon, and it wouldn't affect an animated statue at all.

If an NPC is susceptible to an attack that would shift a character down the damage track, using that attack on the NPC usually renders it unconscious or dead. Alternatively, the GM could apply the debilitated condition to the NPC with the same effect as it would have on a PC.

The Effects of Taking Damage

Taking damage normally has little to no effect on a character's capabilities, unless the damage reduces the stat Pool or health to 0.

NPCs, upon reaching 0 health, either die or (if the attacker wishes it) become incapacitated, meaning unconscious or beaten into submission.

When an object reaches 0 health, it is broken or destroyed.

If damage reduces a PC's stat Pool to 0, any further damage to that stat (including excess damage from the attack that reduced the stat to 0) applies to another stat Pool, in the following order:

1. Might (unless the Pool is 0)
2. Speed (unless the Pool is 0)
3. Intellect

Even if the damage is applied to another stat Pool, it still counts as its original type for the purpose of Armor and special abilities that affect damage. For example, if a character with 2 Armor is reduced to 0 Might and then is hit by a creature's claw for 3 points of damage, it still counts as Might damage, so his Armor reduces the damage to 1 point, which then is applied to his Speed Pool.

Even though he takes the damage from his Speed Pool, it doesn't ignore Armor like Speed damage normally would.

The Damage Track

In addition to applying damage to the Might Pool, Speed Pool, or Intellect Pool, a PC also has a damage track. The damage track has four states (from best to worst):

Hale ⇆ Impaired ⇆ Debilitated ⇆ Dead

When a stat Pool reaches 0, the PC moves one-step down the damage track: from hale to impaired, impaired to debilitated, and, finally, debilitated to dead.

Some effects can immediately shift a PC one or more steps on the damage track. These include rare poisons and massive traumas (such as falls from very great heights, being run over by a speeding vehicle, and so on, as determined by the GM).

When NPCs (who have only health) suffer Speed or Intellect damage, this is treated the same as Might damage. The GM or the player has the option to suggest an appropriate alternate effect—the NPC suffers a penalty, moves slowly, is stunned, and so on.

Hale is a PC's normal state: all three stat Pools are at least 1 and the character has no penalties from harmful conditions. A hale PC becomes impaired when one stat Pool drops to 0.

Impaired is a wounded or injured state. An impaired PC suffers all of the following drawbacks:

- The PC increases the cost of applying Effort by 1.
- The character ignores minor and major effects from rolls other than dealing additional damage.
- When the character rolls a natural 17 or higher on a roll for a damaging attack, the attack deals only 1 additional point of damage.

An impaired PC becomes debilitated when a second stat Pool drops to 0.

Debilitated is a critically injured state. A debilitated PC suffers all of the following drawbacks:

- The character may not take any actions other than to move (probably crawl) no more than an immediate distance. If a debilitated character's Speed Pool is 0, he can't move at all.

A debilitated PC dies when his third and final stat Pool drops to 0.

Dead is dead.

The damage track allows you to know how far from death you are. If you're hale, you're three steps from death. If you're impaired, you're two steps from death. If you're debilitated, you are only one small step from death's door.

Recovering Points in a Pool

A PC recovers points lost from stat Pools by resting. The amount of points recovered from a rest, and how long each rest takes, depends on how many times the PC has rested so far that day.

When your PC rests, make a *recovery roll*. To do this, roll a d6 and add the character's tier. The PC recovers that many points, and you can divide them among your stat Pools however you wish. For example, if your recovery roll is 4 and you've lost 4 points of



Might and 2 points of Speed, you can recover 4 points of Might, or 2 points of Might and 2 points of Speed, or any other combination adding up to 4 points. Resting never allows a character to exceed his maximum stat Pools (you cannot "overfill" a stat Pool by resting). Any excess points that would be recovered are lost.

It takes time to rest and it takes longer and longer periods of rest for a PC to recover points. The first time a PC rests each day, it takes only a few seconds to catch her breath. If she rests this way in the middle of an encounter, it takes an action on the PC's turn. The second time a PC rests in a day, she must rest for ten minutes to make a recovery roll. The third time, she must rest for one hour to make a recovery roll. Finally, the fourth time the PC rests in the same day, she must rest for ten hours to make a recovery roll (usually, this occurs when a PC stops for the day to eat and sleep). After that much rest, it's assumed to be a new day, so the time it takes to complete a rest resets.

Recovery Rolls and Rest Time

Recovery Roll	Rest Time Needed
First recovery roll	One action
Second recovery roll	Ten minutes
Third recovery roll	One hour
Fourth recovery roll	Ten hours



If a PC hasn't rested yet in a day and takes a lot of damage in a fight, she could rest a few seconds (regaining 1d6 points + 1 point per tier) and then immediately rest for ten minutes (regaining another 1d6 points + 1 point per tier). She would still have her one-hour and ten-hour recovery rolls available. Thus, in one full day of doing nothing but resting, a character can recover 4d6 points + 4 points per tier.

Each character chooses when to make recovery rolls. If a party of five explorers rests for ten minutes because two members want to make recovery rolls, the other characters don't have to make rolls at that time. Later in the day, those three can decide to rest for ten minutes and make their recovery rolls.

Restoring the Damage Track

Using points from a recovery roll to raise a stat Pool from 0 to 1 or higher also automatically moves the character up one step on the damage track.

If all of a PC's stat Pools are above 0 and the character has taken special damage that moved him down the damage track, he can use a recovery roll to move up one step on the damage track instead of recovering points. For example, a character debilitated from being hit by a flesh-eating spell can rest and move up to impaired rather than recover points in a Pool.

Distance

The game rules simplify distance into three categories: immediate, short, and long.

Immediate distance from a character is within reach or within a few steps; if a character stands in a small room, everything in the room is within immediate distance. At most, immediate distance is 10 feet. Immediate distance is sometimes referred to as close, or even point-blank, particularly when referring to ranges.

Short distance is anything greater than immediate distance but less than 50 feet or so.

Long distance is anything greater than short distance but less than 100 feet or so.

Beyond long range, distances are always specified—500 feet, 1 mile, and so on.

All weapons and special abilities use these terms for ranges. For example, all melee weapons have immediate range—they are close-combat weapons, and you can use them to attack anyone within immediate distance. A thrown knife (and most thrown weapons) has short range. A small handgun also has short range. A rifle has long range.

GMs and players don't need to determine exact distances. For example, if the PCs are fighting a group of thugs, any character can likely attack any foe in the general melee—they're all within immediate range. However, if one thug stays back to fire his pistol, a character might have to use her entire action to move the short distance required to attack that foe. It doesn't matter if the thug is 20 feet or 40 feet away—it's simply considered short distance. It does matter if he's more than 50 feet away because that distance would require a long move.

Movement and Distance

A character can move an immediate distance as a part of another action. She can take a few steps to the lever and push it down. She can lunge across a small room to attack a foe. She can open a door and step through.

A character can move a short distance as her entire action for a turn. She can also try to move a long distance as her entire action, but the player might have to roll to see if the character slips, trips, or stumbles for moving so far so quickly.

The words "immediate" and "close" can be used interchangeably to talk about distance. If a creature or object is within arm's reach of the character, it can be considered both immediate and close.

Timekeeping

Outside of combat or other situations where time is tracked using rounds, game time is tracked using minutes, hours, days, and weeks. Thus, if the characters walk overland for 15 miles, about eight hours pass, even though the journey can be described in only a few seconds at the game table. Precise timekeeping is rarely important. Most of the time, saying things like "That takes about an hour" works fine.

This is true even when a special ability has a specific duration. In an encounter, a duration of "one minute" is mostly the same as saying "the rest of the encounter." You don't have to track each

Timekeeping

Action	Time Usually Required
Walking a mile over easy terrain	About fifteen minutes
Walking a mile over rough terrain (forest, snow, hills)	About half an hour
Walking a mile over difficult terrain (mountains, thick jungle)	About forty-five minutes
Moving from one significant location in a city to another	About fifteen minutes
Sneaking into a guarded location	About fifteen minutes
Observing a new location to get salient details	About fifteen minutes
Having an in-depth discussion	About ten minutes
Resting after a fight or other strenuous activity	About ten minutes
Resting and having a quick meal	About half an hour
Making or breaking camp	About half an hour
Shopping for supplies in a market or store	About an hour
Meeting with an important contact	About half an hour
Referencing a book	About half an hour
Searching a room for hidden things	At least half an hour, up to one hour
Searching for cyphers or other valuables amid a lot of stuff	About an hour
Identifying and understanding a cypher	About five minutes
Identifying and understanding an artifact	At least fifteen minutes, up to three hours
Repairing a device (assuming parts and tools available)	At least an hour, up to a day
Building a device (assuming parts and tools available)	At least a day, up to a week

round that ticks by if you don't want to. Likewise, an ability that lasts for ten minutes can safely be considered the length of an in-depth conversation, the time it takes to quickly explore a small area, or the time it takes to rest after a strenuous activity.

Time in Action

The game uses several terms for tracking and talking about time.

Encounter

Sometimes in the course of the game, the GM or players will refer to an *encounter*. Encounters are not so much measurements of time as they are events or instances in which something happens, like a scene of a movie or a chapter in a book. An encounter might be a fight with a foe, a dramatic crossing of a raging river, or a stressful negotiation with an important official. It's useful to use the word when referring to a specific scene, as in "My Might Pool is low after that encounter with the horde of zombies yesterday."

Round

A *round* is about five to ten seconds. The length of time is variable because sometimes one round might be a bit longer than another. You don't need to measure time more precisely than that. You can estimate that on average there are about ten rounds in a minute. In a round, everyone—each character and NPC—gets to take one turn.

To determine who goes first, second, and so on in a round, each player makes a Speed roll called an *initiative roll*. Most of the time, it's only important to know which characters act before the NPCs and which act after the NPCs. On an initiative roll, a character who rolls higher than an NPC's target number takes her action before the NPC does. As with all target numbers, an NPC's initiative roll target number is three times the NPC's level. Many times, the GM will have all NPCs take their actions at the same time, using the highest target number from among all the NPCs. Using this method, any characters who rolled higher than the target number act first, then all the NPCs act, and finally any characters who rolled lower than the target number act.

The order in which the characters act usually isn't important. If the players want to go in a precise order, they can act in initiative order (highest to lowest), by going around the table, by going oldest to youngest, and so on.

For example, Bruce, Monte, and Shanna's characters are in combat with two level 2 assassins. The GM has the players make Speed rolls to determine initiative. Bruce rolls an 8, Monte rolls a 15, and Shanna rolls a 4. The target number for a level 2 creature is 6, so each round Monte and Bruce act before the assassins, then the assassins act, and finally Shanna acts. It doesn't matter whether Monte acts before or after Bruce, as long as they think it's fair.

After everyone—all PCs and NPCs—in the combat has had a turn, the round ends and a new round begins. In all rounds after the first, everyone acts in the same order as they did in the first round. The characters cycle through this order until the logical end of the encounter (the end of the fight or the completion of the event) or until the GM asks them to make new initiative rolls. The GM can call for new initiative rolls at the beginning of any new round when conditions drastically change. For example, if the NPCs gain reinforcements, the environment changes (perhaps the lights go out), the terrain changes (maybe part of the balcony collapses under the PCs), or something similar occurs, the GM can call for new initiative rolls.

Since the action moves as a cycle, anything that lasts for a round ends where it started in the cycle. If Umberto uses an ability on an opponent that hinders its defenses for one round, the effect lasts until Umberto acts on his next turn.

Faster Initiative (Optional Rule): To make an encounter move faster, the GM can simplify initiative even further. If at least one character rolls high enough to beat the target number of the NPC(s), all the characters act before the NPC(s). If nobody rolls high enough to beat the target number of the NPCs, all the characters act after the NPC(s). On the characters' turn, go clockwise around the table. If you're playing using an online video chat or virtual table, start with the leftmost player and move right; repeat.

As with all other rolls, an initiative roll is a d20 roll, unless you're spending Effort. The fact that it's a Speed roll simply means that if Effort is used, the points come from your Speed Pool.

Actions

An *action* is the attempt to perform a particular task, whether that task is to fire your shotgun at a zombie, kick down a locked door, pull a rope up to free a friend from a pit, or activate a cypher. Anything your character attempts to do during the round is an action.

The most important thing to remember is that your action attempts to complete a specific task or produce a particular outcome. The action itself lets you do what you need to do to attempt the activity. Thus, if you're attacking an orc with a sword, you would be able to draw your weapon, move an immediate distance toward the orc, and swing the sword – all as part of the same action.

While you can take all the necessary steps to perform the activity, you can only accomplish one thing at a time with an action. For example, stowing a pistol and pushing a heavy bookcase to block a door would be two actions since they would accomplish two different things. Conversely, grabbing an injured friend and dragging him out of a dangerous hallway would be a single action.

You can move up to an immediate distance as part of an action. This movement can occur before or after your action, so you can move to a door and open it, or you can open a door and move through it.

The most common actions are:

- Attack
- Activate a special ability (one that isn't an attack)
- Move
- Wait
- Defend
- Do something else

Action: Attack

An attack is an action taken to affect another creature or an object in a harmful manner, usually resulting in damage. There are many kinds of attacks—slashing with a sword, firing a shotgun, letting loose blasts of lightning—and in almost all cases, they require a roll to determine the attack's outcome.

Describe every attack with flavor and flair. One attack roll might be a stab to the foe's arm. A miss might be the PC's sword slamming into the wall. Combatants lunge, block, duck, spin, leap, and make all kinds of movements that keep combat visually interesting and compelling.

PC Attacks

When a PC attacks a creature, the player rolls and compares the result to the opponent's target number. If his roll is equal to or greater than the target number, the attack hits or otherwise affects the creature. Just as with any kind of task, the GM might modify the difficulty based on the situation, and the player might have a bonus to the roll or might try to lower the difficulty using skills, assets, or Effort.

If you make an attack that has a limited number of uses and the result of the roll is a failure, you can try again. Each round is an action until you hit the target, use another ability, or take a different action that requires you to use your hands. These attempts in later rounds count as different actions, so you don't have to keep track of how much Effort you used when you activated the ability or how you used Edge. For example, let's say that in the first round of combat, you activate a special ability that requires you to touch your foe, then you use Effort to reduce the difficulty of the attack roll, and miss your foe. In the second round of combat, you can try attacking again and use Effort to reduce the difficulty of the attack roll.

Melee Attacks: A melee attack is an attack made against something within immediate range. Melee attacks can be Might or Speed actions—player's choice. Effects that require touching the target require a melee attack.

Ranged Attacks: A ranged attack is an attack made against something at a distance, usually specified by the weapon or ability. Physical ranged attacks (such as bows and thrown weapons) are almost always Speed actions, but those that come from special abilities are probably Intellect actions.

The majority of ranged attacks have only two ranges: short range and long range.

NPC Attacks

When an NPC attacks a PC, the attack is resolved using the Defend action (see page 97).

Situations That Don't Involve PCs

The GM determines what happens in conflicts that do not involve the PCs. Such conflicts should be adjudicated in the most interesting, logical, and story-based way possible. When in doubt, match the level of the NPCs (characters or creatures) or their respective effects to determine the results. Thus, if a level 4 NPC fights a level 3 NPC, he'll win, but if he faces a level 7 NPC, he'll lose. Likewise, a level 4 creature resists poisons or devices of level 3 or lower but not those of level 5 and above.

The essence is this: The higher level wins. If two things of equal level oppose each other, there might be a long, drawn-out battle that could go either way.

Attack Modifiers

Darkness, cover, range, and other factors may modify rolls in combat. The GM applies whatever modifiers he thinks are appropriate to the situation (that's his role in the game), but the following suggestions and guidelines make these determinations easier.

In most cases, when you apply modifiers to a roll, you adjust the difficulty up or down by one or two steps. This either increases or decreases the difficulty of the player's roll, as appropriate. If a situation hinders attacks and a PC attacks an NPC, the difficulty of the PC's attack roll is increased by one step. In that same situation, if an NPC attacks a PC, the difficulty of the PC's defense roll is decreased by one step. This is because players make all rolls, whether they are attacking or defending—NPCs never make attack or defense rolls.

When in doubt, if it seems like it should be harder to attack in a situation, increase the difficulty of attack rolls by one step. If it seems like attacks should gain an advantage or be easier in some way, then increase the difficulty of defense rolls by one step.

Cover

A character has cover when a sturdy object covers a significant portion of his body. Typically, cover modifies an attack by one step in the defender's favor. A character entirely behind cover can't be attacked unless the attack can go through the cover. For example, if a character hides behind a thin wooden screen and his opponent shoots the screen with a rifle that can penetrate the wood, the character can be attacked. However, because the attacker can't see the character clearly, this still counts as cover (attacks are modified by one step in the defender's favor).

Position

Positioning can grant advantages or disadvantages. In a combat situation, if a character is in a large melee, he's usually considered to be next to most other combatants, unless the GM rules that he's farther away because the melee is especially large or the situation dictates it.

If he's not in melee but still nearby, he is considered to be a short distance away—usually less than 50 feet. If he's farther away than that but still involved in the combat, he is considered to be a long distance away, usually 50 to 100 feet.

Beyond that distance, only special circumstances, actions, or abilities will allow a character to be involved in an encounter.

Prone Target: Melee attacks against prone targets are modified one step in the attacker's favor, while ranged attacks against prone targets are modified one step in the defender's favor.

Higher Ground: A creature on higher ground has the advantage and modifies rolls one step in her favor.

Surprise

Surprise occurs when a creature attacks a target that's unaware of it. If the target is completely unaware of its attacker, the attack is modified two steps in the attacker's favor. If the defender isn't sure of the attacker's location but is still on guard, the attacker's modifier is only one step in his favor.



Range

A few special cases—point-blank range and extreme range—modify an attack's chance to successfully hit.

Point-Blank Range: A character using a ranged weapon to attack a target within immediate range modifies the attack by one step in his favor.

Extreme Range: Targets just at the limit of a weapon's range are at extreme range. Attacks against such targets are modified by one step in the defender's favor.

Precise ranges are not important in Shotguns & Sorcery. The broadly defined "immediate," "short," and "long" ranges let the GM quickly make a judgment call and keep things moving. Basically, the idea is: your target is right there, your target is close, or your target is pretty far away.

In certain situations, such as a PC on top of a building looking across an open field, the GM should allow long-range attacks to go farther than 100 feet—often much farther. In perfect conditions, a good archer can hit a large target with an arrow at 500 feet.

Illumination

The game divides illumination into four broad categories: light, dim light, very dim light, and darkness.

Light provides enough illumination for sighted creatures to see clearly out to the normal range of vision.

Dim light, such as that cast by a full moon or a torch, permits enough light for creatures to see out to a short distance. Attacks against creatures in areas of dim light are modified by one step in the defender's favor. Attackers trained in low-light spotting negate this modifier.

Very dim light, such as starlight on a night of a new moon or the light shed by a candle, provides enough light for creatures to see out to an immediate distance and perceive vague shapes out to a short range. Attacks against targets in areas of very dim light within immediate range are modified by one step in the defender's favor, while attacks against those in short range are modified by two steps in the defender's favor. Attackers trained in low-light spotting modify these difficulties by one step in their favor. Attackers specialized in low-light spotting modify these difficulties by two steps in their favor.

Darkness indicates there is no illumination at all. Targets in complete darkness are almost impossible to hit. An attacker able to use other senses such as hearing to get an idea of the target's approximate position can attack it, modifying the attack by four steps in the defender's favor. Otherwise, attacks in complete darkness fail without the need for a roll unless the player spends 1 XP to "make a lucky shot" or the GM uses a GM intrusion. Attackers trained in low-light spotting modify this difficulty by one step in their favor. Attackers specialized in low-light spotting modify this difficulty by two steps in their favor.

Visibility

Similar to illumination, factors that obscure vision affect combat.

Mist: A target in mist is similar to one in dim light. Ranged attacks against such targets are modified by one step in the defender's favor. Particularly dense mist makes ranged attacks nearly impossible (treat as darkness), and even melee attacks become difficult (modify by one step in the defender's favor).

Hidden Target: A target in dense foliage, behind a screen, or crawling amid the rubble in a ruin is hard to hit because she's hard to see. Ranged attacks against such targets are modified by one step in the defender's favor.

Invisible Target: If an attacker can use other senses (such as hearing) to get an idea of where the opponent might be, attacks against such targets are modified by four steps in the defender's favor. Otherwise, attacks against an invisible creature fail without the need for a roll unless the player spends 1 XP to "make a lucky shot" or the GM uses GM intrusion.

Water

Being in shallow water can make it hard to move, but it doesn't affect attacks. Being in deep water can make things difficult, and being underwater entirely can seem as different as being on another world. Aquatic creatures are, obviously, not hindered when fighting in deep water or underwater.

Deep Water: A character in water up to his chest (or the equivalent thereof) modifies attacks by one step in the defender's favor.

Underwater Melee Combat: For nonaquatic creatures, being completely underwater makes attacking very difficult. Melee attacks with slashing or bashing weapons are modified by two steps in the defender's favor. Attacks with stabbing weapons are modified by one step in the defender's favor.

Underwater Ranged Combat: As with melee combat, nonaquatic creatures have difficulty fighting underwater. Some ranged attacks are impossible underwater—you can't throw things, fire a bow or crossbow, or use a blowgun. Firearms also do not work underwater. Attacks with weapons that do work underwater are modified by one step in the defender's favor. Ranges underwater are reduced by one category; long-range weapons work only to short range, and short-range weapons work only to immediate range.

Moving Targets

Moving targets are harder to hit, and moving attackers have a difficult time as well.

Target Is Moving: Attackers trying to hit a foe moving very fast, doing nothing but running, mounted on a moving creature, riding on a vehicle or moving conveyance, and so on, modify the attack by one step in the defender's favor.

Attacker Is Moving: An attacker trying to make an attack while moving under its own power (walking, running, swimming, and so on) takes no penalties. An attacker mounted on a moving creature or vehicle has some difficulty; its attacks are modified by one step in the defender's favor. An attacker trained in riding ignores this penalty.

Attacker Is Jostled: Being jostled, such as while standing on a listing ship or a vibrating platform, makes attacking difficult. Such attacks are modified by one step in the defender's favor. Conceivably, training could offset this disadvantage. For example, characters trained in sailing would ignore penalties for being on a ship.

Special Situations

Certain attack situations require special rules.

NPC Attacks an NPC

When an NPC ally of the PCs attacks another NPC, the GM can designate a player to roll and handle it like a PC attacking. Often, the choice is obvious. For example, a character who has a trained attack animal should roll when her pet attacks enemies. If an NPC ally accompanying the party leaps into the fray, that ally's favorite PC rolls for him. NPCs cannot apply Effort. Of course, it's perfectly fitting (and easier) to have the NPC ally use the cooperative action rules to aid a PC instead of making direct attacks, or to compare the levels of the two NPCs (higher wins).

PC Attacks a PC

When one PC attacks another PC, the attacking character makes an attack roll, and the defending character makes a defense roll. If the attacking PC has a skill, ability, asset, or other effect that would decrease the attack's difficulty if it were made against an NPC, the character adds 3 to the roll for each step reduction (+3 for one step, +6 for two steps, and so on). If the attacker's final result is higher, the attack hits. If the defender's result is higher, the attack misses. Damage is resolved normally. The GM adjudicates all special effects.

Area Attacks

Sometimes, an attack or effect affects an area rather than a single target. For example, a bomb or a landslide can potentially harm or affect everyone in the area.

In an area attack, all PCs in the area make appropriate defense rolls to determine its effect on them. If there are any NPCs in the area, the attacker makes a single attack roll against all of them (one roll, not one roll per NPC) and compares it to the target number of each NPC. If the roll is equal to or greater than the target number of a particular NPC, the attack hits that NPC.

Some area attacks always deal at least a minimum amount of damage, even if the attacks miss or if a PC makes a successful defense roll.

For example, consider a character who uses Energy Ball to attack six assassins (level 2; target number 6) and their leader (level 4; target number 12). The PC applies Effort to increase the damage and rolls an 11 for the attack roll. This hits the six assassins, but not the leader, so the ability deals 3 points of damage to each of the assassins. The description of Energy Ball says that applying Effort to increase the damage also means that targets take 1 point of damage even if the PC fails the attack roll, so the leader takes 1 point of damage. In terms of what happens in the story, the assassins are caught flat-footed by the explosion of fire in their midst, but the leader ducks and shields herself from the blast. Despite the leader's quick moves, the blast is so intense that a few flames burn her.



Attacking Objects

Attacking an object is rarely a matter of hitting it. Sure, you can hit the broad side of a barn, but can you damage it? Attacking inanimate objects with a melee weapon is a Might action. Objects have levels and thus have target numbers. An object's target number is its health.

Hard objects, like those made of stone, have 1 Armor. Very hard objects, like those made of metal, have 2 Armor. Extremely hard objects, like those made of diamond, have 3 Armor.

Action: Activate a Special Ability

Special abilities are granted by foci or provided by cyphers or other devices. If a special ability affects another character in any kind of unwanted manner, it's handled as an attack. This is true even if the ability is normally not considered an attack. For example, if a character has a healing touch, but her friend doesn't want to be healed for some reason, an attempt to heal her unwilling friend is resolved as an attack.

Plenty of special abilities do not affect another character in an unwanted manner. For example, a PC might use Hover on herself to float into the air. A character could use a spell or a cypher to change a stone wall into glass. Neither of these requires an attack roll (although when turning a stone wall to glass, the character must still make a roll to successfully affect the wall).

If the character spends points to apply Effort on her attempt, she might want to roll anyway to see if she gets a major effect, which would reduce the cost for her action.

Action: Move

There are several ways characters can use actions to move.

Adjust Position: As a part of another action, a character can adjust his position—stepping back a few feet while using an ability, sliding over in combat to take on a different opponent to help his friend, pushing through a door he just opened, and so on. This is considered an immediate distance, and a character can move this far as part of another action.

Short Move: In a round, as an action, a character can make a short move. In this case, he is doing nothing but moving up to about 50 feet. Some terrain or situations will change the distance a character can move, but generally, making a short move is considered to be a difficulty 0 action. No roll is needed; he just gets where he's going as his action.



Long Move: A character can try to make a long move—up to 100 feet or so—in one round. This is a Speed task with a difficulty of 4. As with any action, he can use skills, assets, or Effort to decrease the difficulty. Terrain, obstacles, or other circumstances can increase the difficulty. A successful roll means the character moved the distance safely. Failure means that at some point during the move, he stops or stumbles (the GM determines where this happens).

Move and Act: A character can also try to make a short move and take another (relatively simple) physical action, like make an attack. As with the attempt to make a long move, this is a Speed task with a difficulty of 4, and failure means that the character stops at some point, slipping or stumbling or otherwise getting held up.

Climbing

When a character climbs, the GM sets a difficulty based on the surface being climbed. If the character succeeds at the roll, she uses the movement rules as though she were moving normally, although climbing is like moving through difficult terrain: it raises the difficulty of a move roll by one step and halves movement. Unusual circumstances, such as climbing while under fire (or while *on* fire!) pose additional step penalties. Being skilled in climbing reduces the difficulty of this task.

Climbing Difficulty

Difficulty	Surface
2	Surface with lots of handholds
3	Stone wall or similar surface (a few handholds)
4	Crumbling or slippery surface
5	Smooth stone wall or similar surface
6	Metal wall or similar surface
8	Smooth, horizontal surface (climber is upside-down)
10	Glass wall or similar surface

Jumping

The distance a character would jump determines the difficulty of the Might roll. For a standing jump, subtract 4 from the distance (in feet) to determine the difficulty. Jumping 10 feet, for example, has a difficulty of 6.

Running an immediate distance before jumping counts as an asset. If a character runs a short distance before jumping, divide the jump distance (in feet) by 2 and then subtract 4 to determine the difficulty of the jump. Because the character runs an immediate distance (and then some), he also counts the running as an asset.

For example, jumping a distance of 20 feet with a short running start has a difficulty of 5 (20 feet divided by 2 is 10, minus 4 is 6, minus 1 for running an immediate distance). Being skilled in jumping reduces the difficulty.

For a vertical jump, the distance cleared (in feet) is equal to the difficulty of the jumping task. If the character runs an immediate distance, it counts as an asset, reducing the difficulty of the jump by one step.

Jump Distance by Type of Jump

Difficulty	Standing	Immediate Run*	Short Run*	Vertical*
0	4 ft.	5 ft.	10 ft.	<1 ft.
1	5 ft.	6 ft.	12 ft.	1 ft.
2	6 ft.	7 ft.	14 ft.	2 ft.
3	7 ft.	8 ft.	16 ft.	3 ft.
4	8 ft.	9 ft.	18 ft.	4 ft.
5	9 ft.	10 ft.	20 ft.	5 ft.
6	10 ft.	11 ft.	22 ft.	6 ft.
7	11 ft.	12 ft.	24 ft.	7 ft.
8	12 ft.	13 ft.	26 ft.	8 ft.
9	13 ft.	14 ft.	28 ft.	9 ft.
10	14 ft.	15 ft.	30 ft.	10 ft.

* If you are skilled in jumping, move one row down to determine your distance. If you are specialized in jumping, move two rows down to determine your distance.

There's nothing wrong with the GM simply assigning a difficulty level to a jump without worrying about the precise distance. The rules here are just so everyone has some guidelines.

Sneaking

Sneaking creatures attempt to move without drawing attention to themselves. The difficulty of sneaking by an NPC is determined by its level. Sneaking is a Speed roll. Moving at half speed reduces the difficulty by one step. Appropriate camouflage or other gear may count as an asset and decrease the difficulty, as will dim lighting conditions and having plenty of things to hide behind. Being skilled in sneaking reduces the difficulty of this task.

Swimming

Characters swimming from one place to another, such as across a calm river or lake, use the standard movement rules, noting

the fact that they are in deep water. Being skilled in swimming decreases the difficulty. However, circumstances may require a Might roll to make progress while swimming, such as when trying to avoid a current or being dragged into a whirlpool.

Long-Term Movement

When talking about movement in terms of traveling rather than round-by-round action, typical characters can travel on a road about 20 miles per day, averaging about 3 miles per hour, including a few stops. When traveling overland, they can move about 12 miles per day, averaging 2 miles per hour, again with some stops. Mounted characters, such as on those on horseback, can go twice as far. Other modes of travel (airships, flying carpets, sailing ships, and so on) have their own rates of movement.

Movement Modifiers

Different environments affect movement in different ways.

Rough Terrain: A surface that's considered rough terrain is covered in loose stones or other material, uneven or with unsure footing, unsteady, or a surface that requires movement across a narrow space, such as a cramped corridor or a slender ledge. Stairs are also considered rough terrain. Rough terrain does not slow normal movement on a round-by-round basis, but it increases the difficulty of a move roll by one step. Rough terrain cuts long-term movement rates in half.

Difficult Terrain: Difficult terrain is an area filled with challenging obstacles—water up to waist height, a very steep slope, an especially narrow ledge, slippery ice, a foot or more of snow, a space so small that one must crawl through it, and so on. Difficult terrain is just like rough terrain, but it also halves movement on a round-by-round basis. This means that a short move is about 25 feet, and a long move is about 50 feet. Difficult terrain reduces long-term movement to a third of its normal rate.

Water: Deep water, in which a character is mostly or entirely submerged, is just like rough terrain except that it also quarters movement. This means that a short move is about 12 feet, and a long move is about 25 feet. Characters trained in swimming only halve their movement while in deep water.

Special Situation: Chase

When a PC chases an NPC or vice versa, the player should attempt a Speed action, with the difficulty based on the NPC's level. If he succeeds at the roll, he catches the NPC, or the PC gets away if he is the one being chased. In terms of the story, this one-roll mechanic can be the result of a long chase over many rounds.

Alternatively, if the GM wants to play out a long chase, the character can make many rolls (perhaps one per level of the NPC) to finish the pursuit successfully. For every failure, the PC must make another success, and if he ever has more failures than successes, he doesn't catch the NPC, or he doesn't get away if he is the one being chased.

For example, if the PC is being chased through a crowded marketplace by a level 3 enemy, he must succeed at three chase rolls. If he succeeds at one but fails the second, he must succeed at the third one, or he will have more failures than successes, and the foe will catch him. The GM is encouraged to describe the results of these rolls with flavor. A success might mean the PC has rounded a corner and gained some distance. A failure might mean that a basket of fruit topples over in front of him, slowing him down.

Action: Wait

You can wait to react to another character's action.

You decide what action will trigger your action, and if the triggering action happens, you get to take your action first (unless going first wouldn't make sense, like attacking a foe before she comes into view). For example, if an orc threatens you with a halberd, on your turn you can decide to wait, stating, "If she stabs at me, I'm going to slash her with my sword." On the orc's turn, if she takes the triggering action (stabbing at you) your declared action (slashing with your sword) happens first.

Waiting is also a useful tool for cooperative actions (see next page).

Action: Defend

Defending is a special action only PCs can do in response to being attacked. An NPC uses its action to attack, which forces a PC to make a defense roll. This is handled like any other kind of action with circumstances, skill, assets, and Effort all potentially coming into play.

Defending is a special in that it does not happen on the PC's turn. It's never an action that a player decides to take; it's always a reaction to an attack. Thus, a PC can make a defense action when attacked (on the attacking NPC's turn) and still take another action on his own turn.

The type of defense roll depends on the type of attack. If a foe attacks a character with an axe, she can use Speed to duck or block it with what she's holding. If she's struck by a poisoned dart, she can use a Might action to resist its effects. If a witch attempts to control her mind, she can use Intellect to fend off the invasion.

Sometimes an attack provokes two defense actions. For example, a poisonous reptile tries to bite a PC. She tries to dodge the bite with a Speed action. If she fails, she takes damage from the bite, and she must also attempt a Might action to resist the poison's effects.

If a character does not know an attack is coming, usually she can still make a defense roll, but she can't add modifiers (including the modifier from a shield), and she can't use any skill or Effort to decrease the roll's difficulty. If circumstances warrant—such as if the attacker is right next to the character—the GM might rule that the surprise attack simply hits her.

A character can always choose to forgo a defense action, in which case the attack automatically hits her.

Some abilities may allow you to do something special as a defense action.

Action: Do Something Else

You can try anything you can think of, although that doesn't mean anything is possible. The GM sets the difficulty—that's her primary role in the game. Still, guided by the boundaries of logic, players and GMs will find all manner of actions and options that aren't covered by a rule. That's a good thing.

Players should not feel constrained by the game mechanics when taking actions. Skills are not required to attempt an action. Someone who's never picked a lock can still try. The GM might assign a negative step modifier to the difficulty, but the character can still attempt the action.

Thus, players and GMs can return to the beginning of this chapter and look at the most basic expression of the rules. A player wants to take an action. The GM decides, on a scale of 1 to 10, how difficult that task is and what stat it uses. The player determines whether he has anything that might modify the difficulty and considers whether to apply Effort. Once the final determination is made, he rolls to see if his character succeeds. It's as easy as that.

Players are encouraged to come up with their own ideas for what their characters do rather than looking at a list of possible actions. That's why there is a "do something else" action. PCs are not pieces on a game board—they are people in a story. And like real people, they can try anything they can think of. (Succeeding is another matter entirely.) The task difficulty system provides GMs with the tools they need to adjudicate anything the players come up with.

As further guidance, the following are some of the more common actions a player might take.

Disabling or Operating Devices

Picking a lock or disarming a trap usually requires one or more rolls, with the difficulty set by the device or object's level. These actions often involve special tools and assume that the character is not trying to destroy the device or lock. (A PC who *is* attempting to destroy it probably should make a Might roll to smash it rather than a Speed or Intellect roll requiring patience and know-how.) Being skilled in operating devices or picking locks reduces the difficulty.

When trying to figure out how to operate an unknown device, you usually make an Intellect roll, with the difficulty determined by the level of the device. Unless a device is very complex, the GM will often rule that once you figure it out, no further roll is needed to operate it except under special circumstances. Once the PCs figure out how to use a flying carpet, they can operate it without needing to make a roll every single time. However, if they are attacked while flying on the carpet, they might need to make a roll to ensure that they don't crash into a wall while trying to avoid being hit (see Riding and Piloting).

Cooperative Actions

Multiple characters can work together in many ways. None of these options, however, can be used at the same time by the same characters.

Helping: If a character attempts a task and gets help from another character who is trained or specialized in that task, the acting PC gets the benefit of the helping PC. The helping character uses his action to provide this help. If the helper does not have training or specialization in that task, or if the acting character is equally trained or specialized as the helper, the acting character instead gets a +1 bonus to the roll.

For example, if Scott is trying to climb a steep incline but has no skill at climbing, and Sarah (who is trained in climbing) spends her turn helping him, the difficulty of Scott's climb is decreased by one step. If Scott were also trained in climbing, or if neither character were, he would gain a +1 bonus to the roll instead. A character with an inability in a task cannot help another PC with that task—the character with the inability provides no benefit in that situation.

Complementary Actions: If a character attempts an action, and a second character skilled in that type of action attempts a complementary action, both actions gain a +2 bonus to the roll.

For example, if Scott tries to convince a ship captain to allow him on board, and Sarah is trained in persuasion, she can use a complementary—but different—action in the situation to gain the +2 bonus. She might try to supplement Scott's words with a flattering lie about the captain (a deception action), a display of knowledge about the region where the ship is headed (a geography action), or a direct threat to the captain (an intimidation action).

Complementary actions work in combat as well. If Scott attacks an enemy using Pierce (a veteran ability) and Sarah also has the ability to make Pierce attacks, she can attack the same enemy using any other kind of attack, such as Bash, and get a +2 bonus. By doing this, she gives Scott a +2 bonus as well.

The players involved should work out complementary actions together and describe them to the GM.

Distraction: When a character uses his turn to distract a foe, the difficulty of that foe's attacks is modified by one step to its detriment for one round. Multiple characters distracting a foe have no greater effect than a single character doing so—a foe is either distracted or not.

Draw the Attack: When an NPC attacks a character, another PC can prominently present herself, shout taunts, and move to try to get the foe to attack her instead.

In most cases, this action succeeds without a roll—the opponent attacks the prominent PC instead of her companions. In other cases, such as with intelligent or determined foes, the prominent character must succeed at an Intellect action to draw the attack. If that Intellect action is successful, the foe attacks the taunting PC, but difficulty of the prominent character's defense tasks is modified by one step to her detriment.

Two characters attempting to draw an attack at the same time cancel each other out.

Take the Attack: A character can use her action to throw herself in front of an attack to save a nearby comrade. The attack automatically succeeds against her, and it deals 1 additional point of damage. A character cannot willingly take more than one attack each round in this way.

The Old One-Two-Three: If three or more characters attack the same foe, each character gains a +1 bonus to the attack.

High and Low: If one character makes a melee attack against a foe and another character makes a ranged attack against that same foe, they can coordinate their actions. As a result, if both attacks damage the foe, the difficulty of the foe's next task is modified by one step to its detriment.

Covering Fire: A character using a ranged attack or ability can aim near a foe but narrowly miss on purpose, making an attack that inflicts no damage but harasses and frightens the foe. If the attack is successful, it deals no damage, but the difficulty of the foe's next attack is modified by one step to its detriment.

Guarding

In a combat situation, a character can stand guard as her action. She does not make attacks, but the difficulty of her defense tasks is decreased by one step. Further, if an NPC tries to get by her or take an action that she is guarding against, she can attempt a Speed action (based on the level of the NPC) with the difficulty decreased by one step. Success means the NPC is prevented from taking the action on his turn. This is useful for blocking a doorway, guarding a friend, and so forth.

If an NPC is standing guard, use the same procedure. To get past the guard, the PC attempts a Speed action with the difficulty increased by one step. For example, Diana is an NPC human with a level 3 bodyguard. The bodyguard uses his action to guard Diana. If a PC wants to attack Diana, she first must succeed at a difficulty 4 Speed task to get past the guard. If she succeeds, she can make her attack against Diana normally.



As with other Cypher System games, in Shotguns & Sorcery *players are not rewarded for killing foes in combat, so using a smart idea to avoid combat and still succeed is just good play. Likewise, coming up with an idea to defeat a foe without hammering on it with weapons is encouraged—creativity is not cheating!*

Healing

You can administer aid through bandaging and other succor, attempting to heal each patient once per day. This healing restores points to a stat Pool of your choice. Decide how many points you want to heal, and then make an Intellect action with a difficulty equal to that number. For example, if you want to heal someone for 3 points, that's a difficulty 3 task with a target number of 9. Being skilled in healing reduces the difficulty. A PC can use the rules for retrying a task if she attempts to heal a character using bandages and similar aids, but she can achieve only one success per day.

Interacting with Creatures

The level of the creature determines the target number, just as with combat. Thus, bribing a guard works much like punching him or affecting him with an ability. This is true of persuading someone, intimidating someone, calming a wild beast, or anything of a similar nature. Interaction is an Intellect task. Being skilled in persuasion, intimidation, bribery, deception, animal handling, and so forth can decrease the difficulty of the task, if appropriate. Interacting usually requires a common language or some other way to communicate. Learning new languages is the same as learning a new skill.

Moving a Heavy Object

You can push or pull something very heavy and move it an immediate distance as your action.

The weight of the object determines the difficulty of the Might roll to move it; every 50 pounds increases the difficulty by one step. Moving something that weighs 150 pounds is a difficulty 3 action; moving something that weighs 400 pounds is a difficulty 8 action. If you can reduce the difficulty of the task to 0, you can move a heavy object up to a short distance as your action. Being skilled in carrying or pushing reduces the difficulty of this task.

Perceiving

Generally, the GM describes any sight or sound that's not purposefully difficult to detect. Characters looking for hidden enemies, searching for secret panels, or listening for faint noises make Intellect rolls. When attempting to perceive an NPC, the creature's level determines the difficulty of the roll. If it's something else, the GM determines the difficulty. Being skilled in perception reduces the difficulty of this task.

Riding and Piloting

Riding an animal that's trained to be a mount, or driving or piloting a vehicle, does not require a roll unless the task involves something complex and difficult. Staying mounted during a fight or doing something tricky with a vehicle requires a Speed roll to succeed. A saddle or other appropriate gear is an asset and reduces the difficulty by one step. Being skilled in riding, driving, or piloting reduces the difficulty. The following table offers some suggested difficulties for maneuvers involving riding and piloting.

Riding and Piloting

Difficulty	Maneuver
0	Riding
1	Staying on the mount (or flying broomstick or similar vehicle) in a battle or another difficult situation
3	Staying on a mount when you take damage
4	Mounting a moving steed
4	Making an abrupt turn with a flying vehicle while moving fast
4	Getting a flying vehicle to move twice as fast as normal for one round
5	Coaxing a mount to move or jump twice as fast or far as normal for one round
5	Making a long jump with a vehicle not intended to go airborne (like a wagon) and remaining in control



Understanding, Identifying, and Remembering

When characters try to identify or figure out how to use a device, the level of the device determines the difficulty. For a bit of knowledge, the GM determines the difficulty. Being skilled in the appropriate area (geography, history, geology, local knowledge, and so on) reduces the difficulty of this task.

Understanding, Identifying, and Remembering

Difficulty	Knowledge
0	Common knowledge
1	Simple knowledge
3	Something a scholar probably knows
5	Something even a scholar might not know
7	Knowledge very few people possess
10	Completely lost knowledge

Crafting, Building, and Repairing

The same rules that govern building a spear also cover repairing an airship. Normally, the level of the item determines the difficulty of creating or repairing it as well as the time required. For items unique to a people other than your own, add 5 to the item's level to determine the difficulty of building or repairing it. If the item is artistic in nature, the GM might add to the difficulty and time required. A crude wooden stool could be hammered together in an hour, but a beautiful finished piece might take a week or longer and would require more skill on the part of the crafter.

A level 0 object requires no skill to make and is easily found in most locations. Sling stones and firewood are level 0 items—producing them is routine. Making a torch from spare wood and oil-soaked cloth is simple, so it's a level 1 object. Making an arrow or a spear is fairly standard, so it's a level 2 object.

If a character wants to create a permanent nonstandard object, she must spend XP. If she fails her roll, no XP are spent.

Materials

A device to be crafted requires materials equal to its level and all the levels below it. So, a level 5 device requires level 5 material, level 4 material, level 3 material, level 2 material, and level 1 material (and, technically, level 0 material).

The GM and players can gloss over much of the crafting details, if desired. Gathering all the materials to make a mundane item might not be worth playing out—but then again, it might be. Making a wooden spear in a forest isn't very interesting, but what if the PCs have to make a spear in a treeless desert? Finding the wreckage of something made of wood or forcing a PC to fashion a spear out of the bones of a large beast could be interesting.

Time

The time required to create an item is up to the GM, but the guidelines in the crafting table are a good starting point. Generally, repairing an item takes somewhere between half the creation time and the full creation time, depending on the item, the aspect that needs repairing, and the circumstances. For example, if creating an item takes one hour, repairing it takes between thirty minutes and one hour.

Crafting Difficulty and Time

Difficulty	Craft	General Time to Build
0	Something extremely simple like tying a rope or finding an appropriately sized rock	A few minutes at most
1	A torch	Five minutes
2	A spear, a simple shelter, or piece of furniture	One hour
3	A bow, a door, a basic article of clothing	One day
4	A sword, a chainmail vest	One to two days
5	Common magic item (magical light)	One week
5	A nice piece of jewelry or art object	One week
6	Technological item (a watch)	One month
6	A superior piece of jewelry, art object, or elegant craftwork	One month
7	A major work of art	One year
8+	Magic item (something rare, magical, and powerful)	Many years

Sometimes a GM will allow a rush job if the circumstances warrant it. This is different than using skill to reduce the time required. In this case, the quality of the item is affected.

The GM is free to overrule some attempts at creation, building, or repair, requiring that the character have a certain level of skill, proper tools and materials, and so forth.

Skills

The skill level of the crafter affects the difficulty as normal in all ways except materials and time. If a PC trained in gunsmithing wants to create a pistol and the GM decides it's a level 4 item, the character's training reduces the difficulty by one step. Now it's only a standard (difficulty 3) task, but it still takes a couple of days and requires proper tools. A set of high-quality tools could serve as an asset, with the GM's approval.

A character can reduce the time or materials needed instead of the difficulty (again, with the GM's approval, and if it makes sense to do so). A trained fletcher making arrows (level 2 items) could attempt a difficulty 2 task rather than a difficulty 1 task to create an arrow in fifteen minutes instead of an hour, or to create it in an hour but with substandard (level 1) materials. However, sometimes the GM will rule that reducing the time is not possible. For example, a single human can't make a chainmail vest in one hour without some kind of machine to help.

Possible areas for character training include:

- Armoring
- Bowyering/Fletching
- Chemistry
- Glassblowing
- Gunsmithing
- Leatherworking
- Metalworking
- Weaponsmithing
- Woodcrafting

Failure

Failing the roll means that the device is not completed or repaired. To continue to work on it, the character must gather more materials (generally, the highest-level material needed) and take the required amount of time again.

Tinkering with Weird Stuff

Characters might try to make a cypher or an artifact do something other than its intended function. Sometimes, the GM will simply declare the task impossible. You can't turn a vial of healing elixir into a sword. But most of the time, there is a chance of success.

That said, tinkering with weird stuff is not easy. Obviously, the difficulty varies from situation to situation, but difficulties starting at 7 are not unreasonable. The time, tools, and training required would be similar to the time, tools, and training needed to repair a device. If the tinkering results in a long-term benefit for the character—such as creating an artifact that she can use—the GM should require her to spend XP to make it.

Experience Points

Experience points (XP) are the currency by which players gain benefits for their characters. The most common ways to earn XP are through GM intrusions and by discovering new and amazing things. Sometimes experience points are earned during a game session, and sometimes they're earned between sessions. In a typical session, a player might earn 2 to 4 XP, and between sessions, perhaps another 2 XP (on average). The exact amounts depend on the events of the session and the discoveries made.

GM Intrusion

At any time, the GM can introduce an unexpected complication for a character. When he intrudes in this way, he must give that character 2 XP. That player, in turn, must immediately give one of those XP to another player and justify the gift (perhaps the other player had a good idea, told a joke, or performed an action that saved a life).

Often, the GM intrudes when a player attempts an action that should be an automatic success. However, the GM is free to intrude at other times. As a general rule, the GM should intrude at least once each session, but no more than once or twice each session per character.

Anytime the GM intrudes, the player can spend 1 XP to refuse the intrusion, though that also means she doesn't get the 2 XP. If the player has no XP to spend, she can't refuse.



If a player rolls a 1 on a die, the GM can intrude without giving her any XP.

Example 1: Through skill and the aid of another character, a fourth-tier PC reduces a wall-climbing task from difficulty 2 to difficulty 0. Normally, she would succeed at the task automatically, but the GM intrudes and says, "No, a bit of the crumbling wall gives way, so you still have to make a roll." As with any difficulty 2 task, the target number is 6. The PC attempts the roll as normal and gains 2 XP because the GM intruded. She immediately gives one of those XP to another player.

Example 2: During a fight, a PC swings his axe and damages a foe with a slice across the shoulder. The GM intrudes by saying that the foe turned just as the axe struck, wrenching the weapon from the character's grip and sending it clattering across the floor. The axe comes to a stop 10 feet away. Because the GM intruded, the PC gains 2 XP, and he immediately gives one of those XP to another player. Now the character must deal with the dropped weapon, perhaps drawing a different weapon or using his next turn to scramble after the axe.

Discovering New Things

The core of gameplay in *Shotguns & Sorcery*, as well as in other Cypher System games—the answer to the question "What do characters do in this game?"—is "Discover new things." Discovery makes characters more powerful because it almost certainly grants new capabilities or options, but it's also a discovery unto itself and results in a gain of XP.

Discovery can include finding a significant new location, such as a hidden chamber, a secret fortress, or a lost land. In this fashion, PCs are explorers. It can also include learning about a new and significant aspect of the world in general or Dragon City in particular, such as a secret organization.

Discovery can also mean finding a new procedure or device (something too big to be considered a piece of equipment) or previously unknown information. This could include a source of magical power, a unique teleportation device, or the cure for a plague. These are all discoveries. The common thread is that the PCs discover something that they can understand and put to use.

Lastly, depending on the GM's outlook and the kind of campaign the group wants to play, a discovery could be a secret, an ethical idea, an adage, or even a truth.

Artifacts: When the group gains an artifact, award XP equal to the artifact's level and divide it among the PCs (minimum 1 XP for each character). Round down if necessary. For example, if four PCs discover a level 5 artifact, they each get 1 XP. Money, standard equipment, and cyphers are not worth XP.

Miscellaneous Discoveries: Various other discoveries might grant 1 XP to each PC involved.

It's a fine line, but ultimately the GM decides what constitutes a discovery as opposed to just something weird in the course of an adventure. Usually the difference is, did the PCs successfully interact with it and learn something about it? If so, it's probably a discovery.

Experience point awards for artifacts should apply even if the artifact was given to the PCs rather than found, because often such gifts are the rewards for success.

GM Awards

Sometimes, a group will have an adventure that doesn't deal primarily with discovery or finding things. In this case, it's a good idea for the GM to award XP for accomplishing other tasks. A goal or a mission is worth 1 to 4 XP for each PC involved, depending on the difficulty and length of the work. A mission should be worth at least 1 XP per game session involved in accomplishing it. For example, saving a family on an isolated farm beset by raiding cultists might be worth 1 XP for each character. Of course, saving the family doesn't always mean killing the bad guys; it might mean relocating the family to a safer homestead, parlaying with the cultists, or dispersing the cult by revealing that the cult leader is a fraud.

Delivering a message to a hermit in a tiny cave isolated in the mountains—one that requires the PCs to face dangerous conditions and risk possible attacks by predators—is probably a mission worth 2 XP per character. On the other hand, if the PCs can travel directly to the cave, the mission is probably worth 1 XP per character. Thus, GM awards are based not only on the task, but on the PCs and their capabilities as well.

However, that doesn't mean the characters should earn fewer XP if they make a lot of lucky rolls or devise a clever plan to overcome obstacles. Being lucky or smart doesn't make a difficult challenge less difficult—it just means the PCs succeed more easily.

Player-Driven Awards

Players can create their own missions by setting goals for their characters. If they succeed, they earn XP just as if they were sent on the mission by an NPC. For example, if the characters decide on their own to help find a lost caravan in the mountains, that's a goal and a mission.

Sometimes character goals are more personal. If a PC vows to avenge the death of her brother, that's still a mission. These kinds of goals that are important to a character's background should be set at the outset of the game. When completed, a character goal should be worth at least 1 XP (and perhaps as much as 4 XP). This encourages players to develop their characters' backgrounds and to create opportunities for action in the future. Doing so makes the background more than just backstory or flavor—it becomes something that can propel the campaign forward.

Often the best scenarios are the ones in which the players take the initiative and are proactive about attaining a goal that they set for themselves. Whether they want to case and rob an elf lord's estate, start their own business, clear out an area of the wilderness to make their home, or anything else, players should make their own adventures sometimes.

Spending Experience Points

Experience points are meant to be used. Hoarding them is not a good idea; if a player accumulates more than 10 XP, the GM can require her to spend some of them.

Generally, experience points can be spent in four ways: immediate benefits, short- and medium-term benefits, long-term benefits, and character advancement.

Experience points should not be a goal unto themselves. Instead, they are a game mechanic to simulate how—through experience, time, toil, travail, and so on— characters become more skilled, more able, and more powerful. Spending XP to explain a change in a character's capabilities that occurred in the course of the story, such as if the PC made a new device or learned a new skill, isn't a waste of XP—it's what XP are for.

Immediate Benefits

The most straightforward way for a player to use XP is to reroll any roll in the game—even one that she didn't make. This costs 1 XP per reroll, and the player chooses the best result. She can continue to spend XP on rerolls, but this can quickly become an expensive proposition. It's a fine way to try to prevent disaster, but it's not a good idea to use a lot of XP to reroll a single action over and over.

A player can also spend 1 XP to refuse a GM intrusion.

Short- and Medium-Term Benefits

By spending 2 XP, a character can gain a skill—or, more rarely, an ability—that provides a short-term benefit. A character infiltrating the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship, where she spent a lot of time in the past, might draw on those experiences to know where a particular location might be, the names of faculty members, and so on.

Progressing to a New Tier

In *Shotguns & Sorcery*, progressing to higher tiers is not the players' only goal or the only measure of achievement. Starting (first-tier) characters are already competent and there are only six tiers. Character advancement has a power curve, but it's only steep enough to keep things interesting. In other words, moving up a tier is cool and fun, but it's not the only path to success or power. If you spend all your XP on immediate, short- and medium-term benefits, you would be different from someone who spends her points on long-term benefits, but you would not be "behind" that character.

The general idea is that most characters will spend half their XP on tier advancement and long-term benefits, and the rest on immediate and short-term benefits (which are used during gameplay). Some groups might decide that XP earned during a game is to be spent on immediate and short-term benefits (gameplay uses), and XP awarded between sessions for discoveries is to be spent on character advancement (long-term uses).

Ultimately, the idea is to make experience points into tools that the players and the GM can use to shape the story and the characters, not just a bookkeeping hassle.

Medium-term benefits are usually story based. For example, a character can spend 2 XP while climbing through mountains and say that she has experience with climbing in regions like these, or perhaps she spends the XP after she's been in the mountains for a while and says that she's picked up the feel for climbing there. Either way, from now on, she is trained in climbing in those mountains. This helps her now and any time she returns to the area, but she's not trained in climbing everywhere.

This method allows a character to get immediate training in a skill for half the normal cost. (Normally, it costs 4 XP to become trained in a skill.) It's also a way to gain a new skill even if the PC has already gained a new skill as a step toward attaining the next tier.

In rare cases, a GM might allow a character to spend 2 XP to gain an entirely new ability—such as a magical device, a special ability, or knowledge of a spell—for a short time, usually no longer than the course of one encounter. The player and the GM should agree on a story-based explanation for the benefit. Perhaps the ability has a specific, rare requirement, such as a tool, a magical widget, or a drug. For example, a character who falls out of a window and wants to avoid splattering on the cobbles below might spend 2 XP to recall a spell that will slow her descent so she can land safely.

The skill you choose for character advancement can be anything you wish, such as climbing, jumping, persuading, or sneaking. You can also choose to be knowledgeable in a certain area of study, such as history or geology. You can even choose a skill based on your character's special abilities. For example, if your character can make an Intellect roll to blast an enemy with mental force, you can become trained in using that ability, treating its difficulty as one step lower than normal.

In many ways, the long-term benefits a PC can gain by spending XP are a means of integrating the mechanics of the game with the story. Players can codify things that happen to their characters by talking to the GM and spending 3 XP. For example, a character named Petra spends a long time working in a tavern she believes is owned by a member of the Black Hand assassins. During that time, she becomes familiar with cooking. Petra's player talks with the GM and says that she would like the experience to have a lasting effect on her character. She spends 3 XP and gains familiarity with cooking.

Some things that a PC can acquire as a long-term benefit are story based. In the course of play, the character might gain a friend (a contact) or build a log cabin (a home). These benefits are probably not the result of spending XP. The new contact comes to the PC and starts the relationship. The new home is granted to him as a reward for service to a powerful or wealthy patron, or maybe the character inherits the home from a relative.

Things that affect character abilities, like a familiarity or an artifact, are different. They likely require XP and time, money, and so on.

Long-term benefits can include the following.

Familiarity: The character gains a +1 bonus to rolls involving one kind of task.

Contact: The character gains a long-term NPC contact of importance—someone who will help him with information, equipment, or physical tasks. The player and GM should work out the details of the relationship.

Home: The PC acquires a full-time residence. This can be an apartment in a city, a cabin in the wilderness, or a base in a dungeon. It should be a secure place where the PC can leave his belongings and sleep soundly. Several characters could combine their XP and buy a home together.

Title or Job: The PC is granted a position of importance or authority. It might come with responsibilities, prestige, and rewards, or it might be an honorarium.

Wealth: The PC comes into a considerable amount of wealth, whether it's a windfall, an inheritance, or a gift. It might be enough to buy a home or a title, but that's not really the point. The main benefit is that the PC no longer needs to worry about the cost of simple equipment, lodging, food, and so on. This wealth could mean a set amount—perhaps 1,000 gold coins—or it could bestow the ability to ignore minor costs, as decided by the player and GM.

Artifact: The PC creates an artifact that has a power of his choosing. If the item is fairly simple, the GM can skip the crafting details and just say that after a period of time, the PC creates it. For an item that significantly alters gameplay—granting the character the ability to control fire or fly at will—the GM might require difficult rolls, a considerable amount of time, and rare, hard-to-find components and materials.

GMs and players should work together to make XP awards and expenditures fit the ongoing story. If a PC stays in a location for two months to learn the inhabitants' unique language, the GM might award her a few XP, which are then immediately spent to grant the character the ability to understand and speak that language.

Character Advancement

Progressing to the next tier involves four stages. When a PC has spent 4 XP on each of the stages, he advances to the next tier and gains all the type and focus benefits of that tier. The four stages can be purchased in any order, but each can be purchased only once per tier. In other words, a PC must buy all four stages and advance to the next tier before he can buy the same stage again.

Increasing Capabilities: You gain 4 new points to add to your stat Pools. You can allocate the points among your Pools however you wish.

Moving Toward Perfection: You add 1 to your Might Edge, your Speed Edge, or your Intellect Edge (your choice).

Extra Effort: Your Effort score increases by 1.

Skills: You become trained in one skill of your choice, other than attacks or defense. If you choose a skill that you are already trained in, you become specialized in that skill.

Other Options: Players can also spend 4 XP to purchase other special options. Selecting one of these options counts as purchasing one of the four stages necessary to advance to the next tier. The other three need to be from the other categories. The special options are as follows:

- Reduce the cost for wearing armor. This option lowers the Speed penalty for wearing armor by 1.
- Add 2 to your recovery rolls.



Part 4: Setting



Chapter 10: Dragon City

Dragon City isn't the crown jewel in the center of a thriving empire overseen by a benevolent ruler. It's the last bastion of determined survivors thrown together onto an isolated mountain that stabs up out of an overwhelming sea of death like an island beset on all sides. The people of Dragon City didn't come here by choice but by desperation, and that fateful origin seeps into every brick and every stone.

A Little History

About five hundred years ago, a necromancer known as the Ruler of the Dead launched an all-out assault on the living peoples of this continent. Her zombie hordes ravaged the land from coast to coast, picking up the fallen and inducting them into her armies as they went. Entire nations fell before their unending onslaught.

As the forces of the Ruler of the Dead moved from west to east, some groups of people were forewarned by other survivors and were able to flee. Elves, dwarves, gnomes, halflings, and humans—even orcs, goblins, trolls, and other so-called monsters—scattered before the hungry dead, put aside their longstanding differences, and worked together for their mutual benefit. These refugees eventually gathered on a lonely mountain near the land's eastern shore, on top of which lived the most dangerous dragon in the world.

As the zombie armies made their way toward the mountain, the terrified survivors came up with a plan to stem the tide of the undead horde. The people petitioned the dragon who lived on top of the mountain to protect them so they could build a wall around the mountain, one strong and tall enough to keep the Ruler of Death at bay. In return, they would name him the Dragon Emperor and become his loyal subjects.

This offer intrigued the dragon, who had lived in isolation for untold centuries, emerging only to feed and plunder. Now rather than battling armies and slaughtering heroes, he would rule over people who would bring his tribute straight to him.

He agreed to the deal, which became known as the Imperial Pact.

Dragon City Today

Since that fateful deal was sealed, Dragon City has grown from a battlefield settlement into a thriving metropolis that tens of thousands of people call home. The city stretches from that reinforced wall — now known as the Great Circle — all the way up to the Dragon Emperor's palatial lair at the top of the mountain, in the Dragon's Spire.

Life in Dragon City has evolved over the past five centuries. Almost every square inch of the place has been converted from mountain into city, including miles of tunnels and chambers that run beneath the surface. Most people live in apartments or small homes, although the stately manors in the Elven Reaches show little sign of compromise.

The streets are paved with cobblestones, and they wind throughout most of the city, forming a maze that only the most knowledgeable and determined citizens can hope to navigate. People who can afford magical transportation soar over this challenge atop brooms or flying carpets and even inside the occasional blimp. Most folks don't own such costly rides, but hundreds of hacks are willing to rent out their vehicles to get people from one place to another at high speed.

During the day, the streets and skies throng with people going about their business.

At night, glowglobes illuminate most of the city's streets with their magical light. In the lower parts of town, people often steal these or simply shoot them out, but in the upslope sections, they help push back the darkness around the clock.

Most people in Dragon City just want to get by. Unfortunately, it's rarely that easy.

The Neighborhoods

Dragon City splits up into several major neighborhoods. Locals also like to note that every neighborhood also has its own sub-hoods, each with its own distinct flavor.

The main neighborhoods are—in order of their altitude, from highest to lowest—as follows:

- The Dragon's Spire
- The Elven Reaches
- The Stronghold
- Wizards Way
- Gnometown
- The Big Burrow
- The Village
- Goblintown
- Great Circle

Each of these is covered in greater depth later, but here's a quick overview.

The Dragon's Spire

The home of the Dragon Emperor and his entourage of servants and counselors. It sits at the absolute top of the mountain and features a great balcony from which the Dragon can watch over his people as they scurry about their lives below him.

The Elven Reaches

Many of the elves who live here took part in the battle against the Ruler of the Dead and signed onto the Imperial Pact. As peace came to the city, they claimed this barren area above the mountain's treeline and made it their own.

Despite the hostile terrain, the elves used magic to grow trees in the nearly frozen soil. Using spells and patience, they shaped these trees to form living homes for them that are as grand as a palace in any other part of the world.

No roads lead through this part of the city—they all stop at the Stronghold Gate—although people do walk between houses on paths that lead through tended parks. Walking in this part of town without an elf escort, though, is considered suspicious and can be grounds for arrest.

The Stronghold

When the dwarves settled in Dragon City, they carved out an area beneath the surface. They formally call this place the Dwarfheim, although everyone in town refers to it as the Stronghold instead. This is where they began their mines and their quarries, but they have now transformed it into a subterranean city ruled over by the Dwarven Council. It would probably be considered a city all on its own if the Dragon Emperor hadn't forbade that to be so.

The main entrance to the Stronghold sits on the edge of a rolling plateau. The massive stone arch, known as the Stronghold Gate, towers over the area and reminds visitors of the dwarven devotion to architecture. The roads up from the rest of the city all end here, at Siegebreaker Square, where the refugees sustained a prolonged siege against the undead while they negotiated the details of the Imperial Pact.

Wizards Way

The wizards who settled Dragon City long ago argued that they needed a location in which they could concentrate on their studies. It had to be removed from the rest of the city, they claimed, to keep the wizards above the concerns of the people in the streets. The rest of the city—eager not be blown to bits in a magical experiment gone awry—agreed to this condition.

The Dragon Emperor assigned the Wizards Council a narrow plateau of land that sits atop a rocky spur that stabs out high over the Village below. The wizards reshaped the land, transforming it into Wizards Way, and there they established the Academy of Arcane Apprentices, where they could both study the nature of magic and bequeath their knowledge to later generations.

Gnometown

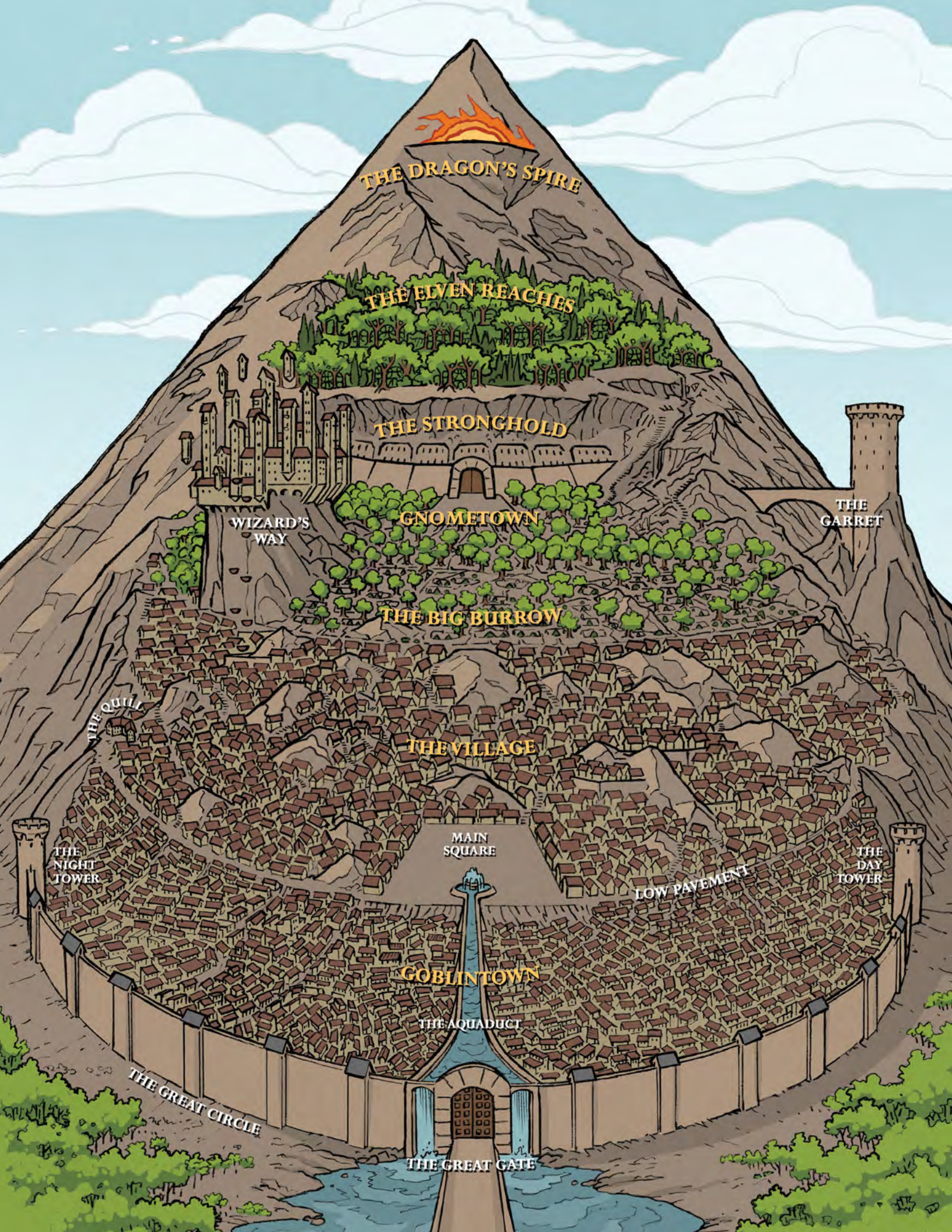
The gnomes took over a section of land in a wooded part of the mountain and turned it into a proper neighborhood, right below the Stronghold Gate. This section of town features tree-lined streets, mostly because the gnomes live in homes hidden beneath the roots and wedged among the trunks of those trees.

This is the quietest of the lower neighborhoods. The gnomes keep mostly to themselves and like it that way. Most of the homes and shops in this area feature low ceilings, making it difficult for anyone larger than a dwarf to feel at home. Adventurous diners often make their way up here to sample their cuisine, though, which features root vegetables and fungi grown in basement gardens.

The Big Burrow

The halfling families that made it to Dragon City for its founding spotted a massive knoll high in the trees and decided that this would be their home. Together, they dug out a massive complex of half-buried homes and shops that spread down from the knoll all the way to High Pavement, the street that borders the upslope side of the Village.

The Big Burrow—also called the Big Hill—is renowned for its shops and especially its restaurants. Halflings pride themselves on providing comfort for their guests, no matter who they might be, and most of the places are built to accommodate even humans or elves.


THE DRAGON'S SPIRE
THE ELVEN REACHES
THE STRONGHOLD
WIZARD'S WAY
GNOMETOWN
THE GARRET
THE BIG BURROW
THE QUILL
THE VILLAGE
MAIN SQUARE
THE NIGHT TOWER
THE DAY TOWER
LOW PAVEMENT
GOBLINTOWN
THE AQUADUCT
THE GREAT CIRCLE
THE GREAT GATE

The Village

When the first refugees made it to the mountain, they congregated at the headwaters of the Crystal River. The settlement that coagulated here became known as the Village, and it's now the heart of the human part of the city. While this locale was once home to all the races, the longer-lived peoples moved upslope, and the green-skinned peoples were forced down closer to the Great Circle, leaving mostly humans behind.

The Village stretches across the entire city, from High Pavement on its upslope border to Low Pavement at its downslope edge. Most residents consider Old Market Square, which sits just above Low Pavement, to be the center of the city.

Goblintown

The dregs of the city wind up in Goblintown, washed up against the Great Circle. This is, by far, the worst part of town, filled with killers and thieves and their powerless victims. Most of the people who live here are greenies—orcs, goblins, trolls, and the like—people with a greenish hue to their skin, although anyone who's fallen from grace can end up here, even the rare elf.

The buildings in Goblintown are little more than shanties or shacks, supposedly temporary housing stacked against and atop each other with centuries of filth until it forms a twisty hive laced with despondency and despair. The streets are filled with beggars of all ages and conditions, and the alleys brim over with muggings and murders.

Great Circle

The Great Circle is the unbroken wall that towers above Goblintown and surrounds the entire city in its protective circumference. It stands high above even the tallest of the ramshackle apartment buildings in Goblintown, forever dousing that part of the city in its shadow.

The main part of the wall stretches between the Day Tower to the east and the Night Tower to the west. The Imperial Dragon's Guard patrols it every hour of the day, under the guidance of Captain Maurizzio. Anyone caught on the wall or moving in or out of the city without express permission is to be shot on sight, and the Guards take their job as if the entire city depended on them—which it does.

Racism

The neighborhoods of Dragon City are segregated by racism. There are some exceptions—and heroes are notable for being such rule-breakers—but the rule is that most people live among their own kind. The farther apart they live on the mountain, the rarer it is to see them together in any situation.

The Village is the most accommodating of all the neighborhoods. Anyone from upslope is welcome within its borders, and many people make their way up to the Old Market Square from Goblintown as well. Greenies often labor under suspicions wherever they show their faces, though, and the higher they go up the mountain, the more overt this becomes.

People who work their way down the mountain are often seen as slumming it. The farther down they go, the worse this is. An elf seen voluntarily in Goblintown, for instance, would face great shame upon her return home, but the same elf might barely raise an eyebrow with a venture into the Stronghold.

This inherit racism factors into more than just social shame, of course. Orcs are barred from many places above the Village and are treated with outright hostility in the Stronghold and the Elven Reaches. Some have even been summarily executed, and their killers faced no penalties after they explained that seeing such a person in the wrong place made them fear for their life.

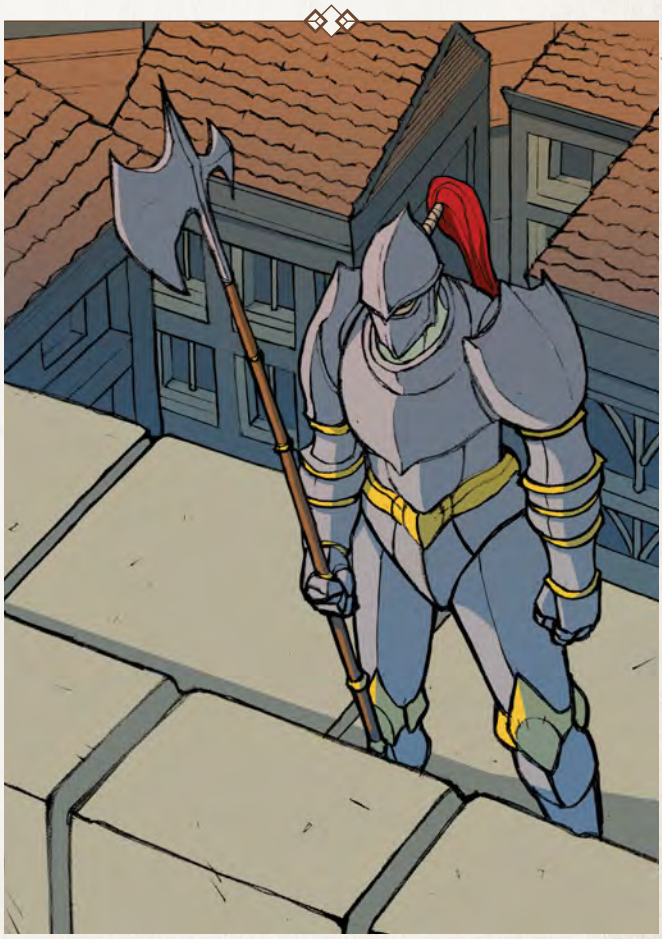
The Guard

The Imperial Dragon's Guard comprises the Dragon's teeth and claws in Dragon City. They execute his will—and anyone that cares to stand in their way.

There are three distinct branches of the Guard. The regular Guard—the one that most people see on a regular basis and, if they've ever done anything wrong in their lives, fear to their core—is the Imperial Dragon's Guard. They patrol the entirety of the city inside the walls. The elf in charge of them is Captain Yabair, who's been at the job for more years than anyone cares to remember, and he's just as harsh and jaded about his fellow citizens as you'd expect.

Most of the people in the Guard are elves, with a few dwarves tossed in for good measure. They're the only people the Dragon trusts with carrying out his will.

The second branch of the Guard patrols the Great Circle and staffs the Night and Day Towers. It's their job to protect the city from any external threats—and to keep people from escaping, although that's not nearly as much of a concern. The elf in charge of that is Captain Maurizzio, a cousin of Yabair.



The Auxiliary Guard

When it became clear that the Guard couldn't muster enough elves to patrol the entire city—particularly its lower reaches—Yabair instituted the Dragon's Auxiliary Guard. Its officers are charged with patrolling the city from Gnometown down to Goblintown, and they deal mostly with low-level offenses, the kinds of petty crimes Yabair can't be bothered with himself.

The Auxiliary Guard admits gnomes, halflings, and humans to its ranks. Orcs and other greenies are not officially barred, but by the same token, they are never hired.

Corruption runs rampant through the Auxiliary Guard, much to Yabair's consternation. He would prefer to keep the Auxiliary in line with an iron fist, but he has his hands full with the regular Guard. While the Auxiliaries regularly embarrass him, he sees them as the best solution to an intractable problem. Not enough elves care about what happens downslope for them to join the Guard, so unless the Dragon drafts them himself—something he's shown no sign of considering, despite repeated requests—the Auxiliary Guard must suffice.

Precinct Houses

When the Guard arrests someone, they are usually brought to the nearest precinct house. There's at least one in each of the neighborhoods inside the city, although the Village has three. They each consist of offices, a locker room for the Guards, an interrogation room, and a jail with holding cells.



Prisoners are brought into the offices and booked. Then they're tossed into one of the holding cells until they can be hauled before an arbiter. If the Guard feels like interrogating someone, they can bring in a truthsayer—a wizard who specializes in drawing the truth out of people—but they often simply do their level best to beat confessions out of prisoners with their fists instead.

Under the Imperial Pact, the citizens of Dragon City have the right to a trial—although it doesn't mention anything about it having to be fair or speedy. Some people languish in a precinct jail for weeks or months. Many of them consider themselves lucky to be there, though, rather than the Garret.

Law and Justice

Officially, the laws in Dragon City are simple. Whatever the Dragon says goes.

As a practical matter, the law is a bit more complicated and has been built up by collecting the Dragon's dictates over the centuries. Many things are illegal, including stealing, assault, and murder—the sorts of things any civilized society frowns upon—but there are a few unique standouts.

Corpses

Because of the influence of the Ruler of the Dead, there's a risk that any dead body within the boundaries of Dragon City could rise up and start attacking people. To prevent this from happening, citizens are required to turn over all dead bodies to the Dragon City Morgue as soon as possible.

Officially, those responsible for the deceased have a mourning period of up to seven days before they must turn over the body. Most people, however, submit the body within three days, if not sooner.

Because an undead elf can be such a dire threat to the city's security, if an elf's body is not surrendered to the morgue within those seven days, the Imperial Dragon's Guard is authorized to collect any of the deceased's living relatives in their stead. Because of this, elves tend to keep a close eye on their relations, if only to ensure that they don't find themselves dragged off to the morgue as well.

Illegal Substances

The Dragon doesn't much care if the people of his city want to get wasted. They can drink themselves sick, and they're free to smoke all the pipeweed they can get their grubby hands on. There are two things he doesn't wish for them to abuse though, and they're both related to him.

Dragonfire is a liquor infused with dragon essence. When you drink it, it gives you a boost to your mojo, although it, of course, intoxicates you at the same time. Dragonfire is strictly prohibited and, at the same time, widely available. Many people drink it recreationally, while some wizards abuse it ritually, giving themselves a short-term edge when they need it most.

The Imperial Dragon's Guard is under orders to destroy any dragonfire it finds, and it's rare for a week to go by without them executing a raid on one speakeasy or another. They prefer to break open the casks of the stuff on the front steps of such places, and then they ignite the spilled liquid. Those on the hunt for dragonfire can often identify such places by the scorches on the streets in front of them. It's not long after the Guard leaves that busted speakeasies find new supplies.

The Guard takes the scourge of dragon essence far more seriously. This is a powdered substance of reddish gold that feels warm to the touch. Users generally snort or smoke the stuff, and it gives them an intense high unrivaled by anything else.

Wizards who use dragon essence get a huge boost to their mojo, although the incredible high that comes with it often makes them useless for much of anything they haven't planned for well ahead of time. For that reason, it's often used for longish rituals that require both huge amounts of power and little in the way of movement.

There's only one potential source for dragon essence that most people in Dragon City know of: the Imperial Dragon himself. People generally assume that it comes from scales the Dragon has shed, or the trimmings of his mighty claws, but how the material then makes its way back down the mountain to the rest of the populace remains a mystery to them.

Court

If a citizen is accused of a crime, they are hauled before an arbiter, who judges their guilt or innocence. Those of means can often put up bail—or leverage it via a bail bond—so they don't have to spend the entire time before their trial in jail. The poor or powerless languish in their cell instead.

The arbiter is a person of good repute, appointed by the Dragon himself. Each precinct house has at least one, although most have three. They work independently of each other, except for particularly thorny cases, for which they may convene a tribunal in which the arbiters involved each have a vote.

Arbiters serve in their position for as long as they like, which means that most of them are behind the bench for life. Arbiters are chosen from the race associated with each neighborhood, even in Goblintown—mostly because no one else wants the job. The life expectancy of arbiters in Goblintown can be measured in heartbeats.

The Garret

Punishment that arbiters hand down can vary from fines to time in the public stocks. Dangerous criminals, though, wind up in the Garret, the most impregnable prison around. The mere threat of being thrown into can make even the toughest crooks whimper.

The Garret sits on a promontory that stabs out of the eastern side of the mountain, off above Gnometown. On foot, it can only be reached by a bridge that stretches from its front gate to a small plateau on which visitors mass each morning before being let in. It's a cold, forlorn place endlessly whipped by frigid winds coursing through the thin air.

The Garret is built entirely of cut stone and steel bars. The guards there are among the hardest people in the city, mostly dwarves, including the warden himself. They brook no dissent from their prisoners.

Sentences in the Garret are rarely less than a year, and they can stretch on for decades. Many of the prisoners commit suicide rather than continue to suffer there endlessly, and the guards—understanding the impulse all too well—make no effort to curb it.

Some of the cells are enchanted to be able to handle monsters of various types. A vampire named Alcina sits in one, for instance, although she likes to tell anyone who will listen how she's the actual power behind the prison.

Sustenance

While there are farms and ranches farther up the mountain on isolated plateaus outside of the city proper, they can't produce enough food to keep everyone inside the city happy and healthy. Most people supplement whatever they can grow, butcher, or buy with magical food. While you can live on such stuff indefinitely, those who do claim that it's somehow not as filling, and they often find themselves craving natural food instead.

Two rivers run through the city, accumulating from rain and snowmelt trickling down from the top of the mountain and gaining in size as they go. The first of these is the Crystal River, which runs beneath the surface for much of its journey. It eventually emerges in the Village, and from there it runs a high ridge through Goblintown until it reaches the Great Gate. At the gate, it splits in two, each branch spilling down over a shoulder of the gate in a massive cataract that tumbles into a small lake outside of the city. From there, its waters meander toward the sea.

The other main river is known as the Ash River. It's actually a flow of graying lava that emerges in the eastern part of the Village and wanders down into Goblintown before disappearing underground again. People often throw their garbage into it and watch it burn. The prevailing winds carry the ashes off to the east, although many days they become trapped inside the Great Circle and swirl above Goblintown instead of reaching the open sky.

Countless wells are also scattered throughout the city, many of which are available for public use. People with magical abilities often generate their own water, and many places have magical taps that produce water—hot or cold—upon demand.

Families

Dragon City is filled with families of all kinds. The ones that live at the top tend to be the traditional nuclear families with the males who work while the females take care of the homes and children. The farther down the mountain you go, the less true this becomes.

This is born more of necessity than anything else. As poor as the people of Goblintown are, it's hard for any families down there to be able to make any kind of living at all without both parents working. They simply don't have the luxury of the lifestyles the upslope peoples consider traditional.

Similarly, families in Goblintown and the Village often have three or more generations living under the same roof. Sometimes these families are far more complex too, with siblings, half-siblings, and step-siblings rotating in and out of places as ages and circumstances dictate.

Children

The population of Dragon City is already stretching the city's resources to its limits. There's no law against adding to the city's numbers but doing so can be expensive. Having one or two children is within most people's means, but more than that is frowned upon, especially the higher up the mountain you go.

Wizards have perfected magical birth control, so there are relatively few unplanned pregnancies in the city. Most of these happen down in Goblintown, where people have less access to such magical tools.



Most children are home-schooled, although there are private schools scattered throughout the city. These are not cheap, but despite this, most people in the city are literate—upslope of Gobintown, at least. In Goblintown, families often pool together to share childcare responsibilities, freeing more of the adults up to work.

The Dragon's Spire

The Imperial Dragon has made his home in this mountain for time immemorial. He lives in a massive cave he hollowed out at the top of the mountain, carved into its snow-capped peak. Since the founding of Dragon City and his installment as emperor, his cavern has only become more posh and perfect—at least by his standards.

Visitors enter the Imperial Palace by means of a gigantic balcony that overlooks the city. Most fly their way there, as the climb is long and treacherous. If they are not expected when they arrive, the crack platoon of the Imperial Dragon's Guard that stands watch in the Spire day and night greets them—often with bullets. Although they carry ceremonial spears tipped with red steel, they do not take chances when it comes to protecting the Dragon.

The Grand Balcony itself is chilly and regularly covered with snow the Guard sweeps or shovels aside. The area is wide enough for the Dragon himself to sprawl out in comfort alongside his entire entourage. A single massive archway one hundred feet high yawns at the north end of the balcony and leads straight into the Dragon's lair.

Inside the Palace

The Dragon's body gives off a tremendous amount of heat, enough to keep the interior of the spire warm and dry. The Guards stationed there all seem immune to it, as does anyone else who works there. This particularly includes the Voice of the Dragon, an ancient elf who wears a burning cloak and whose every bit of hair has long since been singed away.

The entire chamber is decorated with priceless gems and precious metals. In the back of the chamber sits a golden dais, on top of which spills a mound of treasure that serves as the Dragon Emperor's bed. The coins in that trove often glow red from the heat. Most of them are bent or warped in some way and over the years many of them have actually melted together.

The Voice of the Dragon perches in a golden throne that sits next to the Dragon Emperor's bed. He is immune to fire, and he has the power to discern if those who speak to him are telling the truth.

Beyond the Dragon's bed, a stairway leads down to another level several yards below. This is where the staff lives, eats, and sleeps while on duty. While the hallways here are wide enough for the Dragon to pass through—although just barely—he rarely bothers to do so. His servants bring everything he needs straight to him, and he has no desire to go rummaging through their quarters.

Although the Dragon hardly needs defending, he hates to be bothered. A full platoon of Guards are stationed here at all times. They rotate out with units downslope on a weekly basis. The Voice himself, though, never leaves the Dragon's side. He is, by all accounts, the Dragon's sole means of communication.



The Elven Reaches

The elves who signed the Imperial Pact claimed the highest reaches of the mountain—besides the Spire itself—as their home. The dwarves conceded this to them, as they had no desire to live above ground, much less near the top of a mountain, and the rest of the peoples didn't care to argue the point. The Elven Reaches are a chilly and windswept land, and while the elves didn't mind such weather, everyone else preferred more temperate conditions.

This gave the elves the space they wanted and the quiet they preferred. They took advantage of their relative isolation to create a utopian neighborhood free from the kinds of wants and diseases that plagued the city's lower levels. Or so it seems, at least from the outside.

In truth, the Elven Reaches are thoroughly corrupted, not by money but by influence, accumulated favors, and coagulated offenses built up over centuries. The ever-shifting matrix of alliances and enmities may seem unreadable to outsiders, but to those who live in the Reaches, it binds them as tightly as a straightjacket.

The Elves

There are fewer elves in Dragon City than there are of any of the other races. They lost a great deal of their numbers staving off the Ruler of the Dead's forces at the time of the founding of Dragon City, and elves produce children more slowly than any other race. Because of this, they prize their offspring above all else.

Partly because of their upbringing, elves come across to others as spoiled and haughty. Combine that with their long lives, which offer them the chance to consider long-term ventures in a way that most of the other races—except perhaps the dwarves—can't begin to contemplate, and you can see how they manage to accumulate power and wealth.

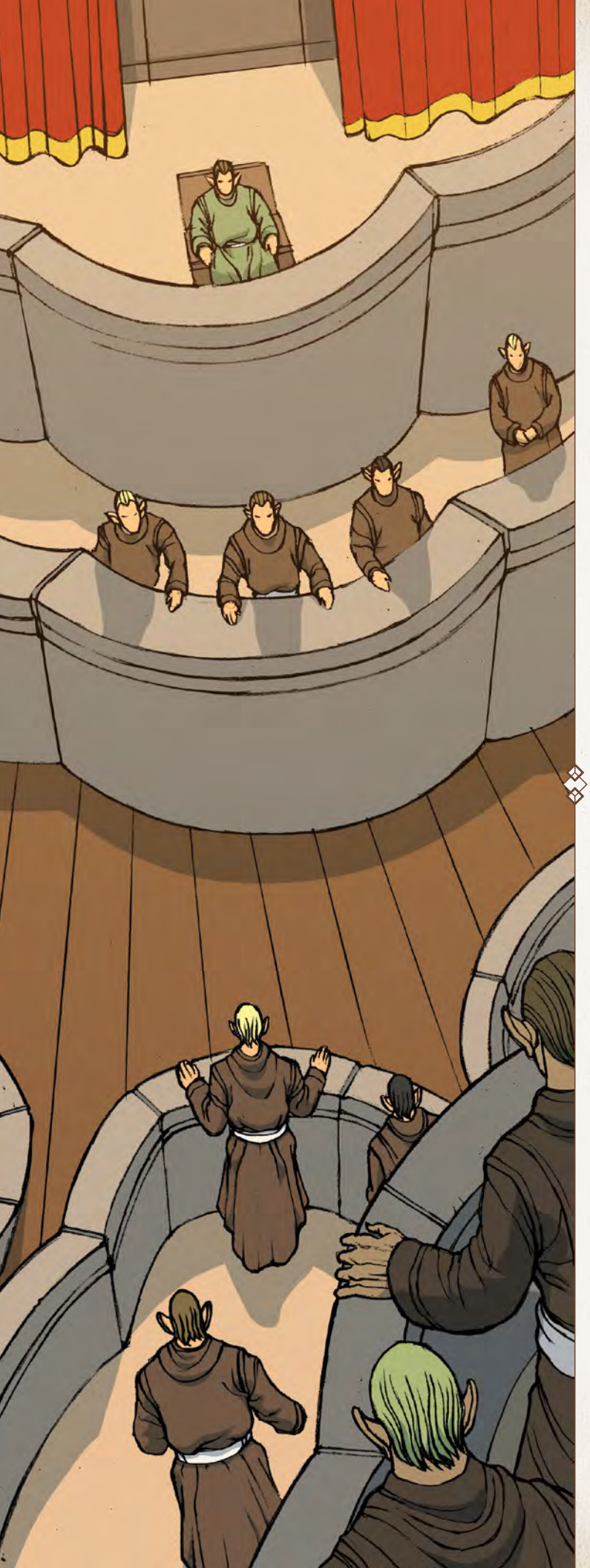
Elves plan their lives out on the scale not of days and months but decades and centuries. They are patient and prefer to take their time to make any important decisions. This also makes them slow to sense the need for change.

An elf's reputation means everything to them. Their accomplishments follow them around for their entire lives—as do their errors. They often go to great lengths to erase reports of such errors before they can spread, but they can't always control their families' actions as much as they would prefer. They often experience shame by association, and it taints them for decades.

The Elven Senate

The Elven Reaches are ruled by a direct democracy known as the Elven Senate. Once per year—or more often, if necessary—the elves of Dragon City convene a senate in which to discuss current issues. They debate them back and forth and then vote on them. Each adult elf casts their own vote, and the majority rules on each issue.

The issues the Elven Senate debates, of course, only apply to the Elven Reaches. They can offer proclamations and even advisory statements to the Dragon, or to any of the other neighborhood governments, but these hold no more weight than the people who receive them give them. The Dragon often ignores them entirely.



Places

Most of the Elven Reaches is residential. There are few shops of any kind. Some of the elves have their own places to create things—meals, weapons, magical items, and so on—but these are integrated into their estates.

If you want something from someone, you visit their home and commission it from them. Those items are then handmade to your requirements and instructions. You may have to wait weeks if not months or years for your order to be filled, but when it is, you know that it will be the best quality item of its kind.

Of course, elves aren't the only ones who live in the Elven Reaches. There's also a substantial population of humans and halflings who work at various estates as servants. Such servants always wear formal uniforms when on duty. When off-duty, they either travel downslope or—as is more common—stay in their private chambers hidden deep within (sometimes even under) their employers' estate.

The homes in the Elven Reaches are uniformly magnificent estates perched on particular parts of the mountain. It's difficult to move between them without being able to fly, although the elves manage it. A single trip next door can require hours to manage, though, so the elves always try to make sure that such ventures are worthwhile.

The only public building in the entire neighborhood is the open amphitheater in which the Elven Senate meets. It consists of a stage in the center of a narrow plateau, with seats fanning upward along the side of the mountain, carved into its living stone. This venue can be rented for other events, although only elves of good standing are permitted to do so.

Ennui

After living for several centuries, some elves have a hard time coming up with any more reasons to get up in the morning. They simply quit doing it and instead lie about their homes, smoking pipeweed—or even dragon essence—and contemplating the mysteries of nature, time, and fate.

Given how reclusive most elves can be, it can take months if not years before their neighbors notice that they've disappeared from public view. Even then, most such elves are quietly cared for by their servants while the younger members of the family take on the job of overseeing their households.

The Stronghold

While the Elven Reaches were a place to which the elves could flee when the zombie hordes approached, the Stronghold is where the dwarves laid in to prepare to survive the Ruler of the Dead's long siege. It's not a haven but a fortress.

While it's hard to wander into the Elven Reaches, it's almost impossible to stumble over the Stronghold. It has one well-known entrance—the Stronghold Gate—which the Imperial Dragon's Guard watches over every minute of the day. The other entrances are both secret and, when feasible, locked. No outsider would be likely to find them, even if hunting for them.

No flying is permitted inside the Stronghold, whether by device or direct magic. Those who approach the Stronghold Gate by air must set down in Siegebreaker Square or be shot from the sky.

The Dwarves

The Stronghold is occupied almost exclusively by dwarves. They carved the place out of the mountain themselves, and they consider it their hard-earned home. Dwarves of any kind are always welcome here. Those who are not dwarves, though, are often viewed with suspicion and treated with caution.

While the dwarves may not be as snooty as the elves, outsiders often consider them hidebound by familial roots and traditions. It's hard to get dwarves to make an important decision without first consulting the other members of their clan. These conversations are often held over ales and stiffer drinks and can take the better part of an evening. They often don't come to any sort of conclusions at all.

Dwarves know that anything they do reflects on the rest of their clan. However, dwarves prize cleverness over intellect and directness over subterfuge. They prefer to be funny and blunt rather than cool and deceitful.

This is, perhaps, one reason they value alcohol so much. Drinking is a huge part of their culture, and they do not trust those who refuse to drink with them.

While dwarves can spend weeks and months underground, never seeing the sun or feeling a fresh breeze, they have come to appreciate the open air as well. The wealthiest dwarves have balconies that look out over Dragon City from above. All of these, however, are under the Imperial Guard's constant watch, to prevent any intruders from slipping into the Stronghold unseen.

Dwarves like to wear their hair and their beards long and to fashion them in elaborate braids. A common dwarf saying is to "bet your beard or braids," since to lose such things would mark a dwarf with shame.

The Dwarven Core

The dwarves govern their neighborhood by means of the Core, a council comprised of the most powerful dwarves in Dragon City. This includes the leaders of each of the great dwarf clans, plus a number of others who have either commanded or weaseled their way into the Core.

The Core meets as often as necessary—usually once per week— to debate the issues of the day and decide which path the people of the Stronghold shall take. The meetings are often contentious, and it's not unheard of for members of the Core to come to blows over matters vital to their own interests.

Each of the dwarf clans automatically places its own leader in the Core, and the Core itself approves any at-large additions. Less than half of the members of the Core were alive when Dragon City was founded. One of those includes the dwarf who's been the chair of the Core the entire time: Benno Bricht.

The Dwarven Way

The Stronghold is notoriously and openly corrupt. If you want to get anything done in the Stronghold, you need to fill empty palms with gold. Otherwise, you can be sure to stumble into roadblocks thrown into your path.

The Bricht clan has a stranglehold over all mining operations in the entire mountain, for instance. Those who want to set up any kind of a dig—especially in the Stronghold part of the city—face strict regulations. These are overseen by the Core and enforced by the Imperial Dragon's Guard, but they were dictated by the Brichts. Because of this, few organizations and almost no people could possibly afford to set up a competitive mine or quarry. Some people attempt this in secret, but if they're discovered, they're shut down, hard, which can include collapsing the entire illegal dig onto itself.



Despite this, the Stronghold runs like a smoothly oiled machine. If you have the cash or the influence, you can make things happen. You can also make any problems you have—up to and including murder charges—go away. The only thing that you can't buy your way out of is trouble with the Dragon himself. If you're one of the working stiffs, though, you're usually out of luck either way.

Siegebreaker Square

Most of the roads from the lower part of the mountain lead up to the only part of Dwarfheim that sits above ground: Siegebreaker Square. It was here that the army of what would become Dragon City held off the forces of the Ruler of the Dead—and here that, with the help of the Dragon, they eventually broke the siege. The great stone arch at the end of the square commemorates that.

Today Siegebreaker Square is lined with shops and stalls that sell goods and services in demand inside the Stronghold, and further downslope as well. The shops, which are permanent buildings, are all owned and operated by dwarves. Their patrons are usually people from other parts of the city who would rather deal with the dwarves in the open air rather than venture into the subterranean Stronghold.

The Core allows for a number of temporary stalls that line the outside edge of the square as well. These are mostly run by non-dwarves who wish to do business with the dwarves and would rather come to the dwarves than force their patrons to travel to them. Dwarves are usually willing to pay a premium for high-quality goods, so the prices are higher here than they would be in other parts of the city, like the Old Market Square.

Those with the means come from all over the city to shop here. There are few shops in the Elven Reaches, so most of the elves come here to purchase whatever they need—or, more likely, send their servants to do so on their behalves. Wealthier people from downslope, especially Wizards Way, often make the pilgrimage to shop here as well.

The Clan Hall

The Core meets in a vast underground chamber with high vaulted ceilings, known as the Clan Hall. This is generally not open to the public, although any dwarf can visit the Clan Hall on days when the Core is not meeting. Dwarves can also request to speak with the Core, and these inquiries are considered on an individual basis. Most are granted automatically, although a few cranks are barred for all but the most vital matters.

The Core gathers around a table that's built to resemble the arch in Siegebreaker Square. The leader of the Core, Benno Bricht, sits at the top of the arch, with the rest of the Core arrayed around him in order of importance. Those who appear before the Core walk into the open end of the arch and speak while surrounded by the members of the core. The speaking area is recessed so that even a human standing there has their head lower than the dwarves assembled around them.

Armed guards line the walls of the Clan Hall. These are loyal to the Stronghold rather than the Dragon, but to avoid incurring the Emperor's wrath, they are rarely seen outside of the Clan Hall. While the Core is in session, they protect its members. At other times, they stand guard over the Great Vault.

The Great Vault

The Great Vault is a gigantic room in which the Core stores the greatest treasures in all of Dwarfheim. The door that leads into the Great Vault is twenty feet wide and forty feet high, and it's made of a single stone slab a yard thick. The Stronghold arch is carved into its exterior face, framing a crossed pickaxe and hammer.

The entire symbol sparkles with gold, platinum, rubies, and diamonds inlaid throughout. The rubies and diamonds actually move, flowing like water, so that it seems that the symbol is on fire.

The Great Vault contains ancient weapons, powerful artifacts, and a variety of enchanted items beyond compare. However, the most valuable item in the Great Vault is the set of stone tablets on which are carved the text of the Imperial Pact, sometimes known as the Dragon City Compact. These are permanently set into the walls of the Great Vault, and they display not only the original agreement that founded the city but also the signatures of all those who agreed to it five hundred years ago.

The exact text of the Imperial Pact is a tightly held secret. Those born and raised in Dragon City are aware the gist of it, but few know the particulars it contains. The elves who were around to sign the Imperial Pact and who still live to this day know what it says, though, even if it's been five centuries since they've read it.

Wizards Way

Below Siegebreaker Square, off to the west, a spur of the mountain stabs out high over the lands below. The very tip of it towers over the Village at an angle that would defy any attempts to climb it. The top of the spur is relatively flat, sloping upward as it moves away from the bulk of the mountain to form an impressive outcropping, at the end of which sits the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship.

A road winds up to this area from the heights of Gnometown, snaking back and forth until it reaches the beginning of the spur. The road then veers straight for the gates of the Academy. Over the years, several wizards have built towers of their own alongside that road, which is why it's now known as Wizards Way. The entirety of the neighborhood takes its name from this road.

The architecture in this part of town differs from everywhere else. The ledge on which the Academy sits has been magically reinforced and extended so that it looms farther out over the Village than any natural outcropping could. Many of the towers that line Wizards Way have been similarly enhanced. In fact, some parts of them float high in the air without any sort of visible support at all.

Each of the towers and the Academy itself are sequestered from the general public by high fences and large gates, not to mention various sorts of magical defenses. Anyone can walk along Wizards Way freely but getting inside any of the buildings along its path requires either clout, an invitation, or both.

It's a challenge to reach Wizards Way by foot. Those in a hurry—or with enough cash—take a taxi. Everyone else rides up from the Village in a massive basket that carries them up to the Academy via a levitation column. There have been a few spectacular accidents with these over the years, but it's been a long while since anyone died in such an incident.

The Wizards

Wizards make for a strange and mixed lot of souls. They hail from all walks of life—rich, poor, and of every race. The one thing they all have in common is a talent for magic and a determination to build the skills they need to use it.

While the Academy is officially open to anyone, in reality, the vast majority of its students are humans. That's partially because there are more humans than any other sort of race in Dragon City, but several other factors come into play.

Most elves are powerful enough without wanting to worry about becoming a wizard, and they don't care to come down the mountain to slum it with the rest of the Academy. Dwarves and gnomes tend to keep to themselves. Halflings don't thrive in such a rigid environment as the Academy, so most who have some talent don't bother to apply—or wash out soon after they arrive.

People from Goblintown often cannot afford the tuition, although the Academy makes a big show of offering scholarships to those who cannot pay. They also face bigotry from many of the instructors and even their fellow students. It's far easier to find a shaman of some sort in Goblintown and serve as an apprentice to them instead.

The Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship

The Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship was founded soon after the Great Circle went up around Dragon City. The greatest wizards of the time realized that they needed to foster magical



talent in as much of the city's population as they could manage—as a hedge against the failure of the Imperial Pact, if nothing else—so they banded together to become the instructors at the Academy.

Previously, most wizards in the land took on their own apprentices at will and served as their masters until the students were ready to stand on their own. While some wizards still prefer that sort of arrangement, they are the exception. The vast majority of fully qualified wizards work with the Academy, and most of those also graduated from the Academy themselves.

Studying at the Academy is a process that can take years. Children are admitted to the Academy as young as 13 years of age (for humans), and they tend to graduate from their apprenticeship at the age of 21. Full wizards are not yet qualified to teach, though, and being certified for that can take another decade or more. Only at that point can a wizard receive an invitation to join the Academy's staff. Exceptions can be made for incredibly powerful or gifted wizards, but these exceptions are rarer even than kobolds in the halls of the Academy.

Wizards associated with the Academy live, eat, and sleep there year-round. It becomes their new home, with their fellow wizards as their new family. This cloistered life gives them the chance to concentrate on their studies, but it also insulates them from the concerns of the rest of the city—which can be both good and bad.

The Wizards Council

The governing body of the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship is a group of the most powerful magic-users in Dragon City, known as the Wizards Council. By the Academy's charter, the Council consists of at least five wizards, but the roster currently sits at eleven. These wise people oversee the Academy and Wizards Way and advice the Dragon Emperor on all magical issues.

The Council works by simple majority rule. In case of a split, the vote of the Council's chair breaks all ties.

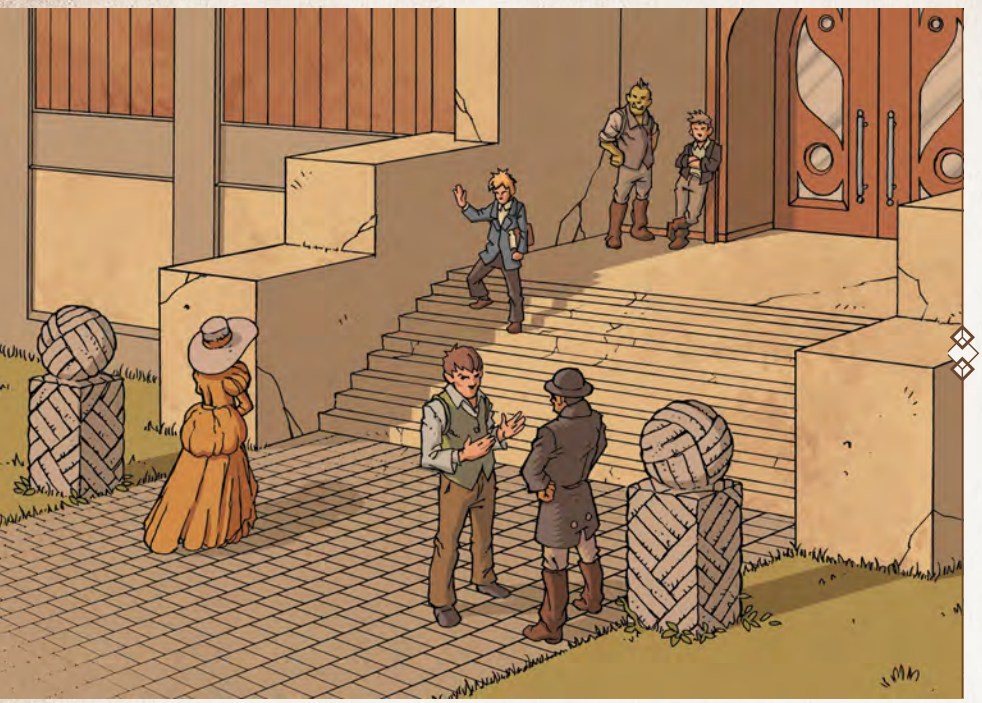
These days, the chair of the Council is Bill Whitman, a skilled wizard who worked his way up to the position by means of his pleasant nature and steely resolve. He's been in charge of the council for over two decades, and he shows no sign of slowing down. Rumor has it he's using his magic to keep himself young and, if so, he might not ever step down from his post. At least not willingly.

Richard Gibson is also on the Council, although he's given up any hope of ever becoming the chair. He's an excellent wizard who's dedicated his life to the Academy, but he doesn't have the political chops—or the overriding ambition—to unseat Whitman, whose influence spreads far beyond his simple tie-breaking vote.

Celia Parsons works as the Council's secretary. She keeps the organization running smoothly and does most of the actual labor for it, while the rest of the Council concentrates on the bigger picture. Many see her as next in line for a seat on the Council. The only roadblock at this point is somehow finding someone to replace her as secretary.

The Towers

Many of the wizards on the Council have homes of their own outside of the Academy's grounds. The Academy takes up most of the acreage along Wizards Way, leaving only small plots for the rest of those who live there. Because of this, the residents were



Officially, the Dragon City Hospital is outside of Wizards Way, which makes it easier for people from the lower parts of the city to reach it without incident. The only thing that stands between any citizen and being cured of whatever ails them, then, is the ability to pay. The triage nurses at the hospital work in concert with the hospital's administration to make sure they don't stretch their resources too thin helping poor patients who have no means of payment. Those who have plenty of cash are admitted without question, while folks who can't cough up enough gold are put on waiting lists or outright refused admission.

Most of the healers who work in the hospital studied at the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship. They spend far less time in the ivory towers of that institution, preferring to get blood on their hands instead. Most of them are there to help people rather than make money, though, and it's not unheard of for a healer to storm past the triage nurses to help someone in need whether their pockets are full or not.

forced to build upward, and they used their magical abilities to construct beautiful towers employing impossible architecture.

The first towers along Wizards Way were modest things of timber and stone, but that didn't last long. Wizards of the Academy tend to be a competitive bunch, and they soon took to trying to outdo each other by means of the opulent and obvious splendor of their homes. The towers spiraled high and higher until they began to crowd out the sky.

When simple height wasn't enough, the wizards added dazzling lights, booming sounds, and other magical effects to call more attention to themselves. This reached a point at which illusions of full-on battles involving hordes of dragons raged in the skies above the towers. That crossed the line of what the Dragon Emperor was willing to tolerate, though, and illusory decorations that included loud sounds or images of dangerous creatures were banned.

The wizards returned to wildly imaginative architecture instead, and the competition between them on that front continues on to this day. Most of the towers have been established for centuries at this point, and there's no open land left in Wizards Wary. However, there's nothing stopping new owners from tearing down old places and starting over from scratch to create their own outlandish towers.

The most recent example of this is the opulent tower of Danto Wu, which he started building a decade back, with profits made from his illegal adventuring career. He's since started a smaller academy of his own that functions outside of the purview of the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeships.

The Dragon City Hospital

There are scores of healers practicing their trade throughout Dragon City, from the swankiest herbalist in the Elven Reaches all the way down to the scummiest bleeders in Goblintown. When it's a matter of life or death, though, the best place in town to get medical help is the Dragon City Hospital, which sits at the end of Wizards Way closest to the mountain.

Gnometown

Gnometown sits on the highest end of Dragon City that's easy to reach on foot. It's a quiet little community with few shops and almost zero in the way of restaurants and entertainment. The gnomes value their privacy and long ago decided not to develop any ventures that might draw other people to their communal home.

Most gnomes live in their own little houses with ceilings low enough to make a halfling feel claustrophobic. They have small but tight families that are extremely loyal to each other. They spend most of their time either with those families or with whatever sort of work to which they've dedicated themselves.

Many older gnomes don't work for pay at all. They saved up enough throughout their lives—or inherited it from their ancestors—that they can afford to retire and live simply on that amount. Still, a good number of them then return to their hobbies, making them into at least part-time occupations. A great deal of the art and inventions created in Dragon City springs from Gnometown, and much of it is sold to upslope patrons who wish to impress their friends. The gnomes are only too happy to exploit this.

The Gnomes

The gnomes of Dragon City would much rather have been left alone to live in their subterranean homes in forest around the land. Unfortunately, the Ruler of the Dead's army proved tenacious—or at least hungry enough—to start digging the gnomes out, and they were forced to flee. They took up with the rest of the people begging the Dragon for a chance to live, and they soon after became part of Dragon City.

Gnomes are a reclusive lot, quiet and competent. They openly fear going to Goblintown or dealing with anyone who hails from it. Truth be told, they're not too sure about anyone who lives below Gnometown at all.

When someone who's not a gnome wanders into Gnometown, they're watched every instant. The Imperial Dragon's Guard is usually called and shows up within minutes. They accost any strangers and demand to know their business. Those without decent answers are escorted out of the area—or to a precinct house jail cell if they resist.

The Little Moot

Gnometown is already set up just the way the gnomes like it, and they're so reclusive it's rare for them to interact much with their neighbors, much less have conflicts with them. Because of this, Gnometown has no official governing authority. The gnomes simply concede all such decisions to the wisdom of the Dragon and leave it at that.

When the rare issue arises that requires input from the entirety of Gnometown, they call together a Little Moot. During this, every citizen of Gnometown who has the ability and inclination to join the event gather in Moot Park, a beautiful, wooded area right in the heart of the neighborhood.

At the meeting, the gnomes all have a chance to speak their mind, and they keep at it until no one feels like they have anything more to say. This can take hours, even days. By the time it's over, many of the participants have left, some abandoning the effort in disgust. Those who stick it out generally resolve to not force another Little Moot to happen for as long as they can possibly manage it.

The Big Burrow

The Big Burrow is actually a series of grassy knolls that sprawl along under the wooded neighborhood of Gnometown. They stretch from one side of the Great Circle to the other and reach down to the upper end of the Village. While there are many human-style buildings throughout the area, most of the neighborhood consists of grass-roofed homes and businesses dug out of the side of the area's rolling hills.

Where Gnometown is quiet and residential, the Big Burrow throbs with activity. The halflings who joined the flight to the mountain that would become Dragon City were the ones ready and willing to leave their hometowns rather than be slaughtered in their homes, and it's the descendants of those daring souls who now run the most vibrant part of the city. Cozy shops and delightful restaurants line the streets, with lines forming outside of the most popular ones every night. The elves and dwarves who don't mind leaving their own neighborhoods often shop here, drawing the line before they reach the Village. The halflings cater to them, as upslope clientele stands ready to pay the highest prices they can demand.

Most of the streets of the Big Burrow feel like little more than winding paths. They follow the curves of the hills there, so there's not a single straight line that crosses the entire city up there. This gives the neighborhood a homey feel, but it also makes it a challenge to navigate. Even halflings who have lived here their entire lives can find it hard to locate new places, and when it comes to giving someone directions, forget about it.

The Halflings

While most of the people of Dragon City seem like they're trapped there, the halflings have embraced the big-city life. They don't see Dragon City as the last outpost of a doomed civilization but instead as an unparalleled opportunity to not only do some amazing business but also have some incredible fun. To that end, the Big Burrow can often feel like a party that never ends.

It's not that the halflings don't understand that they're caught between Death and the Dragon, as the Dragon City saying goes. Rather than deny that fact, they embrace it. They feel that if they're going to die, though, they should have themselves the best possible time they can before the inevitable end.

Because of this, halflings tend to ignore the laws of Dragon City—right up to the point at which they figure they might attract the attention of the Guard. In their minds, it's not a question of right or wrong but whether or not the risk of punishment is work the potential reward from the supposed crime. The biggest crime in the Big Burrow comes from misjudging the situation and having the Dragon's claws— a.k.a. the Guard —come down on you for it.

Because of this the Big Burrow pulses with life. If you're looking for action of any kind, this is the place to find it.

The Mayor

Just because the Big Burrow thrives on chaos doesn't mean that it doesn't need some order. From the beginning, the halflings of the neighborhood have banded together to elect themselves a mayor to oversee any disputes they may have. Elections are theoretically free and open, although they really devolve down into who can swing the most influence to buy themselves the most votes.

The current mayor, Fergus O'Malley, rode into the job on the coattails of the previous mayor—his mother, Maggie—after she retired. He's continued her easy-going policy of "anything goes," and so far, his constituents have rewarded him handsomely. Like Maggie, Fergus peddles his influence to anyone that will pay him for it.

Despite this, Fergus really does have the best interests of the Big Burrow and even Dragon City at heart. He knows that if either of these things falls apart, he's not only out of a job. He and everyone he's ever cared about will likely be slaughtered as well. Because of this—and despite his ever-present smile—he takes his job seriously and tries to be circumspective about any potential abuse of his limited powers.

The Barrelrider

One of the best-known restaurants in the Big Burrow is the Barrelrider, a traditional halfling-style restaurant situated on the west central side of the neighborhood, right near the border with the Village. It serves a diverse clientele, even allowing Goblintown residents to patronize the place upon occasion. As the owner, Nit Erdini, likes to say, "I don't care about the color of anyone's skin. Their gold all spends the same."

Nit runs the restaurant with his wife Nora. Their grown children—including the ex-adventurer Moira Erdini—often stop in to help out or mooch a meal. In addition to large portions of excellent food, they also serve dragonfire to their trusted guests.

Moira's pal Max Gibson rents the apartment upstairs from the Barrelrider, which is accessed by way of a separate stairway that runs up the east side of the building. He uses the front room as his office and sleeps in the back. Although Max sometimes draws in the wrong kind of visitors, he keeps the restaurant from being robbed often enough to help balance things out.



The Village

In many ways, the Village is where Dragon City began, and it remains the largest and most populated part of the city. While the majority of people who live here are humans, people of all types rub shoulders here, even if only for a few moments at a time. Because of this, the most commerce happens here as well.

The Village tends to spill over its boundaries, but it officially extends from High Pavement—which runs east-west along the Big Burrow on the upslope side—to Low Pavement, which borders Goblintown on the downslope side. This gives it the largest stretch of land of any of the neighborhoods, as well as the highest population, something that appalls many upslope citizens, who see the Village as noisy and messy—although tolerably less so than Goblintown, of course.

The streets of the Village may not shine like they do in Gnometown, but that's because they're filled with traffic during the day and even deep into the night. The people here interact with each other in a way that makes the rest of the city seem shy and reserved—or maybe just scared. Residents of the Village are not always peaceful with each other, but they're rarely shy about expressing their opinions or showing how they feel. They live their lives in the open, for all to see.

The Humans

The humans of Dragon City know that most of the people who live upslope consider them just a scant few steps above scum. If it wasn't for the green-skinned folk who live in Goblintown, they'd be at the bottom of the barrel rather than floating in the filthy layer just above it.

Despite that, humans have a tenacity of will and a flair for business and organization that the folks upslope seem to lack. Perhaps the fact that humans have some of the shortest lifespans in the city only adds to their sense that they have to work hard to get anything of value done in the little time nature allots to them.

Outside of the Wizards Council, humans aren't trusted with much responsibility inside the city. They produce the bulk of the city's goods and labor, and without them, the city's economy—both legal and illegal—would collapse. From the point of view of the elves and dwarves, though, humans are unpredictable and rarely plan for the long term, so true power is withheld from them.

The Board

The Village was founded on the gentlest part of the mountain's slopes, and soon afterward, a Village Board was gathered to oversee it. At the time, this consisted of trustees of all kinds drawn from each of the peoples who had assembled in the shadow of the Dragon to plead for his help. Once the other neighborhoods were founded, though, the members of the longer-lived races moved upslope, though, while the green-skinned folks got shoved down to dwell in the shadow of the Great Circle.

Each of the upslope sections of the city has its own form of local government. When there were only humans left on the Village Board, though, the trustees began putting forward ideas meant to advance their rights under the Dragon City Compact. While each individual human didn't have much power, the trustees realized that together they could influence both the Dragon Emperor and the fate of his city.

That lasted until the Board came to an impasse with the Dragon over the fact that no humans had been made a part of the Imperial Dragon's Guard, despite the fact that the Guard was charged with overseeing the entirety of the city. After prominent humans suffered abuse at the hands of the Guard—up to and including being killed—the Board voted for the people of the Village to go on strike.

This did not end well.

When informed of the Board's decision, the Dragon personally flew down to their next meeting and slaughtered every one of the trustees. He declared the Village Board null and void and that he would oversee the neighborhood directly, just as stated in the Dragon City Compact. To show that he wasn't entirely deaf to the pleas of the Villagers, though, he ordered the foundation of the Dragon's Auxiliary Guard to watch over the Village and Goblintown below.

While many humans whisper that the Dragon destroyed the Board because he feared the Village's collective power, those who live upslope read the situation differently. They saw the Dragon's actions as a warning to them and their own local governments to never become too ambitious. They now had little doubt that if they ever sought to overstep their bounds the Dragon would take swift and terrible action against them.

The Village has never had any local government since. The residents there simply tolerate each other and the patrols of the Auxiliary Guard as best they can. If they have problems, they can petition the Dragon for direct help, but few are so ambitious or brave to attempt it.

The Old Market Square

The center of the Village used to be the Old Market Square. It was here that the people who founded Dragon City first met to trade goods and services, and that tradition continues on to this day.

The square is bounded by Low Pavement on its downslope side, and shops of all kinds surround the square on each of its four sides. There's a massive fountain in the middle of the cobblestones that line the square, with a well to the east and west of it. People shop here all throughout the daylight hours, and they stumble among the many restaurants, cafes, and taverns scattered throughout the place at night.

A circle of stalls surrounds the square's fountain. These are temporary places, thrown up each morning and dismantled every evening. Some of them stay up overnight on many days, but the Auxiliary Guard comes through about once a week to clear the square from one end to the other. If they encounter any challenges, they call in the regular Guard to back them up, and it's rare for any merchant to challenge their authority. None ever succeed.

The Imperial Dragon's Museum

A few blocks north of the Old Market Square sits the Imperial Dragon's Museum. The Dragon himself ordered the place built here near where his shortest-lived citizens resided, to ensure that they would never forget how the city came to be.

Most of the displays focus upon the glory of the Dragon himself and the debt the people of the city owe to him for deigning to save their lives. One small room contains a few special objects that are less than one or two hundred years old, but the vast majority of the items on display here date back to the founding of the city or beyond.

One particular section explains the Dragon City Compact and the benefits and responsibilities it places upon the city's residents. It does not, however, feature the full text of the Compact. That resides only in the Vault deep inside the Stronghold, and copies of it are not permitted to be made.

The Quill

The Quill is one of the best-known dives in the Village. It squats on the upslope side of the far western end of Low Pavement. The entrance is on the southeast corner, under a sign of a quill dipped in ink. The door is thick and banded in iron, with speakeasy slots at both human and halfling levels.

Despite the security, anyone is allowed in during the day. At night, the door is staffed by a bouncer, especially if dragonfire is being served in the main room. The door won't do much more than slow down the Guard if they barge in, but that often gives the rest of the staff the precious few moments they need to hide anything incriminating.

The Quill's main room can hold over fifty people, although most nights the crowd is a bit lighter than that. The bartender is a human named Thumper, who has an eidetic memory for his patrons and their drinks. There are rooms upstairs in which friends can crash, although they often stand empty.

There's also a stairwell to the attic, which features a hatchway that opens onto the tavern's roof. There's another hatchway in the floor behind the bar. This leads to a secret tunnel that spills out through the cliff face below the bar's western windows, which overlook the Great Circle and the undead-riddled lands beyond. The canopy of a massive oak hides the tunnel's exit.

In the northern end of the building, there's a cellar dug out of the mountain's rock. Thumper keeps the bar's supplies stocked here. This features a locked cage in which the most expensive items are stored, including several small casks of dragonfire.

The Quill has long been a hangout for adventurers looking for their next mission. Max Gibson met many of his friends here, and their sorties outside the Great Circle paid off so well that Max eventually bought the bar. He doesn't like to advertise the fact, though, so most of the place's patrons only know him as one of the Quill's longtime regulars.



Goblintown

The hovels, shacks, and shanties that surge up against the inside of the Great Circle like a rising tide form Dragon City's worst neighborhood, bar none: Goblintown. This is where the green-skinned people of the city live, work, and starve. Squashed right up against the Great Circle, they can hear the undead clawing and scratching on the other side of the wall at any time, day or night. From that noise, at least, there is no escape.

Goblintown wasn't founded so much as it grew. No one who signed the Dragon City Compact gave much thought to the fate of the greenies that wound up inside the city's walls. They just knew they didn't want them roaming about their neighborhoods.

When the construction of the Great Circle was laid out, it curved well south of the Village, giving the city ample room to breathe both then and in the future. As the green-skinned people were forced out of the Village—and barred from most other locales upslope—they found themselves pressed up against the newly built wall. Having nowhere else to go, they set themselves down in the Great Circle's lengthening shadow and shot roots.

The architecture of Goblintown is completely unplanned. The poverty of its residents means that quality materials are rare or nonexistent. The buildings are clapped together out of scrap wood, rocky rubble, ill-cut sheets of rusty metal, and all sorts of other odds and ends castoff by people upslope or the workers who built the Great Circle. They weren't built by artisans but instead by trial and error.

It's not uncommon for a Goblintown building to spontaneously collapse, especially the ones in the center of the neighborhood, which are low and shaky. The edifices improve in quality the nearer they get to the Village, enough so that some humans—either open-minded or desperate—are willing to live in these places.

The buildings grow in height as they get closer to the Great Circle. Many of these are ramshackle apartment buildings several stories tall that lean up against the cut-stone wall for support. The rooftops form a rough-made canopy of open balconies and crude kitchens that stretch the entire length of the Great Circle, between the Night and Day Towers, and at night the cook-fires glow atop them like fireflies in a filthy forest.

The people of Goblintown navigate the neighborhood by memory and landmarks rather than standard directions. The streets of Goblintown are mostly alleys that connect various small squares that appear at irregular intervals in the cityscape. They form no recognizable grid of any kind.

Most of these alleys have no names, and few of the buildings have numbers to identify them. Some of the bigger squares still have glowglobes posted about their perimeters, but the majority of places in Goblintown stand dark, the public lighting long ago stolen or destroyed.

The Greenies

Greenie is a slur some of the upslope residents of Dragon City use to refer to the green-skinned people who live in Goblintown. This includes goblins, kobolds, orcs, hobgoblins, and trolls,



among other kinds of creatures. In the time before the founding of Dragon City, these sorts of people often fought against the upslope peoples in sporadic wars.

When the armies of the Ruler of the Dead began their long march across the continent, the question was no longer about the color of your skin but whether or not you still drew breath. The living united against the inexorable waves of the walking dead, and orcs and elves fought alongside each other for the first time in any memory.

After the Great Circle was built and the immediate threat ended, however, the green-skinned people were pushed as far away from those in power—and as low down the mountainside as they could go. Those who live above the Village rarely interact with the greenies, and the Imperial Dragon's Guard does its best to make sure they never have to.

The Gangs

The various peoples who reside in Goblintown have their own cultures, of course, but they've been forced to live so close together for so long that these have melded together into a communal culture unique to Dragon City. The Dragon has never permitted them any form of self-government, perhaps fearing the kind of damage they could do if they managed to unite in any form. They have no board, no council, and no elections of any kind.

Instead, the people of Goblintown tend to organize themselves into gangs centered around the neighborhood's most powerful personalities. The trouble is that as soon as one gang threatens to become ascendant, the others team up to tear it down. For this reason, few gangs have more than a couple dozen members, and most of them can never muster more than a handful at any given time.

The few times in the past that a Goblintown gang has risen to prominence, the Imperial Dragon's Guard has crushed it fast. Even the rumor that such a group is growing in power can be enough to bring down the Dragon's wrath.

Despite this, most Goblintown residents strong enough to lift a bat or fire a pistol belong to one sort of gang or another, if only for mutual protection. These gangs often wage war on each other, which the Guard does nothing to discourage. From the Guard's point of view, it's better to have the people of Goblintown squabbling among themselves over the scraps they have rather than turning their attention upslope, since only the Dragon knows where that might end.

The Tunnels

The land under Goblintown is riddled with tunnels of all kinds. Many of these were carved out of the mountain when the Great Circle was built, but others have been constructed since. Most of them stand unlit and uninhabited.

Only the most desperate people of Goblintown would dare take up residence here. While the tunnels are supposed to terminate long before they reach the Great Circle, legends say that some of these twisting passages lead under the wall, emerging into hidden areas outside of the city. Only the fact that they are so well hidden keeps the roaming armies of the dead from finding them and worming their way inside the city.

No one wants to be the first people to discover that these legends are true. It would be bad enough if the undead crept up into the city and snatched people from their homes, but it would be horrifying for it to happen deep beneath the surface, where no one could even hear your screams.

The Skinned Cat

The Skinned Cat is a notable tavern squatting somewhere in the heart of Goblintown. It's been located in several places during Dragon City's long history, and it's often had to move, usually after one sort of disaster or another.

Sometimes the entire place burned down. More often than not, it was leveled by a massive brawl. Once, it collapsed into a subterranean tunnel that everyone involved claimed they didn't know was there.

Each time the Skinned Cat is remade, it winds up in a new place—and often with a new owner—but with the same clientele. The only thing that persists through every version of the place is the tavern's sign: a wooden carving that depicts a hairless cat howling at the sky.

If the Skinned Cat has more than one room in its current version, one of those rooms is usually set aside for gambling. It would be wrong to call these friendly games, as a number of people have been killed during them over the years. The regulars generally find the games a pleasant way to pass the time, even if their disagreements sometimes mean the destruction of the Skinned Cat once again. They have plenty of time to cool off before the next version of their favorite tavern opens its doors for them.



Great Circle

The Great Circle is the massive wall that protects Dragon City from the Ruler of the Dead's undead armies that roam the lands beyond. It stretches roughly fifty feet tall, although this varies along the length of the wall. It's often farther to the ground on the inside of the wall than it is on the outside.

In most sections, the top of the wall stands about thirty feet wide and is lined by crenellations on both sides. The top of the wall is usually reached by stone stairs carved into its interior. These are usually watched by the Imperial Dragon's Guard, and in some places, they are blocked off entirely—or have even been dismantled to keep people from using them.



The wall is uninterrupted along its entire length, with one exception: the Great Gate. This structure looks like a set of double doors, but they are made entirely of solid stone. They were built by the Bricht clan and imbued with magic by the Wizards Council. While they can theoretically be swung open by means of that magic, this has never been done since the completion of the wall. The risk is simply too great.

The Crystal River flows along an aqueduct that carries it from the Village to the Great Circle, bypassing much of Goblintown. The aqueduct forks when it reaches the Great Gate, splitting the river in two, and each branch flows over the shoulders of the Great Gate, spilling into a wide basin beyond.

The Towers

There are two major towers along the Great Circle: the Day Tower and the Night Tower. They both stand over a hundred feet tall, and the Imperial Dragon's Guard staffs them every hour of the day, watching over the Great Circle and the distant lands beyond. They keep a lookout for movement from the Ruler of the Dead's vast armies of zombies, which roam free about the surrounding lands.

The Ruler of the Dead isn't one to squander her resources on fruitless attacks. She hasn't amassed her forces to launch a full-on attack against Dragon City in over a century. However, she does like to send in smaller teams to test the Guard's readiness from time to time, probing for a weakness she can exploit to their doom.

The Day Tower stands on the east side of the Great Circle. If you're standing in the Old Market Square at dawn on Midsummer's Day, the sun comes up directly in line with the Day Tower. At dusk on that same day, the sun goes down straight through the Night Tower in the west.

Beyond the towers, the Great Circle curves up more treacherous angles of the mountain. The natural formations of the terrain make these parts of the wall far easier to defend. The Guard's patrols may be thin here compared to those that stride between the two towers, but that doesn't mean that the rest of the wall goes unwatched.

The Ruler of the Dead has never mounted a serious attack against the rest of the wall. The lands nearby them are simply too treacherous for an army to traverse, even one composed of the dead. When the attack comes—no matter when it happens—she plans to throw her forces straight against the Great Gate until it comes crumbling down.

No Circle

The Great Circle isn't really a circle at all. While it has a circular bend in the stretch between the Night and Day Towers, the rest of the wall follows the dictates of the mountain's terrain.

On top of that, the Great Circle doesn't actually surround the entire mountain. Instead, it covers the mountain's southern slope, from the Great Gate all the way up to the Dragon's Spire. It spreads out like a fan from the Dragon's lair, and its arms curl around to embrace the city at its base.

The wall does a fine job of making the city inaccessible from the mountain's other slopes. The lands fall away drastically from the stretches of the Great Circle that wind upslope from the Night and Day Towers. While a determined mountaineer might be able to scale such heights, no army of the dead would be able to manage it, and so the city has remained impervious to such attacks since the Great Circle was completed five hundred years before.



Chapter 11: Organizations

Dragon City is a large place, and while the Dragon Emperor watches over it all, he mostly ignores the things that don't concern him. He lets the various neighborhoods worry about themselves and deal with their own internal squabbles.

It's rare that the Dragon Emperor has to intervene personally. When he does, the mountain shakes with his rage. This gives the people involved in any disputes an excellent incentive for sorting things out on their own. No one wants to be immolated in the Dragon's fiery breath.

Imperial Dragon's Guard

The most visible organization in the entire city is the Imperial Dragon's Guard, mostly because of their crimson red uniforms and their authoritarian attitudes—and the fact they can arrest people at will. When a Guard gives an order, they expect it to be followed to the letter, immediately. Those who refuse to do so—for any reason—can hope for a short stay in the local precinct house at best. If that's not possible, they can maybe wish for their death to be painless.

The regulations for the Imperial Dragon's Guard—as spelled out in the Dragon City Compact—insist that guards use non-lethal spells whenever possible. For the most part, they stick to that, although they have wide latitude when it comes to determining when they need to employ lethal methods. Dead citizens also find it hard to file complaints.

Any elf who wishes to join the Guard can do so. Only the most dedicated elves volunteer for such positions, and attrition has slowly lowered their numbers over the years. Dwarves are welcome in the Guard as well, although the call of their warbands is often stronger.

Not too many gnomes or halflings join the Auxiliary Guard, which is limited to the regions below the Stronghold. Those that do often patrol their own neighborhoods, and they often have a taller partner at their side to help emphasize their authority.

The Auxiliary Guard is mostly made up of humans looking for a decent job. Some of them really do want to help clean up Dragon City's streets, while others just want access to the benefits that rampant corruption provides.

A few orcs have joined the Auxiliary Guard, but they're restricted to patrolling Goblintown. They're all too aware that they're stuck on the lowest rung on the Guard's ladder, and their fellow Guards remind them about it every chance they get.

Elven Reaches Noble Houses

Many of the elves who live in the Elven Reaches were old before the founding of Dragon City. They carry on the traditions of their people, dating back untold centuries. To them, the founding of Dragon City—and even the rise of the Ruler of the Dead—are recent developments, stories that have yet to find an end.

There are three main noble houses in the Elven Reaches: the Selvaggios, the Magellis, and the Tarantos. Each has their own flavor and style, but they are all elven to the bone. The members of each house that share its name are often closest to their leaders, but it's not uncommon to see elves with all sorts of surnames in each house. The houses have evolved over the years, absorbing lesser families and even smaller houses.

The Magellis

Leader: Antonio Magelli

The Magellis originally hailed from the northern part of the continent, where they built their homes on permafrost and carved them from ice. They are the most at home in the Elven Reaches, where they claimed the highest and chilliest levels of the mountain. This puts them within an arrow's flight of the Dragon's Spire: close enough to hear his snores.



The Magellis are the oldest and wealthiest of the elves. They rarely move farther down the mountain than the lower ledges of the Elven Reaches, and most citizens of Dragon City have never actually seen one of them.

The Tarantos

Leader: Lucia Taranto

The Tarantos lived in high valleys clustered along the continent's main mountain chain. They grew their high-arching houses from birch trees and the like, and legend has it that they invented dragonfire—and dragon essence too—although they formally deny such rumors.

The Tarantos are the elves most dedicated to the Dragon City Compact. Many of them serve in the Imperial Dragon's Guard, including Captain Yabair and Captain Maurizzio. They are known for their humorless ways.

The Selvaggios

Leader: Constantine Selvaggio

The Selvaggios came from the woods in the southern part of the continent. They lived in the canopies of those trees, but in Dragon City, they've adopted the architecture of the Tarantos instead. They are the most outgoing of the elves, engaging in commerce throughout the city—on both the regular and the black market.

The Selvaggios always stand by their word, and they expect those they deal with to do the same. They have long memories and refuse to forgive slights against them—unless they can exact some sort of satisfaction.

The Sanguigno family is part of the Selvaggios.

Stronghold Warbands

The dwarves of Dragon City follow their ancient tradition of warbands: groups of families banded together under a single banner for a common defense. Although there are dozens of smaller groups, five major warbands rule over the Stronghold: the Brichts, the Hildebrands, the Jaegers, the Konigs, and the Steins.

The Brichts

Leader: Benno Bricht

The Brichts are by far the most powerful of the dwarf warbands in Dragon City, but they fought their way to that position by assassination, intimidation, and skullduggery. No one likes them much, but everyone respects them. They have no other choice.

The Brichts established their power by banding together all the architects and stonecutters in the city under their banner. While most dwarves lived simple lives before the advent of the Ruler of the Dead, they found their skills in high demand with the founding of Dragon City. They leveraged their new power, placing themselves in high positions throughout the Stronghold, even as they carved the place from the mountain.

Today, nothing happens within the Stronghold without the Brichts' say-so. They maintain an iron grip on the Core and show no signs of relinquishing it. Their only weakness may be in their callow youths, who remember little of how the Brichts came to power. They exhibit all of their parents' ruthlessness but none of their drive.

The Hildebrands

Leader: Timo Hildebrand

The Hildebrands are the proudest of the dwarf warbands, although their fortunes have fallen over the centuries. They formed the bulk of the dwarven forces that fought against the armies of the dead at Dragon City's founding. They held the undead off long enough for the Brichts to build the Great Circle, and they led the action at Siegebreaker Square that shoved the zombies back behind the walls.

The Dragon himself covered the Hildebrands in glory, but the shine on that has faded over the past five hundred years. In an effort to regain some of that bygone sense of triumph, many of the Hildebrands have joined the Imperial Dragon's Guard. There they can still serve their people and their city, at least in their own small ways.

The Jaegers

Leader: Fritz Jaeger

Before the founding of Dragon City, the Jaegers were the most outgoing of the dwarves. They preferred to go out and hunt down their enemies rather than walling themselves up in fortresses of stone. They took the greatest losses of all the dwarf warbands in the battle against the Ruler of the Dead, and they find little of their traditions represented in today's Stronghold.

The Jaegers mostly work as merchants these days, although their honesty and forthrightness often hamper them in their competition against less scrupulous sorts. A few of them have given up such shopwork to become adventurers, roaming outside the Great Circle to make their fortune in the most dangerous way possible—or die trying.

The Gütmanns were part of the Jaeger warband.



The Konigs

Leader: Kriemhilde Konig

Of all the warbands, the Konigs have fallen the farthest, but they started from the greatest height. Before armies of zombies wandered the land, the Konig warband ruled the greatest of the dwarf kingdoms. They lost many of their numbers when they refused to leave their homes behind, even when they were overrun.

Those Konigs who did escape with their lives were broken dwarves. When they tried to claim leadership over the Stronghold, the Brichts ruined them once again. They now live in the poorer parts of the Stronghold, subsisting off the scraps of what they once had, and they dream of better days and a return to the glory their people once knew.

The current leader of the Konigs, Queen Kriemhilde, lives in dingy apartment in the lowest part of the Stronghold. She has been plotting to recover her people's power for decades, but senility has set in, making her even less of a figurehead than before.

The Steinmetzes

Leader: Wilma Steinmetz

If any of the warbands ever had a chance to stand up to the Brichts, it was the Steinmetzes. Mostly miners, they knew as much about pulling stone from mountains as anyone, and they could have stopped the Brichts from establishing an effective monopoly on the craft just when Dragon City needed it most. The Brichts knew this as well, though, and they kept assassinating leaders of the Steinmetzes until one arose who was willing to cut a deal.

The Steinmetzes effectively subjugated themselves to the Brichts on that day, and that relationship continues unabated. The Steinmetzes do most of the actual work of maintaining the Great Circle, while the Brichts focus on using their power to control the Stronghold, and as much of the rest of the city as they can manage.

Most of the Stienmetzes are grateful that the Brichts haven't ever seen a reason to wipe them out. Others know the Brichts only keep the Stienmetzes around as a blatant example of their power and how far they're willing to go to maintain it. They bristle at this disparity, even if they don't see any way to remedy it.

Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship

The Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship holds its own kind of monopoly within Dragon City on magical education. If you want to learn how to become a wizard, you technically must study at the Academy.

While some wizards—like Danto and a number of shamans that live deep in Goblintown—openly defy this law, the Guard hasn't historically done much to enforce it. Both the Wizards Council and the Guard know that the only reason for the law was that the Dragon wanted to have all the wizards in the area in one place so he could keep an easy eye on them—and destroy them, if necessary. Quietly allowing wizards to live and work outside of the Academy gives the wizards options should the worst come to pass.

That said, the vast majority of wizards study at the Academy. The biggest exception is green-skinned students, who don't always feel welcome on Wizards Way. The irony that those students might be the last bastion of magic in the city should the Dragon's claws come down is not lost on the Wizards Council.

Arcane Concentrations

Within the Academy, there are several different schools or concentrations for apprentices to study. Most students pick a single concentration for the bulk of their studies and become experts in that one field, while others pick and choose what they like, often delaying their graduation to full wizard in the process.

The major concentrations within the Academy include:

- **Conjuring:** The creation of objects from thin air.
- **Healing:** The use of magic to repair harm.
- **Illusions:** The manifestation of false sensations.
- **Magineering:** The use of magic to imbue standard items with magical properties.



- **Visions:** The use of magic to predict the future or communicate with other places. Can also be used for spying. The Truthsayers who work with the Guard come from this concentration.
- **War:** The use of magic in battle, either to inflict harm or to protect people from harm.

Necromancy

One concentration that may be common in other parts of the world is forbidden at the Academy of Arcane Apprentices: necromancy. The Ruler of the Dead is the greatest necromancer the world has ever known, and the Academy has ceded the study of that field to her.

In the days of the Academy's founding, some members of the Wizards Council argued that they should fervently study necromancy so that they might someday discover a way to loosen the Ruler of the Dead's hold upon her undead armies. All those who chose such a concentration, though, wound up dead and under the Ruler's influence. After a number of such frustrating disasters, the Wizards Council outlawed any study of that sort of magic.

Word is that some of the unaffiliated wizards in town may still dabble in necromancy. If so, they're studiously ignored by their counterparts at the Academy (who generally prefer not to admit that unaffiliated wizards exist at all, much less necromancers).

Gnometown Societies

The gnomes of Dragon City aren't nearly as regimented in their associations as the elves and dwarves. While there are several major families living in the city, the dozens of generations that have passed by since the city's founding have all but erased any brightly drawn lines the gnomes may have brought with them.

Instead, the gnomes tend to gather themselves around magineering interests and principles. They adore their research and are usually eager to compare notes with others in their respective fields.

Not everyone who's involved in these societies is actually a magineer. Many, instead, are simple tinkerers who bring their technical knowledge to the projects at hand. They may not have ever studied at the Academy, but their contributions are seen as vital.

Gnometown societies tend to meet twice a month, usually at their group workshop. There are several such workshops in Gnometown, and they often share their spaces with each other. A few of the more paranoid inventors have private spaces they keep under strict lock and key, but these are the exception rather than the rule.

Here's a selection of the most notable societies.

The Comforts Society

Leader: Sergei Tsarenko

The Comforts Society concerns itself with the items that make life in Dragon City just a little bit more tolerable for those who live there. Their first major initiative was the installation of glowglobes to light the city's streets, and they followed that up with the development of flameless magical incinerators designed to rid the city of its refuse without leaving behind a sooty mess.

While the Comforts Society makes a tidy profit off its efforts to improve the city, its members regularly plow their funds back into research on new and exciting projects. On the rare occasions they've run shy of coin, the Dragon Emperor has been known

to make up the shortfall himself. This is not a simple act of generosity, though, as the Dragon knows that satisfied citizens are far less likely to bother him with their petty needs.

The Firearms Society

Leader: Mikhail Tretyak

This group works on advances in firearms of all kinds, both magical and mechanical. When they're not collaborating on the next thing in guns, they're taking field trips to the Great Circle for target practice. They normally use any lurking zombies for targets, but in a pinch any other creature—or an innocent tree stump—will do.

Jack Kells is a member of the Firearms Society, one of the few humans to be accorded such an honor.

The Forensics Society

Leader: Aleks Drupov

The Forensics Society labors over advances in criminology, using both magic and technology to gather and process evidence found at crime scenes. The Imperial Dragon's Guard calls on them most often, although they are willing to hire out to private concerns as well.

Aleks hands out the assignments for the cases the Guard requests assistance on. He generally keeps the most intriguing ones for himself, no matter how disconcerting they may be.

The Sustenance Society

Leader: Grusha Alkaev

While it may have an unassuming name, the Sustenance Society is arguably the most important organization in all of Dragon City. It's their mission to make sure that the city has plenty of edible food and clean water, through whatever means necessary. They began their work back before the founding of Dragon City, to help sustain the refugees from the Ruler of the Dead's advances, and they've been at it ever since.

They run experimental farms in certain areas outside the Great Circle—too high for the zombies to easily reach. They also develop ways of distributing that food to all the people in the city, from the Dragon's Spire straight down to Goblintown. Without their efforts, a lot more people would go hungry in the city, and during a few down seasons they prevented many from outright starving.

The Transport Society

Leader: Maksim Orlov

Soon after the foundation of Dragon City, horses and other pack animals were outlawed in the city's streets. There just weren't enough resources—including food, water, and space—for them to share with the people in the city.

The size of the city, though, meant that traveling from one part to another on foot could take hours if not days. To remedy the trouble, the Transport Society set itself to developing ways for people to move quickly throughout Dragon City. To that end, they began by breeding griffins for the Imperial Dragon's Guard to use, but they soon realized that such creatures required too much maintenance and skill for most people to be able to employ them.

The Transport Society then set to creating flying devices on which people could move throughout the city. Their biggest success was the flying carpet, which is used by hacks all across Dragon City today. They keep working at the problem, though, experimenting with teleportation, blimps, and other means of moving citizens and goods around.

Burrow Clubs

The halflings of the Big Burrow don't have goals quite as lofty as their upslope friends in Gnometown. Rather than bother themselves with improving the city's infrastructure, they concentrate on making the city a place where people might want to live in the first place—or at least find more tolerable.

To that end, the Big Burrow has dozens of clubs that encourage the people of Dragon City to get out and enjoy themselves. Most of these are centered around popular taverns and involve each tavern's patrons. The activities range from board games to sports, from high cuisine to drinking contests, and from gambling to bird watching.

The most notorious clubs include:

The Barrelrider

Leader: Nit Erdini

The Barrelrider has a steady flow of customers from all over Dragon City, even including the occasional orc or goblin. As the Barrelrider Club is housed in one of the most cosmopolitan restaurants in the city, its members join in all sorts of activities. This has the unfortunate effect of diluting the club's efforts so that it fails to excel in any single category.

That said, the Barrelrider Club is known for leading an annual pub crawl that takes participants from the Elven Reaches all the way down to Goblintown. Only those who have been members for over a year are allowed to join, and even then, the Imperial Dragon's Guard keeps a close eye on the crowd every sip of the way.

The Right Foot

Leader: Riona Desmond

The Right Foot sits on the east side of the Big Burrow, and it houses the largest rooftop golf club in the entire city. The grassy roofs of the homes in the Big Burrow form Dragon City's only proper course, but the adventurous members of the Right Foot Club often plot out new courses that take them into other parts of town, from Gnometown into the Village.

Riona Desmond, the spirited young halfling who runs the place, also runs a halfling rugby league that plays on a pitch on the Right Foot's flat and expansive roof. It's too small for larger people to properly use, but the field is perfect for halfling players.

The Slippery Slope

Leader: Siobhan Murray

The Slippery Slope sits on the western side of the spur topped by Wizards Way. The angle of the roof is so steep that it's impossible to climb without equipment.

Taking advantage of this, the Slippery Slope Club plays what can best be described as live-action pinball on that roof. A pair of hurlers toss a ball as far up onto the roof as they can, and then teammates situated at carved-out flat places on the roof endeavor to bat the ball back up along the slope and keep it from falling off the roof as long as they can. Each strike upward is worth an extra point, and teams get three tries before they must relinquish the field to the next group.

The Stagger Inn

Leader: Huck McCready

At the Stagger Inn, owner Huck McCready is known for his assortment of tolerable beers, ales, and whiskeys sold on the cheap. He knows his crowd (drunks) and what they want (drinks), and he caters to their needs.

To emphasize this, the Stagger Inn Club holds drinking contests of all types on a weekly basis, and they stand ready and willing to take on all challengers. Once a year, this culminates in a three-day tournament that tests the participants' endurance in every way. The Dragon City Hospital has taken to sending healers to the scene rather than wait for them to come streaming in.

Village Guilds

The people of the Village are less concerned with recreation and more with commerce. To that end, they've set up dozens of guilds that dictate the ways in which business is to be run throughout the city in nearly every different profession. People who want to belong to such professions pay their monthly dues to their guild. Those who refuse to do so can find themselves forced out, roughed up, or even killed, depending on the nature of the guild.

Notable guilds include:

- Blacksmiths Guild
- Builders Guild
- Farmers Guild
- Innkeepers Guild
- Jewelers Guild
- Magineers Guild
- Shopkeepers Guild
- Stonecutters Guild
- Tavern Guild
- Teachers Guild
- Tinkerers Guild
- Toysmiths Guild
- Wizards Guild

Apprentices & Masters

In the guild system, you work as an apprentice under a master for a handful of years, after which you are tested to see if you qualify to become a master yourself. Apprentices generally work for little money and under poor conditions, but they do not have to pay dues.

Masters must pay dues, but they can take on as many apprentices as they can handle. They must oversee each of their apprentices personally, though, and those who fail to offer proper instruction to their students can have their status suspended or even revoked.

Each guild elects its own guildmaster from its masters. To qualify, you must be a master in good standing for at least five years. Even then, many guildmasters only leave office upon their deaths, so it's rare to have a free and open election without some sort of tragedy preceding it.

Dealing with Guilds

While most guilds have offices in the Village, some have others spread throughout the city as well. The Magineers Guild, for instance, is headquartered in Gnometown, while the Bricht warband oversees the Stonecutters Guild in the Stronghold.

Many guilds are rife with corruption, much like any other part of the city. If you want to get something done in Dragon City, it helps if you grease the palms of the relevant guildmasters with gold. If you try to go around the guilds—and they find out about it—they usually issue a fine to start. If that doesn't go well, some guilds simply try to blacklist you, but others feel free to come down much harder.

The Adventurers Guild

There is no Adventurers Guild in Dragon City—at least not officially. Adventuring (specifically, leaving Dragon City without permission) is strictly forbidden. Because of this, no one is willing to join an organization that would label them as habitual lawbreakers. It would just make the Guard's job of finding them too easy.

That said, there's a loose affiliation of adventurers throughout town. They know who they are, and they're often happy to exchange tips and tricks of the trade. They're wary of newcomers, though, and are always on the lookout for Guard moles trying to weasel their way into the fold.

Several taverns around the city serve as notorious watering holes for adventurers. Most of them are speakeasies that serve dragonfire, which means their owners are already breaking the law on a habitual basis. Hosting a bunch of plausibly deniable outlaw adventurers doesn't mean much on top of that.

The Quill is one such place. Max Gibson assembled his first adventuring team there, and as the owner of the bar, he and his bartender Thumper continue to turn a blind eye to anyone else planning their own sorties outside the Great Circle.

Goblintown Gangs

Goblintown has its own kinds of guilds, clubs, and societies, but none of these can hold a glowglobe to the actual power in that part of town: gangs. Just about everyone in Goblintown belongs to one sort of gang or another, and many people are affiliated with a few at once.

The bigger gangs in Goblintown insist on absolute loyalty—and especially that their members don't take up with one of their rivals. Smaller gangs, which are often just groups of like-minded friends, don't draw nearly as much ire, particularly if they know their place and keep to it.

There are scores of smaller gangs in Goblintown, ranging in size from four people to a dozen. Gangs are more important to people in Goblintown than family. To emphasize this, most of the green-skinned folks in the city don't use surnames to identify themselves. Instead, they say something like, "I'm Ferd, of the Bricks."

The most notorious gangs in the city include:

Big Trouble

Leader: Shug

Big Trouble started as a joke. A band of goblins and kobolds got together and announced, "We may be small, but we're Big Trouble." Once they gathered enough of themselves, though, everyone else stopped laughing.

Most of the shorter green-skinned people who live in Goblintown are either members of Big Trouble or wish they could be. The gang is the reason this part of Dragon City is called Goblintown rather than Orctown, after all. Individually, any member of the gang isn't all that strong, but when they join together, they can take on just about anyone.

Big Trouble likes to train its members to be fearless, to think not of themselves but the gang as a whole. Any one of them is willing to die to further Big Trouble's cause—whatever it may be.

Big Trouble is centered on the lowest part of Goblintown, including everything from the Day Tower to the Night Tower. It has its fingers in every bit of criminal activity that falls under the Great Circle's shadow.

The current leader is a female goblin named Shug, but the life expectancy of Big Trouble's leaders is often short. When one falls, another steps in quickly to take their place.

The Bricks

Leader: Burr

Along with the Stones, the Bricks are one of the two largest gangs in the city. They take all types of people, and while most of their members are green-skinned, they even have a few humans in their ranks.

Their leader is Burr, a middle-aged male hobgoblin who filed down all of his teeth to stiletto-sharp points. He rules over the gang with a loaded scattergun combined with a shoot-first-don't-bother-with-questions policy. He's personally killed enough aspirants to his position to field a whole new gang.

The Bricks control most of the west side of Goblintown, from the Night Tower to the aqueduct that carries the Crystal River to the Great Gate. They often have turf wars with the Stones under the aqueduct, but the Guard regularly interrupts these. The Guard doesn't care about the gangsters as much as the safety of the aqueduct, but their appearances do help keep the troubles between the gangs to a low simmer.

The Gutter Snipers

Leader: Sai

The Gutter Snipers work above the fray that absorbs the attention of the rest of the gangs in Goblintown—literally. Rather than tussle with other Goblintown gangs, they prefer to rob those who travel the city's skies. They use rifles to snipe and take down anyone flying overhead who doesn't have the gang's permission.

This shake-down racket is why most people who don't absolutely *have to*, won't fly over Goblintown. It's simply too dangerous. Even if you've paid the extorted fee, it's all too easy for a Gutter Sniper to mistake you for someone who hasn't and shoot you down. Such "accidents" happen far too often.

When someone does get shot down over Goblintown, there's a mad rush to get to wherever the victim crashed. Fast scavengers can strip the bodies and make off with the flying gadget before anyone else reaches the scene. Those who are a bit too slow often have to battle it out with the latecomers for that precious salvage.

The Gutter Sniper leader—a female orc named Sai — tamped down on many of these accidents over the course of the past year. She knows that the value of a Gutter Sniper seal plummets every time someone who paid the fee gets shot down, and she's working hard to return it to where it should be. Her primary method for that is to execute any of her people who make such mistakes, but she's also issued orders for the Gutter Snipers to take down anyone else in Goblintown who's shooting at their protected flyers.

The Stones

Leader: Dom

Alongside the Bricks, the Stones are the other major gang in Goblintown. They work the east side of the neighborhood, from the Day Tower to the aqueduct that splits Goblintown in half. In many ways, they're the same gang, just divided into two rival parts.

The main difference is that the Stones are far more violent. They have orders to shoot any Bricks they see on sight, and they're often overzealous in identifying such people and have killed many people who were absolutely innocent of being a Brick, no matter what their other crimes.



The savagery of the Stones comes from the top. Their leader—a one-eyed ogre named Dom—is a reputed cannibal who likes to eat his meals as fresh as possible, even starting in on them while they're alive. When he gets angry at his followers, they listen. No one wants to incur his wrath.

If it wasn't for the Guard keeping the Stones out of the west side of Goblintown, Dom would have feasted on Burr's still-beating heart by now. Instead, he's decided that he needs to do something about the Guard first. He just needs to figure out how to manage it without bringing the Dragon's fury down on his head.



Chapter 12: Beyond the Great Circle

The lands beyond Dragon City are a no-go zone. It's illegal to enter or exit the city without permission from the Imperial Dragon's Guard, and hordes of zombies roam the encroaching territory. Most people want to stay tucked safe within the Great Circle, avoiding the horrors that scratch at the walls at every hour of the day.

But most people aren't adventurers.

For those brave souls who wish to stretch their legs beyond the walls, here is the lay of the land.

The Surrounding Lands

Dragon City sits on a tall, lonely mountain on the eastern side of its continent. In the days before the coming of the Ruler of the Dead, it was known as Dragon Mountain, due to the creature that occupied a massive cave inside it, but these days, no one in Dragon City calls it anything but "the mountain."

The mountain itself stands to the east of a long chain that runs far to the north and south cutting off the eastern seaboard from the rest of the continent, which most people now call the Land of the Dead. This mountain chain slowed the advance of the armies of the dead long enough for the refugees fleeing before them to find the mountain and cut their deal with the dragon.

The armies of the dead reached the mountain as the Great Circle was being built. The Dragon was able to hold them off long enough for the wall to be completed, but the zombies now roam every bit of the continent other than Dragon City—at least as far as anyone in Dragon City knows.

From the River to the Sea

The Crystal River flows down out of the mountain, gathering strength as it goes. It tumbles down over the shoulders of the Great Gate and spills into a wide bit of water called the Lonely Lake. The people of Goblintown call it the Ruler's Stew, due to the number of zombies that have fallen into it over the centuries.

The Crystal River picks up again at the eastern part of the lake and flows from there to an expansive ocean, only twenty miles away. The town of Watersmeet sits on the north shore of the junction between the river and the ocean.

Although it's now overrun by undead, Watersmeet once housed a teeming port that did amazing business in the looming shadow of Dragon Mountain. To manage that, it offered tribute to the Dragon on a yearly basis. This arrangement formed the foundation of the Dragon City Compact, which was first proposed by refugees who had fled Watersmeet.

Watersmeet

The port town of Watersmeet was once a thriving cosmopolitan city renowned across the continent. This is the place to which many of refugees fled when they ran afoul of the Ruler of the Dead's horrible ambitions, hoping to find transport to lands to the east. Unfortunately, most of the ships that left the city in those days never returned, as their captains were afraid to risk being trapped by the armies of the dead.

When the refugees realized there would never be enough ships to carry them all to safety, they began making other plans. They became so desperate, they actually petitioned the Dragon for help, and at first this did not go well. In the end, though, the people of Watersmeet abandoned it for the fledgling Dragon City—or they died.

Today, Watersmeet is a ripe target for adventurers. While the undead still roam the city's streets, zombies have no need for the treasures left behind in the city when it fell before the Ruler of the Dead. This includes places like the Royal Palace, the Royal Museum, and the towers and estates of many wealthy people.

Watersmeet was originally a pirate cove, although it evolved into something far more respectable over the years. Because of this, rumors of treasure buried throughout the oldest part of town reverberate to this day. Some adventurers have even taken to exploring nearby islands to see if they can find such booty.

One thing that lends credence to these tales of lost treasure is the security built up around many places in Watersmeet. They feature the kinds of locks and traps that only the wealthy or paranoid—or both!—would bother paying for and setting up.

Because of the promise of such fortunes, many places in Watersmeet also feature the bones of failed adventurers who were torn apart during an ill-fated quest. Some of those adventurers now roam the streets of Watersmeet instead, having risen as undead soon after their demise. No one knows for certain whether their knowledge of Dragon City has somehow passed to the Ruler of the Dead, but this is a topic of much fear and speculation.

The Ruler's Domain

As far as anyone in Dragon City knows, the Ruler of the Dead controls every part of the continent except for Dragon City itself. This is a constant irritant to her, the one element that has prevented her victory over her foes from being complete.

Despite her best efforts, Dragon City still stands. From time to time, she mounts a new attack on the Great Circle, but these have always been half-hearted attempts designed more to test the city's fortitude than for actual victory. For some reason, she hasn't been willing to mass a full-out assault on the city since its founding.

The obvious reason for this, of course, is the Dragon. Anytime the armies of the dead begin to gather for what could be an assault, the Guards on top of the Day or Night Tower—usually the Night Tower—alert the Voice of the Dragon. He passes on their concerns to the Dragon Emperor, who then rouses himself to deal with the situation. He often waits until the undead forces are within a short march of the city's walls before he takes to the skies. Then he leaps into action with a mighty roar that shakes the city's foundations.

The Dragon likes to destroy the undead in the most spectacular way and in front of as many witnesses in possible. This reminds both the Ruler of the Dead and the people of Dragon City who the real power in the region is and just how terrifying he can be. Crimes in the city drop precipitously in the weeks after such a showing.

Into the Mountains

Adventurers looking for other places to rob—um, explore—often turn toward the west and the mountain chain there. At one point, those lofty peaks housed a number of elven valley havens, several dwarf subterranean cities, and numerous hordes of goblins, trolls, and orcs. This makes it a rich environment for exploration—and exploitation.

Adventurers who make it into the mountains have plenty of places to plunder. The only real troubles are getting there through the wandering hordes of undead, dealing with them if they managed to get into the exploration site, and then getting back home through them with all the treasure. Most people aren't willing to risk it, but it seems like there's always someone desperate enough to give it a try.

The undead have usually overrun the places in the mountains, tearing them to pieces as they go. But not always. Sometimes, the living there successfully sealed themselves away, preventing the undead from feasting on their flesh.

It's possible—although unlikely—that there might even be survivors in the mountains. People who managed to not only seal themselves away but found some means of sustenance for the past five centuries. Legends about such places often find their way back to Dragon City, although no actual proof of such stalwart holdouts has ever been produced.

Beyond the Mountains

Few adventurers have made it beyond the mountains. There's enough treasure—and risk—to be found near Dragon City without having to venture so far away that you might never be able to make it back.

That doesn't stop a foolhardy few from trying, of course, but none of them have been heard from again. Whether that's because they found fame, fortune, and safety, or because they died trying, no one in Dragon City knows for sure.

The Ruler's Redoubt

The Ruler of the Dead began her reign of terror on the continent's west coast, and she controlled her armies from there for years. It wasn't until the strength of Dragon City's resistance became clear that she decided to move closer to it. She now resides in an ancient fortress high up in the mountains, less than a week's journey from Dragon City—or even faster for someone who can fly.

The Ruler's fortress was once known as Mount Redoubt, a massive city built by dwarves many thousands of years ago and occupied by the elves who'd commissioned it. It had long been considered the most impregnable place in the world, but the Ruler's undead armies had time on their side. After beating against the city's gates for a decade, they finally gave way, and the hordes entered the streets and devoured all who remained.

As a symbol of her triumph, the Ruler of the Dead moved her base of operations to Mount Redoubt, rebuilt the destroyed gates, and sealed herself inside. This effectively sealed her away from any direct threat in the world, including the Dragon Emperor himself.

It was from Mount Redoubt that the Ruler of the Dead launched her assault on the just-founded Dragon City. Her loss at the teeth and claws of the Dragon set her back on her heels, and she sealed herself inside Mount Redoubt to reflect upon her first serious setback since her campaign of terror had begun. She has not been seen since.

Some in Dragon City—mostly the short-timers—believe the Ruler of the Dead is gone, perhaps destroyed in her battle with the Dragon so many years ago. While the legions of the dead still roam



the lands outside the city, they haven't mounted a concerted attack in recent memory, and rather than a real threat, she's now become more of a boogeyman used to keep the populace in line.

The elders of Dragon City who actually remember the Ruler of the Dead's last assault on the city scoff at such conspiracy theories. But then, they would, wouldn't they?

The Old Country

Beyond Watersmeet, beyond the ocean that sprawls past it, sits a continent filled with all sorts of kingdoms and empires—and no armies of the dead. This continent is collectively known as the Old Country, and it's filled with countless nations, rulers, and even monsters of its own. Most of the people of Dragon City have never done more than hear rumors of this place, but there are those who still travel back and forth between it and the Dragon Emperor's domain.

Traveling

It's treacherous to travel between Dragon City and the Old Country by any means. Sea routes take months, and ships often wind up becalmed in the middle of nowhere for weeks at a time. This is, at least, less troublesome than the myriad number of sea monsters that live beneath the waves, always on the hunt to make a rare treat out of fresh prey.

After such seagoing vessels make landfall, their occupants must then make their way across the zombie-infested lands to reach Dragon City. Even if they manage to make it to the Great Circle, they may find that the Guard doesn't welcome them with open arms. The Guards stationed on the Great Circle are notoriously suspicious of the rare outsiders that come begging to be allowed into the city. Their policy is often, "Shoot first and explain to your superiors later."

On top of that, the Dragon frowns on his citizens departing Dragon City by any means. Those who wish to travel abroad still must obtain permission to leave the Great Circle, and he only grudgingly grants such boons on rare occasions.

Going by Blimp

Because of this, most of the travel that comes in and out of Dragon City moves by blimp. Such vehicles are rare and expensive, but the magineers of Wizards Way and Gnometown invented them as the only safe means of long-term travel in and out of the city.

Others have tried magical flying vehicles, but these require constant concentration by their operators. It's difficult to maintain that over the time required to get from Dragon City to a safe port and falling asleep over the ocean often proves catastrophic.

Blimps, on the other hand, use scientific principles to remain aloft, whether or not anyone's at the helm. This allows for a smooth changing of shifts among pilots.

Blimps also have enough cargo and passenger space to make such trips worthwhile. Plus, they can travel straight from the Old Country to Dragon City without having to deal with the Ruler of the Dead's forces at any point along the way.

If blimps had come from outside the city, the Dragon himself might have blown them out of the sky. They were invented in Dragon City, though, and they departed from the Day Tower with his express permission.

Opening Relations

The Dragon hoped to open trade with the outside world by means of Dragon City's blimps, but this took a long time to establish. The first blimps that reached the Old Country received hostile receptions. After hearing about the utter destruction of the continent by the Ruler of the Dead for centuries, the rulers of the Old Country's nations were suspicious of these newcomers flying into their lands in such large and elaborate contraptions, and the first few ventures were shot down. The survivors were left with no means to return home.

Eventually, though, later blimps found places that had shot down the first ones, and the people there were ready to talk. Some of those blimps were captured and commandeered for local use. Others were torn apart so the locals could see how they worked.

One blimp was even sent back to Dragon City with a platoon of armed soldiers to attack any survivors they found. The Dragon blasted it out of the sky himself, raining blazing blimp and body parts down on Goblintown.

When one of the Dragon City blimps finally returned under the control of its original captain, the Dragon permitted trade to open with the nation it had reached, a distant land known as the Righteous Kingdom. So far, the relations between the two places have been slow and laborious, but they have also been productive.

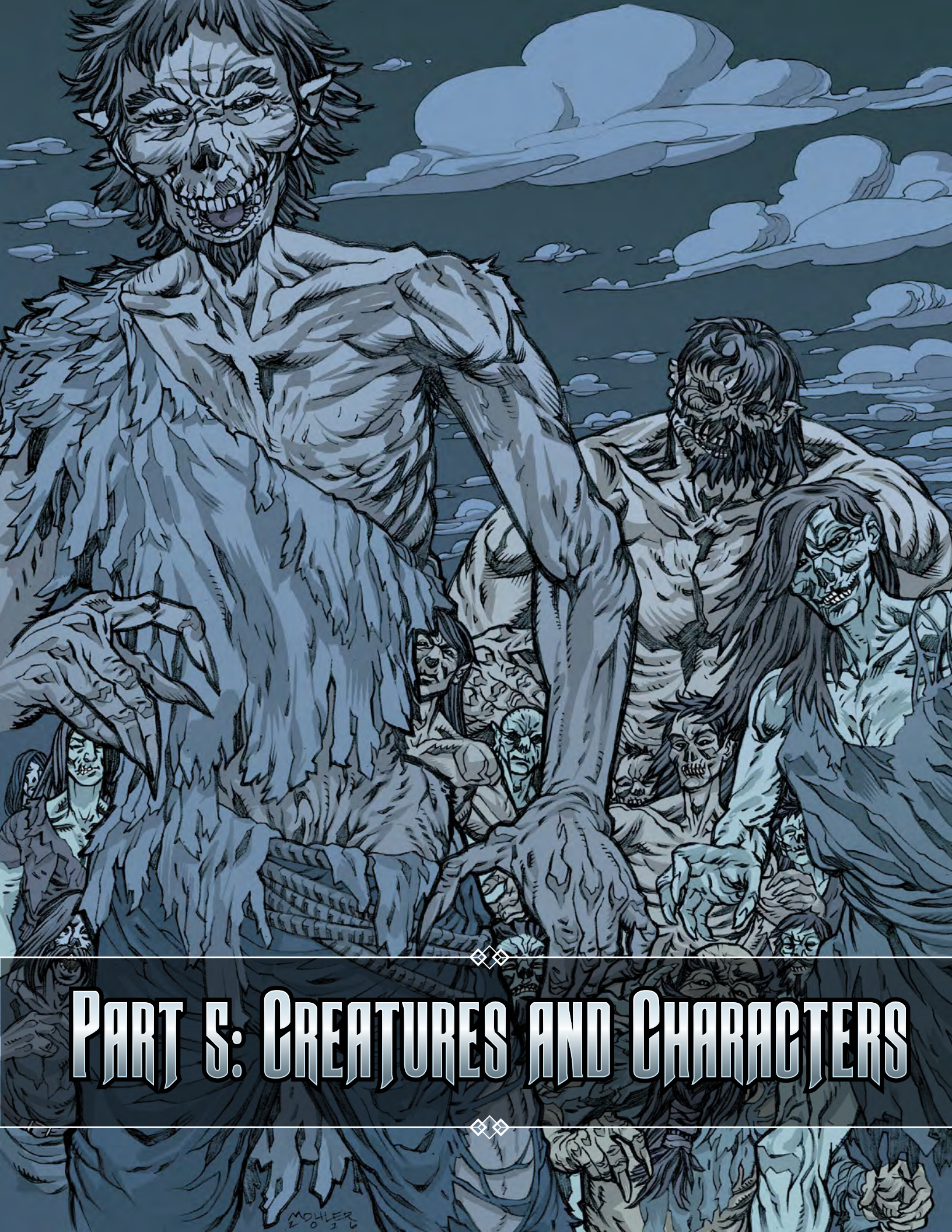
No Exodus

Despite the fact that people could now be leaving Dragon City by the blimpload, no mass exodus from the city has developed. For one, travel on the blimp is limited by the Dragon's wishes, and he has not opened passenger space on the blimp to the public.

On top of that, most people in Dragon City live well compared to the rest of the world. Five centuries of living in a city with brilliant people forced to work together against their common foe has improved Dragon City's standard of living in a way that the rest of the world hasn't seen.

Those who have returned to Dragon City from foreign lands bring reports of feudal societies in which most people still live as farmers and don't even have the mojo to conjure up a decent cup of joe. Sure, there may be zombies massed outside the Great Circle, but they're more of a nuisance than a threat, and when compared to other rulers, the Dragon Emperor doesn't seem all that bad.

Dragon City, after all, is home.



Part 5: Creatures and Characters



Chapter 13: Creatures

Dragon City shelters the survivors and the descendants from the world that was. Beyond its walls is a vast wilderness infested with undead unleashed by the Ruler of the Dead's foul magic. This vast landscape is littered with the ruins of a land abandoned, home to the shuffling zombies, bizarre monsters, and hardy survivors that refused to bend a knee to the Dragon Emperor. The city has become an island, a final outpost clinging to survival in a world gone mad. Those who leave its security face all manner of terrifying creatures, both living and dead.

Of course, Dragon City, for all its laws and the harsh authority of its tyrannical ruler, has monsters of its own. Some are bizarre abominations that found a way into the city, while others conceal their evil beneath the guise of ordinary people: human, halfling, or orc faces that mask cold hearts and wicked intent.

This chapter explores the most common creatures the characters can find and fight in the world of Dragon City. For each, you'll find the stats you need to use in play, and information about how they fit in the world.

Reading the Stats

Each creature uses a basic format to help you find the information you need to use it in the game.

Name — Level (Target #)

A general description of the creature or NPC, which tells you something about what it looks like, its nature, intelligence, and background.

Motive: Every creature wants something. This entry tells you what that something is.

Environment: This entry tells you the places where the creature is most likely to be encountered, and in what numbers.

Armor: This optional entry tells you the value of the creature's Armor. It's absent if the creature lacks Armor.

Health: The creature's Health, which is typically its target number.

Damage Inflicted: The amount of damage the creature inflicts when it hits with any attack it makes. If the creature has any special exceptions, they are noted after the number.

Creatures by Level

Gnome 1
Goblin 1
Kobold 1
Needle Bush 1
Beastman 2
Colony Rat Swarm . . 2
Digger 2
Faerie 2
Lizard Person 2
Merfolk 2
Rat-King 2
Skeletal Warrior 2
Zombie 2
Animated Armor . . . 3
Bloodroot 3
Gaunt 3
Giant Rat 3
Giant Spider 3
Hobgoblin 3
Ooze 3
Phantom 3
Vampire Thrall 3
Boneless 4
Dryad 4
Elemental, Fire 4
Elemental, Water . . . 4
Ghost 4
Ghoul 4
Giant Snake 4
Griffin 4
Last Breath 4
Ogre 4
Revenant 4
Werewolf 4
Cruul 5
Demon 5
Elemental, Air 5
Elemental, Earth . . . 5
Fury 5
Giant Scorpion 5
Golem, Flesh 5
Manticore 5
Mummy 5
Specter 5
Strangler 5
Doppelganger 6
Elemental, Void 6
Golem, Clay 6
Troll 6
Vampire 6
Giant 7
Hydra 7
Sewer Beast 7
Wyvern 7
Golem, Iron 8
Vampire Lord 9

Movement: Here, you'll find how far a creature can move on its turn. The distance is expressed as immediate, short, or long, which correspond to the ranges of the same names. Most PCs have an effective movement of short, so if they are chasing (or being chased by) a creature with immediate movement their Speed tasks are one step easier; if the creature's movement is long, the PCs' Speed tasks are one step harder.

Modifications: If the creature has any exceptions to its stats, they are noted here. Otherwise, this entry is absent. For example, a level 4 creature might say "defends as level 5," which means PCs attacking it must reach a target number of 15 (for difficulty 5) instead of 12 (for difficulty 4). In special circumstances, some creatures have other modifications, but these are almost always specific to their level.

Combat: This entry offers advice for using the creature in combat, such as "This monster prefers ambushes and uses hit-and-run tactics." At the end of the combat listing, you'll also find any special abilities, such as immunities, poisons, and healing skills. GMs should be logical about a creature's reaction to a particular action or attack by a PC. For example, a mechanical creation is immune to normal diseases, a character can't poison a being of energy (at least, not with a conventional poison), and so on.

Normal Animals

Bat: Level 1

Bear, black: Level 3, attacks as level 4

Bear, cave: Level 5, health 20; Armor 1

Dog: Level 2, perception as level 3

Dog, guard: Level 3, attacks and perception as level 4

Hawk: Level 2, flies a long distance each round

Horse: Level 3, moves a long distance each round

Rat: Level 1

Shark: Level 3, attacks as level 4; swims as level 6

Snake: Level 2, bite inflicts 3 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor)

Warhorse: Level 4, moves a long distance each round

Wolf: Level 3, perception as level 4

Interaction: Here, you will find information about how the creature interacts with others. Typically, it includes roleplaying cues or generalizations if the creature is not normally capable of speech or social interactions.

Use: This section presents an example or two for using the creature in the game. It might be a scene that can take place in an adventure or the basis for an entire adventure.

Loot: Finally, if the creature has any loot, this section lists the possessions it typically has and where the characters may discover its treasures.

A Catalog of Creatures

The creatures described here are presented in alphabetical order.

Animated Armor — 3 (9)

Suits of antiquated armor decorate the homes of the rich and powerful, symbols of a time before the darkness spread across the lands. In most cases, these suits are mundane: steel plates with leather straps, their usefulness long gone thanks to the advent of firearms. Yet not every suit of armor is what it seems. Some hold threads of magical power that, under the right circumstances, may give them the semblance of life, moving as they might have once done when worn in battle.

Motive: Fulfill the commands of its creator.

Environment: Suits of animated armor may be found singly or in small groups. They typically protect places important to magic-users, such as wizard towers, workshops, or vaults holding magical treasures.

Armor: 3

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Resists charms, compulsions, fear, intimidation, and mind control as level 10.

Combat: Animated armor fights using whatever weapons are at hand. Most have swords in scabbards or are equipped with polearms. They fight with a single-minded intensity, focusing their attacks on the creature that disturbed them first, ignoring attacks from others until they slay their primary foe or drive it off.

Being nothing more than suits of armor animated by magic, animated armor ignores anything that would affect their minds or bodies. Once slain, the armor falls apart, littering the ground with its components.

Some suits of animated armor act more like traps. Rather than animate when intruders come near, the armor lies dormant, waiting for a fool to put it on. Should this happen, the armor attacks and, on a hit, takes control of the wearer's movements for as long as it wears the armor.

Animated armor relies on senses other than sight to perceive its surroundings.

Interaction: Mindless, animated armor does not speak or understand what others say with one exception. These constructs respond to commands given to them by their creators, or those designated by their creators to have authority over the armor.

Use: Anyone capable of using magic may create suits of animated armor to act as guards. As the armor has no needs or motive beyond obeying commands given to it, these creatures prove useful, if unimaginative, servants.

GM Intrusion

When the animated armor takes damage from a character, a few straps fly free to bind the character's limbs, increasing the difficulty for all tasks involving movement by one step until a character uses an action to remove the straps.

Beastman — 2 (6)

Ages ago, the beastmen herds rampaged across the countryside, tumbling out from the wilderness to raid and plunder the farmsteads and frontier towns scattered across civilization's edges, but the rise of the undead hordes has plagued these monstrous humanoids. Once their numbers were counted in the tens of thousands, but the beastmen now exist in small wandering bands, scavenging the ruins for whatever weapons, foodstuffs, and supplies they can find.



Beastmen encompass several different breeds, but all share some common characteristics. All beastmen, for example, have humanoid bodies with the heads of animals such as goats, dogs, wolves, or bears. Most have patchy fur on their bodies and have stooped postures, moving about on all fours as much as they walk upright.

Motive: Survival, hatred for civilization, and undead

Environment: Beastmen may be encountered singly, in pairs, or in groups of three to ten. Larger bands may include 100 members, with half again as many noncombatants. Beastmen live in wild, untamed places, but rarely stay in one place for long.

Armor: 1

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Hunting, running, scavenging, and stealth tasks as level 4.

Combat: Beastmen use crude weapons such as spears and scavenged armor or uncured animal hides. Skilled hunters, they excel in battle when they have surprise, attacking as level 5 creatures and dealing 2 additional points of damage.

No matter how hungry or how hate-filled, beastmen place survival as their paramount concern. Should the battle turn against them, they flee and may hobble one of their numbers to slow down their pursuers.

Savage brutes, when a beastman takes damage, it makes its next attack as a level 3 creature and inflicts 1 additional point of damage.

Interaction: Beastmen communicate in their crude, barking language, but one in six beastmen know enough words in the common tongue to communicate. While beastmen regard civilized races as their enemies, they may forestall their attack if the characters have something the beastmen might want, such as food, and are willing to trade. Beastmen know a fair amount about the lands through which they wander and may share this knowledge in exchange for healing, foodstuff, or weapons.

Use: Consummate survivors, beastmen have learned to keep moving and never stay put. Their travels might bring them in sight of Dragon City, or they might squat in ruins, scouring the rubble for useful goods. They attack intruders on sight and are not above eating their prisoners.

Loot: Beastmen carry crude weapons such as spears, axes, broken swords, and wear piecemeal armor and strap wooden shields to their arms. Bands of three or more may have one cypher, an oddity or two, and a variety of scavenged materials they might find useful.

GM Intrusion

When a character kills a beastman, two more spring out of hiding to join the fight.

Bloodroot — 3 (9)

The roving bands of zombies make travel beyond the walls of Dragon City difficult, but undead horrors are not the only perils that travelers face. Dangerous monsters abound, hardened by a life of want and fear. In some places, even the plants can be a deadly threat.

Bloodroot grows in warm woodlands, specifically in places thick with zombies. The bloodroot is an enormous trumpet flower with crimson droplets dotting its petals, extending from a thick veiny red stalk. The plant has an extensive network of roots that spreads from the stalk out to a short distance in all directions. Rooting around in the moist soil reveals scores of humanoid bones, bearing signs of fractures created by crushing.

Motive: Feed on the flesh and blood of living victims.

Environment: Any warm forests

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: None.

Modifications: Speed defense as level 1 due to immobility and nature.

Combat: The bloodroot uses its pollen to lure victims close. When it senses movement within a long distance, it releases a puff of pollen in the direction, which immediately spreads that way. Any character within long range of the plant must make an Intellect defense roll. A character becomes intoxicated on a failure; the character becomes immune to this bloodroot's pollen on a success. A character intoxicated by the bloodroot must use its action each round to move toward the bloodroot, only stopping if prevented, or it moves within an immediate distance of the plant. Whenever a character intoxicated by the pollen takes damage, it can repeat the defense roll.

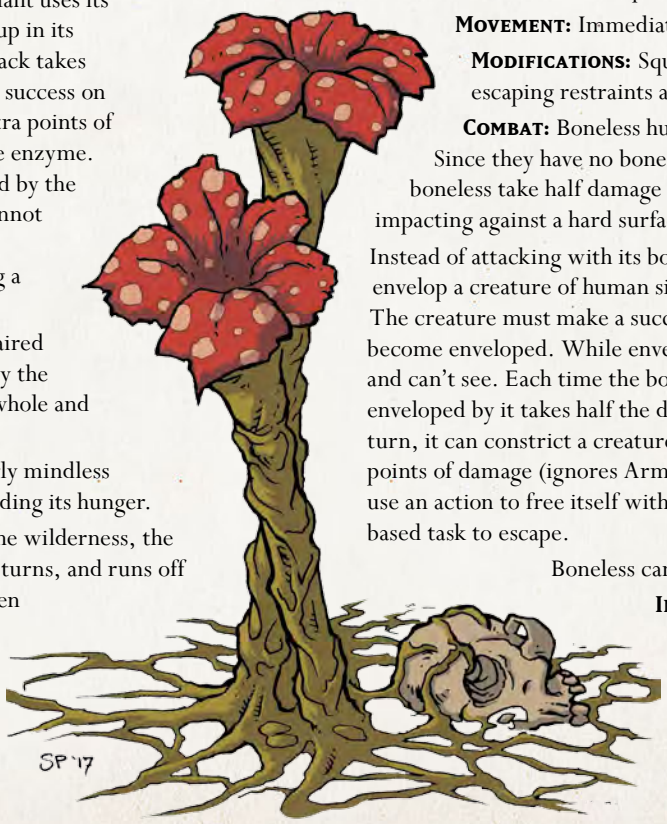
Once a character is within immediate range of the bloodroot, the carnivorous plant uses its action to attack it by scooping it up in its petals. A character hit by this attack takes damage as normal and must get a success on a Might defense roll or take 3 extra points of damage from the plant's digestive enzyme. Furthermore, a creature damaged by the bloodroot is grabbed by it and cannot move unless it uses an action to attempt to escape, typically using a Might or Speed roll.

Any character that becomes impaired (or worse) on the damage track by the bloodroot's attack is swallowed whole and killed instantly.

Interaction: A bloodroot is a nearly mindless predator. It thinks only about feeding its hunger.

Use: While on an expedition into the wilderness, the characters' guide stops abruptly, turns, and runs off in a random direction, having been seduced by the bloodroot's pollen.

Loot: Digging in the soil around a bloodroot is likely to reveal a few coins and trinkets from prior victims.



Instantly killing a character can be rough if the players aren't ready for it. Consider heightening the drama by giving the other PCs a round or two to rescue their friend from the bloodroot. Perhaps the swallowed PC takes 6 points of crushing damage per round and is incapacitated instead of dying outright.

GM Intrusion

A character damaged by the bloodroot loses a small item she was carrying or wearing to the bloodroot's gullet. The item may be regained if the bloodroot is slain and cut open.

Boneless — 4 (12)

The Ruler of the Dead wastes nothing of the corpses she claims. While most of her servants are more or less intact corpses, she counts among her servants animated hands, heads, skeletons, and other fleshy detritus. Among her strangest thralls are the boneless, the flayed skins of mortals infused with dark magic to give them mobility and the sinister purpose of hunting down and squeezing the life from the living.

Boneless become torpid in the absence of living creatures. They drape themselves over furniture or spread themselves over rocks until prey comes near, at which point they gather their tattered bodies up and flutter toward their prey, horrid bags of torn skin, faces stretched out, maws and eye sockets hanging loose, twitching from the memory of muscles long absent.

Motive: Kill humans and other living creatures.

Environment: Boneless dwell in ruins and other remote places, usually alone or in small groups.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Immediate; short when flying.

Modifications: Squeezing through tight places and escaping restraints and grabs as level 10.

Combat: Boneless hurl themselves bodily at their foes. Since they have no bones or internal organs to speak of, boneless take half damage from blunt weapons or from impacting against a hard surface.

Instead of attacking with its body, a boneless can attempt to envelop a creature of human size or smaller with its loose skin. The creature must make a successful Speed defense roll or become enveloped. While enveloped, the creature can't move and can't see. Each time the boneless takes damage, the creature enveloped by it takes half the damage. Finally, on the boneless's turn, it can constrict a creature it has enveloped, inflicting 4 points of damage (ignores Armor). An enveloped creature can use an action to free itself with a success on a difficulty 4 Might-based task to escape.

Boneless can see in the dark.

Interaction: Incapable of speech and nearly mindless, boneless do not communicate, though the belching noises loosed from their flaccid bodies may be mistaken as speech.



Use: Mothers in Dragon City tell stories of boneless to scare their children and keep them indoors at night. There's a kernel of truth to these stories, however. Supremely flexible, boneless can easily infiltrate Dragon City and may roam the streets at night, leaving behind a trail of strangled corpses in their wake.

GM Intrusion

Boneless are horrifying to behold. When a character is surprised by a boneless, he must succeed on an Intellect defense roll or lose his next turn to screaming.

Colony Rat Swarm — 2 (6)

In a place as crowed as Dragon City, rats are a common enough sight. They skitter through the sewers, pick over the rubbish heaps, and can be seen scurrying through the crooked alleys. And most times, these rats behave as expected. Most times.

Colony rat swarms are made up of rats affected by the magic permeating the city. They find their intellect grows when gathered into groups. The larger the group, the more intelligent they become.

Motive: Self-preservation

Environment: Sewers under Dragon City, usually in groups of 3 to 6 swarms.

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Movement-related tasks as level 4; Perception as level 4; Speed defense as level 4 against attacks that target one creature and Speed defense as level 1 against attacks that target areas due to swarming nature.

Combat: Colony rat swarms prefer to avoid violent confrontations, knowing the loss of even one of their number diminishes them all, but when given no other choice, they become quite vicious, flowing over their enemies and biting and clawing, the damage from their attacks ignoring Armor.

A colony rat swarm can flow around creatures and obstacles in their path, able to squeeze through openings large enough to permit one of their numbers.

When four or more colony rat swarms are within a short distance of each other, they can combine their actions to send a pulse of mental energy at any number of creatures they choose within a short distance of them. A successful attack inflicts 4 points of Intellect damage.

Interaction: A growing number of rats display unusual behaviors that grow even more unusual when they gather in numbers. Individually indistinguishable from other rats, when encountered in small or large groups, they display an unusual intelligence. The more rats, the smarter they become, so a couple might just demonstrate uncanny cooperation, while others gain the ability to communicate with each other through gestures and use simple tools. A swarm becomes capable of speech, complex thought, and perhaps even gains the ability to cast spells. In numbers, these rats call themselves the Colony and when they speak, they speak with the combined voices of dozens of rats.

Use: Colony rat swarms have been known to sneak into the Academy and make off with magical trinkets. When an important item goes missing, the characters might be tasked with recovering it from the rats.

Loot: Swarms have no use for coins, but they typically have one cypher per swarm.

GM Intrusion

When a character takes Intellect damage from the swarm, the swarm forges a mental link with the character and communicates "minds to mind" for a few minutes. While the character has this connection, the flood of voices worsens the difficulty of all tasks by one step, but allows the character to "speak" with the swarm.

Cruul — 5 (15)

Strange aberrations created by a magical mishap long ago, the cruul hunt magic-using creatures to draw from them the eldritch energies they need to sustain their existence. Their horrid appearance and bizarre anatomy ensure they pass their days in hiding, deep under the earth. They prefer to lurk below places abundant in wizards and other magical creatures. Cruul emerge from the depths when hunger compels them, and only remain until they have gorged themselves on sorcerous power.

Cruul look like red-skinned headless humanoids with a knot of writhing tentacles emerging from their chests, in the center of

which bulges a great blood-red eye. Each tentacle ends with a sharp spine, a six-inch-long hollow spike the creature uses to prick its victim, draw forth its blood, and pump it back into its victim.

Motive: Feed on magic from victims' blood.

Environment: Solitary cruul roam the tunnels under Dragon City, emerging under the cover of night to feed on the living and leave their victims drained.

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Movement tasks as level 6; Speed defense as level 3 due to form; Might, Speed, and Intellect defense against magical effects as level 7 due to nature.

Combat: All living things are inherently magical, and thus can be prey for a hungry cruul. When on the hunt, the cruul lurches forward on its stumpy legs until it gets close enough for its prehensile tentacles to pierce its victim's body. A cruul can attack with four tentacles divided between any number of creatures within immediate range. A target hit by a tentacle must also succeed on a Speed defense roll or become grabbed until it escapes. Each round, the cruul automatically inflicts 6 points of Intellect damage to each grabbed target. A target can escape by succeeding on a Might-based task to escape.

Creatures that have their Intellect pools reduced to 0 cannot cast spells or use magical cyphers or artifacts until their Intellect pool is at least 1.

Cruul can see in the dark.

Interaction: Cruul lack the ability to communicate using speech. However, individuals on whom they feed sometimes receive flashes of memory, emotions, and sensations from the cruul, which may give an indication of the cruul's state of mind and intentions.

Use: When a cruul stumbles into the cellars under the Academy of Magic, students wake up covered in wounds, unable to cast spells or work any kind of magic. The instructors, suspecting the culprit, are unwilling to find the creature themselves, but may pay a lot of gold to others to drive off or kill the monster.



GM Intrusion

A character that takes Intellect damage from the cruul also loses one randomly determined cypher she's carrying as the cruul drains it of its magic.

Demon — 5 (15)

Magic permeates the world, flowing from and through all living things. It is an energy field, but it is also the manifestation of life's potential, the creative force that brought forth the world and all things in it and the possibility for creatures to reshape the world to suit their purposes. Magic's connection to living things causes it to respond to evil, and when used for dark and sinister ends, the malicious taints the energy and causes it to incarnate the wickedness into physical forms called demons.

Existence does not, however, afford a physical form. Instead, demons are embodiments of magic, twisted by hatred, greed, and other dark desires. They drift through the currents of magical energy, lying in wait for magicians whose studies take them to dark places, or those who send their minds wandering through the ethereal realms through which magic flows. Demons prey on these mortals and may use their magic to take on a physical form or, worse, invade their bodies to goad them to greater and greater acts of evil.

When a demon assumes a physical form, it can be anything it chooses. The demon might appear to be human, with minor diabolical features such as crimson skin, small horns, and a tail. Or, it can assume hideous form, a chaotic jumble of limbs and organs and teeth, impossible yet somehow optimized for killing things.

Without a mortal host, a demon appears as a shadow that has no source. It oozes across the walls and floors, a blot of darkness that bleeds malevolence.

Motive: Destroy magic and magic-users.

Environment: Anywhere, especially in places steeped in magical power.

Health: 25



Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Deception and intimidation tasks as level 7.

Combat: While immaterial, demons attack by touching their shadowy essence to a living creature. The touch either inflicts damage, which causes the flesh to blister and melt, or lets the demon attempt to possess the creature. The target of an attempted possession must succeed on an Intellect defense roll or become possessed, which causes the demon to enter the target's body and disappear.

The first round of the possession, the target can act normally, but in the second and all subsequent rounds, the possessing demon controls the actions of the host. The creature can attempt an Intellect defense roll to resist each suggested action. Successful resistance means the creature does nothing for one round and on subsequent rounds the creature can act as it chooses. While possessing a creature, the demon can only use an action to control its host or leave its body.

Once per day, a creature possessed by the demon can make an Intellect defense roll to force the demon out (certain powerful spells may exorcise the demon). The difficulty of the defense roll increases by 1 for each day of possession after the first seven days. An ejected or cast-out demon is powerless for one or more days.

A demon not possessing another creature is immaterial and can pass through solid objects whose level is lower than its own. While the demon is immaterial, it takes only 1 point of damage from mundane attacks, but it takes full damage from magical, energy, and psychic attacks. While it possesses another creature, the demon is immune to most attacks (though not so the host; killing the host will eject the demon).

Demons can see in the dark.

Interaction: Demons let their hosts act as they normally would, provided those actions do not reveal the demon's presence. Should it be revealed, the demon might negotiate, but only after a tirade of lies and obscenity. The demon likely betrays any deal reached.

Use: One of the character's friends has begun to act strangely, and not in a good way.

A demon prefers to attempt possession before its potential host is aware of its presence, but it might choose to possess a victim in combat, too.

One way to exorcise a demon is to command it out in the name of an entity that has power over the demon. This can be attempted once per day. It grants the possessed character an additional Intellect defense roll to eject the demon.

GM Intrusion

The PC who attempts an exorcism of a possessed target is successful, but the demon moves directly from the former victim into the PC. The PC can make an Intellect-based roll to eject the demon, but only after the first round of possession.



Digger — 2 (6)

The diggers claim the deep places, excavating passages and scouring caverns for the precious metals they crave. Their greed puts them in direct conflict with dwarves, who share some of their interests, though none of their thieving ways. In fact, dwarves hate them so much that whenever something goes wrong in a mine or materials go missing, they blame the diggers.

Generations spent underground have given diggers a distinctive appearance. Hairless albinos with no eyes, they look somewhat like bipedal moles. They wear clothing patched together from stolen materials.

Motive: Find and collect precious metals.

Environment: Anywhere underground, especially near veins of silver or gold.

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Short. A digger can move through cracks in cave walls provided those cracks are wide enough to permit the passage of air.

Modifications: Listening and searching as level 4; escaping as level 5; Speed defense as level 3 due to quickness.

Combat: Diggers carry mining tools such as picks and shovels and use them as effective weapons.

Sightless, diggers perceive their surrounds with keen hearing and a sharp sense of smell. They can pinpoint the locations of all creatures within short range and such creatures cannot hide from diggers.

From their years spent mining, diggers can deliver mighty blows with their weapons. As an attack, the digger can make an attack as a level 1 creature. On a hit, the target takes damage as normal and falls prone.

Diggers are sightless, but thanks to their keen senses, they are completely at home in absolute darkness. Diggers suffer no penalties due to lighting or visibility.

Interaction: Diggers communicate in their own language, a whispering, sibilant language whose sounds never carry farther than a few feet. Diggers distrust surface-dwellers and become nervous around them, casting about for a way to escape. Of all the peoples, diggers hate dwarves and attack them on sight.

Use: A wealthy noble goes to his underground vault to count his gold only to discover that it has all gone missing. Inspecting the site reveals a hairline fracture in one of the walls.

Loot: A digger typically carries 1d6 nuggets of gold or silver worth 1 gold or 1 silver respectively.

GM Intrusion

When a character attacks a digger standing near a wall, the digger slips away through a crack and disappears.

Doppelganger — 6 (18)

Not everyone in Dragon City is what he or she appears to be. Hidden in plain sight, doppelgangers infiltrate the city and steal the identities of ordinary men and women, assuming their likenesses to work mischief, provide for themselves, and to mate with other creatures to perpetuate their species.

In their normal forms, doppelgangers lack distinctive features of any kind. Their eyes are black and overlarge, noses small, and mouth mere slits in their faces. They also lack genders while in their natural states, becoming male or female based on the form they adopt. Their lack of gender means doppelgangers cannot reproduce on their own and must instead wear the forms of other people. Whether they sire a child or carry it themselves to term, the offspring is always a doppelganger. Since this revelation is rarely a happy event, doppelgangers snatch the newborn babe and disappear into the city until the child grows old enough to adopt other forms on its own.

Motive: Produce more of its kind by adopting the forms of other peoples and impregnating them with its brood.

Environment: Anywhere people gather, such as Dragon City.

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Short.



Modifications: Deception, disguise, and persuasion as level 5.

Combat: Doppelgangers use whatever weapons they have at hand and as appropriate to the disguise they wear. While they will fight to protect themselves, they do so only until they can slip away. If prevented, they redouble their efforts to eliminate the aggressor.

What makes doppelgangers dangerous is their ability to assume the forms of other creatures. A doppelganger can use an action to assume the physical likeness of any humanoid creature it can see. The transformation is purely physical; the doppelganger does not mimic the creature's clothing or equipment. For this reason, doppelgangers carry an extra disguise and stash more disguises in hidden places around the area where they live.

Anyone witnessing the doppelganger's transformation must succeed on an Intellect defense roll, or lose its next turn being horrified.

Interaction: Being able to assume different forms is an advantage, but it would be useless if the doppelganger could not act or speak in the appropriate manner. As part of their transformation, doppelgangers can match their voices to that of the person they impersonate. As well, doppelgangers can read the surface thoughts of people around them, which lets them gather information about their victims and provided expected answers to questions put to them while in their borrowed forms.

Use: The character's patron goes missing for a few days and when she finally resurfaces she dodges questions about what happened to her. Over the following days and weeks, quirks in the patron's behavior suggest something might be wrong.

GM Intrusion

When the doppelganger hits a character with an attack, the doppelganger discovers something useful from the target's thoughts. The doppelganger attacks the character as a level 8 creature for 1 minute.



Dryad — 4 (12)

The old tales that tell of woodland spirits leading travelers into danger are true. These nymphs, called dryads, charm their prey and lead them on a merry chase through the forest until the mortal becomes hopelessly lost or, worse, stumbles into the waiting jaws of some forest monster.

The undead plague that spread across the world troubled the dryads as much as it did the mortal people, but dryads were able to escape their rotting enemies by hiding inside trees until they passed. As the zombies' numbers climbed and people began withdrawing to Dragon City and, presumably, other havens, the dryads were left to fend for themselves.

Dryads appear to be young men and women with slight bodies and feral appearance. Their skin tends to be green and their hair color matches the seasons: fiery red in the autumn, sunny blonde in the summer, bright green in the spring, and silver white in the winter. They rarely don clothing, but they may weave flowers into garlands or wear fetching leaves in their hair.

Motive: Protect their forest homes from despoilers.

Environment: Found in forests, dryads live in small families called groves that have three to six members.

Health: 8

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Short. A dryad can move into a living tree and immediately exit from a different tree within long range.

Modifications: Knowing stuff about nature as level 5; movement and stealth as level 6; Speed defense as level 6 due to speed.

Combat: Quick and nimble, dryads are hard to pin down. When threatened, they move unimpeded through the trees, dancing around their opponents and cutting them with stone or bone knives kept wickedly sharp.

Dryads possess powerful and ancient magic. One trick the dryads pull is to awaken a tree and make it their protector. A dryad may use an action to transform an ordinary tree into a level 4 creature. The tree remains a creature until it or the dryad that animated it is destroyed. A dryad can have one animated tree at a time.

A dryad can also use magic to manipulate its enemies. As an attack, the dryad can attack the mind of one character that can see it. If the character fails an Intellect defense roll, it takes 2 Intellect damage and becomes charmed by the dryad. While charmed in this way, the character cannot attack the dryad and must use its action each round to move toward the dryad that charmed it. The effect lasts until the dryad uses an action to lift the charm, or until the character is knocked unconscious.

Interaction: Dryads are wicked creatures, full of mischief and lacking compassion for their victims. They protect their homes not for any particular love of the trees, but because they depend on them for survival. Dryads may be curious about people who stumble into their lands and hold off attacking or charming them until they grow bored talking with them. Short attention spans and willfulness make talking with them a chore.

Use: A band of zombies attack a grove of dryads. If the characters come forward to help, the dryads turn against them after dispatching the zombies.

GM Intrusion

When a character attempts to move toward a dryad, vines and grasses suddenly reach up and grab the character.

Elemental, Air — 5 (15)

A twisting column of wind and flying debris, an air elemental is rage incarnate, reveling in the chaos and destruction it creates. Air elementals sometimes form in powerful storms.

Motive: Destruction.

Environment: Windy places such as storms.

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short; long if flying.

Modifications: Speed defense as level 7 due to quickness.

Combat: Air elementals attack by pummeling foes with their destructive winds. They can also scatter their enemies with powerful gusts, sending creatures within immediate range a short distance away and knocking them to the ground on a failed Might defense roll.

Air elementals are vulnerable to earth and stone. When an air elemental takes damage from anything made of earth or stone, it takes 1 additional point of damage.

Interaction: Possessed of a simple intelligence, air elementals ignore efforts to communicate with them unless those efforts come from a creature using a spell to command it. When given a command, there's a 10% chance that the air elemental shakes off the command and instead attacks that creature.

Use: A sudden windstorm levels several buildings in Dragon City. Most people chalk up the destruction to freakish weather, but

the truth is that an air elemental was responsible and whoever summoned it used it to eliminate a specific target.

GM Intrusion

A character hit by an air elemental's attack flies a short distance away from it and lands prone and takes 5 additional points of damage from the impact.

Elemental, Earth — 5 (15)

An excavation, a meteor fall, a still-shuddering earthquake—all these events can summon an earth elemental to take shape and expand the destruction further.

Motive: Crumble and break, reduce things to earth.

Environment: Anywhere solid or earthen.

Armor: 3

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Immediate; short if burrowing.

Combat: Earth elementals batter foes with heavy fists. They can also create earthquakes (no more than once every other round) that affects the ground within short range. Creatures standing in the area fall to the ground and take 5 points of damage on a failed Might defense roll.

An earth elemental is vulnerable to water. Any damage it takes while standing in or being doused in water ignores its Armor.

Interaction: Although brooding and slow to respond if encountered as immobile stone, earth elementals are intelligent. The ones that are summoned with a spell have about a 5% chance of breaking it and turning on their summoner.

Use: Oddly articulated monoliths were discovered high in the mountains around a shrine containing an ancient treasure. A merchant wants someone to investigate the monoliths in case they represent a trap. In fact, the monoliths are inactive earth elementals.

Structures in the area of a fire elemental's attack might catch on fire; those caught in the area of an earth elemental's earthquake might collapse.

GM Intrusion

A character hit by the fire elemental's attack catches on fire and takes 3 points of damage each round until she spends an action patting, rolling, or smothering the flames.

Elemental, Fire — 4 (12)

Searing flame in a vaguely humanoid shape, a fire elemental exists only to burn that which is not already ash. They sometimes spin into being at the heart of a great conflagration.

Motive: Burn. Burn. BURN!

Environment: Anywhere fires can burn.

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 4 to 7 points; see Combat.

Movement: Short.

Modifications: See Combat for escalating attack level modification.

Combat: A fire elemental attacks with a flaming limb. The more the elemental burns foes, the more powerful it grows. Its power increases according to the number of successful attacks (that dealt fire damage) it made on another creature during the previous minute.

- **0 successful attacks:** Deals 4 points of damage; attacks as level 4
- **1 successful attack:** Deals 5 points of damage; attacks as level 5
- **3 successful attacks:** Deals 6 points of damage; attacks as level 6
- **4+ successful attacks:** Deals 7 points of damage; attacks as level 7

If a fire elemental hasn't burned a foe within the last minute, its combat stats drop back to its level 4 baseline.

A fire elemental is immune to fire attacks but vulnerable to cold; every time it takes 1 point of cold damage, it takes 1 additional point of damage.

Interaction: Fire elementals are barely sentient and usually respond only to those who know spells able to command them. However, there's a chance (about 10%) that a fire elemental commanded to accomplish a particular task breaks free and instead burns whatever's around until it exhausts all possible fuel sources.

Use: A rash of fires lead some people to suspect that an arsonist is on the loose, but the truth is worse.

GM Intrusion

A character within range of the earth elemental's earthquake attack must succeed on a Speed defense roll or be covered in an avalanche from a collapsing structure or cliff face.

Elemental, Void — 6 (18)

The shadows stir as an animate blot of darkness assumes a humanoid shape, intent on spreading fear and darkness. Void elementals often spring into existence deep underground or in gloomy places that have witnessed extreme acts of violence.

Motive: Extinguish all light.

Environment: Anywhere at night or in dark and shadowy places.

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Speed defense as level 8 due to shadowy form.

Combat: As creatures of darkness, void elementals prove difficult to detect, for they move silently and blend into shadowy environments, becoming more or less invisible. Drawn by light sources, void elementals creep forward to the edge of light and use actions to extinguish all light sources within long range. Then, in the dark, the void elemental attacks, draining life and vitality from their victims' bodies.

The elemental can use an action to move into any space of its size or larger that is obscured by shadows or darkness, and immediately emerge from a similar space within long range of the space it entered.

The appearance of a void elemental inspires fear and panic. Each character that sees the void elemental for the first time must get a success on an Intellect defense roll or become frightened for 1 minute on a failure, which causes the difficulty of all rolls to worsen by one step.



Interaction: With only a rudimentary intelligence, void elementals behave as instructed by those with the spells to command them. As with other elementals, there's a chance (10%) for a void elemental to reject a command given to it and instead attack the creature that tried to control it.

Use: Color fades in a neighborhood and everything in its bounds appears drab and dull. People report seeing the shadows come to life at night, snatching people.

GM Intrusion

The void elemental completely envelops the character it hits for 1 round. While enveloped in this way, the elemental moves with the target and the target is blinded.

Elemental, Water — 4 (12)

A towering wall of water held in a shape reminiscent of a humanoid, the water elemental lurches towards its foes to drown them in its watery form. They often rise up and emerge from turbulent waters or take shape in a torrential downpour.

Motive: Drown everything.

Environment: Anywhere with abundant water.

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Immediate; short if swimming.

Combat: A water elemental uses watery limbs to bash enemies, drenching them in the process. Each time a water elemental hits a target with its limb, all normal fires within immediate range of it are extinguished.

When a water elemental takes damage from cold, it partly freezes, gaining Armor 3 for 1 minute or until it takes damage from fire or heat.

Finally, a water elemental standing in or submerged in water may use an action to add the fluid to its body and heal its damage. The water elemental heals 5 points of damage, but once it uses this ability, it cannot do so again for 1 minute.

Interaction: Water elementals are dimly sentient and thus respond only to individuals armed with the spells to command them. There's a 10% chance that a water elemental commanded to carry out a particular task breaks the control and instead goes on a rampage, smashing anything within its reach.

Use: Riverboats have begun to disappear. People blame undead, but one witness claims the water itself rose up and dashed the vessel against the rocks.

GM Intrusion

A character hit by the water elemental is pushed a short distance away from it and falls prone.

Faerie — 2 (6)

The immortal faerie always lived in the wild places, the forests and fields unspoiled and untouched by mortal hands. The Ruler of the Dead and the hordes of zombies in service to this nightmarish being have threatened the faerie along with the rest of the world. While these fey folk could have sought refuge in Dragon City, they refused, unwilling to submit to the Dragon Emperor's rule.

The faeries have suffered terribly at the hands of undead, and the constant fighting has made them feral, vicious, and unfriendly to any who trespass into their lands.

Faeries stand just a few inches tall and have thin, spindly bodies held aloft by the slight wings sprouting from their backs. Most faeries paint their bodies in ashes of their dead, and most sport nasty scars from near misses with their enemies. All tend to be wide-eyed, shifty, and aggressive.

Motive: Self-defense and mischief.

Environment: Faeries live in the dwindling sylvan forests and fields that have not yet been darkened by the shuffling hordes of undead.

Health: 3

Damage Inflicted: 1 point

Movement: Immediate; short when flying.

Modifications: Deception as level 5; stealth as level 7.

Combat: Faeries fight with small blades made from wood or bone. They zip through the air, diving in to jab their opponents in sensitive places.

Faeries have several magical tricks at their disposal. Once, they used them to mislead and befuddle mortals that stumbled into their lands, but now they help them survive. They can use any of the following options once per hour.

The faerie becomes invisible until it attacks.

The faerie creates an illusion of a creature, object, or force in a cube of space—5 feet on each side—that persists until it takes damage.

The faerie places a curse on a creature it can see within short range. The creature must get a success on an Intellect defense roll or fall prone and go to sleep for 1d6 hours. The creature wakens if it takes any damage.



Interaction: Years spent fighting zombies have left the faeries embittered and vicious. They regard living creatures as potential threats, since those creatures might lead more zombies into faerie territory. Thus, faeries use their magic to drive off intruders, and are not above using violence to make their points.

Use: Characters traveling into the deep wilderness may find the landscape does weird things. Trees start moving, pits open up in the ground, malicious laughter sounds in their ears. The farther they travel into these lands, the worse it gets.

GM Intrusion

When a faerie hits a character in the eye—using its wood or bone blade—it blinds him for a minute.

Fury — 5 (15)

Bloodthirsty savages, furies soar through the skies, keen eyes scouring the landscape for prey. The furies once terrorized the countryside, dropping from the sky to tear their victims apart with claws and teeth. Since the zombie plague, the furies have settled in high places beyond the reach of the undead.

Furies resemble humans somewhat, but their avian features, clawed hands and feet, and the leathery wings sprouting from their backs dispel any illusion of humanity. They are wild things, undisciplined and relentless hunters. The only things they fear are the walking dead, and they never hunt them, no matter how hungry they are.

Motive: Hunger for fresh meat.

Environment: High mountain aeries, and anywhere in the sky.

Health: 10

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short; long when flying.

Modifications: Intimidation as level 6; perception as level 7; Might defense rolls as level 4 due to fragile nature; Speed defense rolls as level 6 due to flying and quickness.

Combat: Furies dive at their foes from above, lashing with their claws and snarled fangs. If a fury dives from the sky, it attacks as a level 6, but if fighting on the ground, it attacks as a level 4 creature.

As an attack, a flying fury can attempt to snatch a creature its size or smaller. The fury attacks as normal, but if it hits, the target must get a success on a Speed defense roll or move with the fury as it flies. A fury typically carries its victim into the air and drops it, smashing it against the rocks.

Interaction: Although hateful, screeching creatures, furies are cunning and capable of speech. They talk in their language, which is peppered with clicks and squawks. They appreciate shiny trinkets and can be distracted by a shiny bauble.

Use: Airships passing over the mountains are sometimes attacked by flocks of furies who carry off crew who are never seen again.

Loot: Furies are likely to have coins and baubles in their nests.

GM Intrusion

A character hit by a fury's attack suffers a bleeding wound. Until a character uses an action to stanch the wound, the bleeding character takes 1 point of damage at the start of each of his turns.





Gaunt — 3 (9)

For many races, the Dragon Emperor represented salvation from the horror loosed by the Ruler of the Dead, a reprieve from the nightmare beyond the city's walls. While the dragon rarely interacts with individuals, it remains a tyrant of the highest order, one buttressed by the elves who first knelt before the ancient wyrm. Not everyone in Dragon City is content with the status quo, and some gather in the dark places to find another path, a way free from the crushing regime that has dominated life in the city for years.

The gaunts are one such group. Founded by a cabal of wizards, sorcerers, and dabblers who would see the Dragon Emperor deposed of or, failing that, a new society ruled by the masters of magic. Gaunts keep their identities secret. They fear the Imperial Dragon's Guard, who scour the city and blunt the organization's efforts. As a result, most have been driven underground, where they remain until the day of reckoning for the tyrant.

Long years spent underground have left the gaunts changed. Pale from lack of sun and spare due to malnutrition, when they must leave their warrens they do so in dark clothing and goggles to protect their sensitive eyes. Their costumes and manner earned them the moniker they use with pride.

Motive: Establish a new city under Dragon City, outside of the Dragon Emperor's influence.

Environment: Under and in Dragon City.

Health: 8

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Stealth as level 5; Speed defense rolls at level 5 due to magical nature.

Combat: Gaunts rely on their magical training to see themselves through battle. They let loose bolts of mystic force, crackling lightning, and blasts of flame. They also weave magical defenses around themselves to deflect their enemies' weapons and keep themselves out of harm's way.

Aside from battle magic, many gaunts also know spells to manipulate their opponents. In combat, a gaunt can cast any one of the following spells once.

The target must get a success on an Intellect defense roll or become held in place, unable to move for 1 minute or until it takes any damage.

The target must get a success on an Intellect defense roll or move a short distance in a direction the gaunt chooses.

The gaunt creates a single image of a creature or object within short range. The image must fit within a 10-foot cube. The image can move (the gaunt can make the image appear to walk or attack), but it cannot leave the area in which it appeared. The illusion is optical only, so its nature can be ascertained by using any other sense to interact with the image.

Interaction: Gaunts hate the Dragon Emperor and count anyone they deem as being allied with the tyrant to be their enemy. Thus, they may be friendly to individuals who share their views, going so far as to provide assistance, if doing so would not compromise their own agenda.

Use: A series of magical explosions strike government buildings all across Dragon City. The timing and targets suggest a coordinated effort to undermine the Dragon Emperor's authority.

Loot: Gaunts typically carry all sorts of minor magical trinkets. A group of three or more has one cypher per member.

GM Intrusion

A character hit by one of the gaunt's spells must make a Might defense roll. On a failure, the character transforms into a harmless animal, such as a chicken, rat, or toad, and remains in that form for 1 minute. Until the effect wears off, the character counts as a level 1 creature under the GM's control.

Ghost — 4 (12)

Sounds with no apparent origin, the tap of footsteps on the stair, knocks behind the walls, crying from empty rooms, and haunting music can all be signs that a ghost haunts a place. When a sudden temperature drop accompanies the sounds, and the breaths of living creatures begin to steam, there's a ghost for certain.

Sometimes the magical essence found in all living things survives death and lingers, a cruel mockery of the being that passed from the world. Most manifestations are ghosts, little more than memory fragments that assume the spectral form and haunt the places where they were created. A few ghosts, especially those with strong ties to the physical world, retain much of their original personalities, though distorted and twisted in some way.

Ghosts appearance varies: Many ghosts appear somewhat translucent, washed out. Others look physically warped, misshapen and horrific.

Motive: Unpredictable. Some ghosts carry out the same activities they would have, as if they were still alive. Others are knots of strong emotion, with rage and grief being the most common.

Environment: Almost anywhere.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Stealth as level 7; frightening others as level 6.

Combat: Ghosts ignore damage from mundane physical sources such as bullets and blade, but they take half damage from spells and energy attacks, and full damage from weapons or magic designed to affect spirits.

Ghosts attack by touching their enemies, causing the point touched and the area around it to instantly freeze.

Some ghosts are so malevolent that creatures become frightened in their presence. Ghosts capable of filling creatures with fear can shock the mind so strongly that their victims die. Such ghosts attack all creatures within short range with a mental attack and each target that fails an Intellect defense roll takes 4 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) and becomes terrified, frozen in place. In each subsequent round, a terrified victim can attempt an Intellect-based task to overcome the fear. Each failed attempt moves the victim one step down the damage track. Not attempting to clear one's mind of fear counts as a failed attempt. Those killed by fear are marked by expressions of horror and hair that has turned white.

A ghost can move through solid objects up to level 7 at will, although it can choose to pick up and manipulate objects if it focuses on them. Ghosts can also go into a state of apparent non-existence for hours or days at a time.

Ghosts uses supernatural senses to perceive their surroundings.

Interaction: Some ghosts are talkative, some don't know they're dead, some want help for a task they failed to accomplish in life, and some only rage against the living and want to bring those who still breathe into the same colorless existence they endure.

Use: A ghost that at first appears fully human wants help in eradicating a guild of ghost hunters that has targeted it and a few others haunting an abandoned structure. The ghost promises to tell secrets to any who accept its strange offer.

Loot: Ghosts sometimes haunt places important to their former, living selves. Such places may have treasures that were important to them—a wedding ring, a chest of coins, a cypher, or an artifact.

GM Intrusion

A character that sees the ghost for the first time must get a success on an Intellect defense roll, or panic. Each round for 1 minute, the character must use his action to move away from the ghost by the safest available route.

Ghoul — 4 (12)

The eaters of the dead have long troubled the civilized world, but with its collapse and the rise of the dead, the ghouls have been forced to roam the wastelands, feeding on the roving herds of zombies. While the eating is good, they live in a state of constant peril as the zombies feed on them as readily as they do their other victims.

Orgiastic eaters of human flesh, ghouls carry the cost of their unspeakable appetites in their bodies. Rife with disease, most ghouls carry a terrifying range of maladies, from open, weeping sores, to widespread rot. Their disease stems from their carrion-rich diet, but their unnatural constitution enables them to survive the plagues they carry.

Ghouls typically look human, with spindly arms and legs, swollen bellies, and grotesque features distorted by hunger. If they bother to wear clothes, they wear scraps and rags plundered from their victims.

Motive: Hunger for dead flesh.

Environment: Wastelands and anywhere there are fresh corpses.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short.

Combat: The disease that torments ghouls also aids them in battle. They can spread their noxious plague through biting living victims. When a ghoul inflicts damage with its teeth, the target must succeed on a Might defense roll or become paralyzed for one minute from the introduction of toxins. While paralyzed, the character cannot use actions and fails all defense tasks. A paralyzed target can attempt a Might-based task each round to shake off the effect. On a success, the target is no longer paralyzed, but for one minute, the difficulty of attack, defense, and movement tasks is increased by one step.

Interaction: Ghouls know no restraint. They hurl themselves at their enemies, scrabbling with claws and teeth to fill their bellies with hot blood and meat. They are utterly unreasonable creatures, responding only to pain and violence.

Use: An area noted for its zombie infestation is discovered to be free from the walking dead. The reason? An infestation of ghouls has settled in nearby ruins and they have been picking off the walking corpses for a while.

GM Intrusion

A ghoul dribbles saliva in a character's mouth, forcing that character to make a Might defense roll. On a failure, the character contracts a hideous disease.

Giant — 7 (21)

Long ago, the giants were counted among the world's most dangerous creatures, being great, lumbering brutes that roamed the world, taking what they wished. For who could stop a creature that stood up to 40 feet tall and weighed thousands of pounds? The giants met their match in the hordes of undead. Slow moving, the zombies swarmed them, taking them down and feeding on the abundant flesh. Thus the giants retreated from the wastelands, finding refuge high in the mountains where they have remained. Lack of food and exposure to the elements winnowed their numbers until only a few remain. These survivors have become feral, wild things—eating anything they can catch.

Giants demand so much food that they can't afford to gather in groups. They tend to be loners, though their self-imposed isolation taxes their minds and drives them deeper into savagery.

A giant appears as an overlarge human, with brutish features and thin bodies draped in animal hides and salvaged materials taken from the ruins they sometimes explore.

Motive: Survival.

Environment: Mountains and other remote places free of undead.

Health: 42



Damage Inflicted: 9 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Speed defense as level 5 due to size; Intellect defense as level 5 due to stupidity; breaks and throws objects as level 8.

Combat: Giants fight with their fists and feet. Their great size lets them attack multiple targets at once, such that when a giant swings at or stomps on a human-sized creature, it has a chance of hitting each creature within an immediate distance of the target.

When a giant strikes a target, it may either inflict damage or grab the target if it is human-sized or smaller. The giant inflicts 4 points of damage to the target it grabbed and the target cannot move. A grabbed target can attempt a Might defense roll to pull free from the giant's grip, a Speed defense roll to wriggle free, or an Intellect defense roll to trick the giant. The giant may use an action to squeeze a creature it is grabbing, which inflicts 9 points of damage. Or it can throw the creature as high and as far as it can. The creature typically takes 10 points of damage on landing, though different surfaces may alter the damage—water inflicts half as much damage, while a stone wall might inflict 3 additional points.

Giants are also quite good at throwing objects. They throw boulders, chunks of masonry, or wagons at targets within a long distance. When a giant throws an object, it has the same chance of striking multiple targets as if it has attacked with its fist or foot.

Interaction: Most giants are not very bright. When a giant is rampaging, someone could attempt to distract her by singing, juggling, or doing some other trick, which some giants will pause to watch for at least one or two rounds.

Use: A giant hurled a boulder at a passing airship, knocking it from the sky. The vehicle was carrying important cargo and the merchant who owns the vessel will pay a fine price to recover the goods and, if possible, slay the giant.

Loot: Giants typically carry their belongings in large sacks. A typical sack holds a few hundred coins of varying denominations, 1d6 cyphers, and an artifact or two.

GM Intrusion

The giant strikes the character so hard he's buried in the ground like a tent peg. Until the character uses an action to pull free—or another character uses an action to pull him free, the character cannot move or attack and the difficulty of Speed defense rolls worsens by two steps.

Giant Rat — 3 (9)

Giant rats are as large as attack dogs, just as vicious, and wilier. Some giant rats are the lone matriarchs of a pack of ordinary level 1 rats, and others are just one of several making up a colony of oversized rodents. Like their smaller cousins, giant rats are known for harboring virulent diseases.

Motive: Self-defense and reproduction.

Environment: Ruins and sewers, typically in groups of one to seven.

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short; long when jumping.

Modifications: Perception as level 4.

Combat: Creatures damaged by a giant rat's diseased teeth and claws take 4 points of damage and must succeed on a Might defense roll or become infected with a level 5 disease. Within twelve hours, the victim's lymph glands swell, creating visible buboes. Every twelve hours thereafter, the victim must succeed on a Might defense roll or take 5 points of ambient damage.

Interaction: Giant rats stubbornly pursue prey, but they flee if that prey proves to be too strong.

Use: A contact of the PCs dies of plague before she can deliver an important message. They'll have to backtrack her movements to discover what she wanted to tell them, which leads to a giant rat colony.

GM Intrusion

A swarm of twelve ordinary rats—each level 1, but acting like a level 3 swarm—is summoned by the high-pitched squeaking of a giant rat.

Giant Scorpion — 5 (15)

Veritable living weapons, giant scorpions haunt the abandoned cities and towns littering the wastelands beyond Dragon City. These hulking monstrosities wedge themselves into tight places and emerge under the cover of night to hunt their prey, living or dead.

Motive: Hunger.

Environment: Rocky and sandy desert wastelands.

Armor: 2

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Perception as level 7; Speed defense as level 3 due to size.

Combat: A giant scorpion relies on its keen senses to detect when prey draws near. When presented with a suitable victim, the scorpion emerges from hiding, pulling free from the sand or scuttling out of rocky cover and lashes out with its pincer claw. When it hits a creature with its pincer, the creature must also succeed on a Speed defense roll or become grabbed. While grabbed in this way, the creature cannot move on its turn, worsens the difficulty of all tasks by one step, and must move with the scorpion when it moves. A grabbed creature can attempt a Might defense roll to pull free from the scorpion's grip or a Speed defense roll to wriggle free.

A giant scorpion can grab up to two creatures at a time. The giant scorpion can use an action to squeeze creatures it is grabbing. Each creature must make a Might defense roll or the pincers inflict 4 points of damage.

A giant scorpion may attack with its stinger. If it attacks a creature it is grabbing, it attacks at level 6. On a hit, the creature takes 4 points of Speed damage and must get a success on a Might defense roll or be injected with venom that deals 4 ambient damage and poisons the target. A target poisoned in this way worsens the difficulty of all tasks by one-step. Multiple stings have a cumulative effect. The venom wears off after 1 hour.

Interaction: Scorpions have the intellect of predatory animals. They can't be reasoned with and are aggressive.



Use: A nest of scorpions infests ruins purported to hold a fabled artifact. To acquire the artifact, the characters must contend with these vicious guardians.

GM Intrusion

When a giant scorpion hits a character with its claw, it immediately attempts to sting the same target.

Giant Snake — 4 (12)

Serpents of incredible size, giant snakes dwell underground where they slither through caves in search of prey. One can always tell when near a giant snake's lair from the musty odor filling the air, the shed skins, and the slippery bones of a snake's victims.

Motive: Hunger.

Environment: Anywhere a giant snake can lurk, including jungles, sewers, and caves.

Armor: 2

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Perception and stealth as level 6; Speed defense as level 3 due to size.

Combat: A giant snake uses its sword-length fangs to bite prey, usually slithering out from a hidden position to take their prey by surprise. In addition to damage, a creature bitten by the snake worsens the difficulty for all Speed defense rolls by two steps and must get a success on a Might defense roll or take 3 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor).

A giant snake may coil around a sleeping, stunned, or debilitated victim. Caught victims automatically take 5 points of crushing damage each round until they break free.

Giant snakes lose their perception and stealth modifications in cold climates, and when attacked with abilities that reduce the temperature. Thus, they retreat from cold.

Interaction: A giant snake is a predator that regards other creatures as food, though it ignores them when it is already busy digesting a meal.

Use: Characters note something amiss as they glimpse lambent eyes peering from the darkness, glaring as if seeking to pin victims in place with cold terror.

Loot: A giant snake's droppings or gullet might hold a few cyphers and possibly an artifact that the creature could not digest.

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Once it kills a victim, a giant snake drags off the carcass and swallows it over the course of a minute. It takes the snake several hours to digest a human-sized creature.

GM Intrusion

The snake's venom affects the character more strongly. Instead of merely inflicting Speed damage, it also paralyzes the PC for one minute, though after a couple of rounds, she can make another Might defense roll to throw off the effects of the poison early.



Giant Spider — 3 (9)

Spiders of all breeds infest the world, from tiny, harmless spiders to deadly spiders whose venom can kill a creature many times their size. The term "giant spider" describes any and all venomous spiders the size of a large dog… or larger. Often, enormous spiders result from experimentation or being affected by a magical mishap.

Motive: Hunger for blood.

Environment: Anywhere webs can be spun in the dark.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short or long when traveling on their webs.

Modifications: Perception as level 5; Speed defense as level 4 due to quickness.

Combat: A giant spider's venomous fangs inflict 3 points of damage, plus 3 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) if the victim fails a Might defense roll. Debilitated victims are not killed but instead cocooned and hung for the spider to drain later.

Giant spider webs (level 4) can hold victims immobile and unable to take actions until they manage to break free.

Giant spiders lose their perception and Speed defense modifications in bright light and thus often retreat from intense illumination.

Interaction: Most giant spiders are simple predators and react accordingly.

Use: Giant spider webs can hang across unlit alleys, dungeon corridors, dark forests, and the darkened hallways of abandoned magical laboratories.

Loot: Cocooned corpses of previous victims hanging in a giant spider's web sometimes contain valuables, including cyphers.

GM Intrusion

Giant spider eggs hatch, and a level 3 swarm of tiny spiders attacks the character.

Gnome — 1 (3)

Descendants of dwarves and halflings, yet welcome among neither, gnomes search for their place in Dragon City among the burgeoning and unruly populace. While once rare, and still uncommon, gnomes form their own small communities, finding kinship and company among their own kind.

The combination of halfling ingenuity and dwarven determination grants gnomes keen minds, discipline, and a willingness to accept new ideas and solutions to their problems. Gnomes are best known for their ingenuity and their skill at producing mechanical marvels.

Motive: Varies by individual, though most seek knowledge and discovery.

Environment: Dragon City

Health: 3

Damage Inflicted: 1 point

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Engineering and invention tasks as level 3.

Combat: Gnomes fight with whatever weapons they have on hand, usually an improved tool such as a hammer or wrench. They aren't especially brave, so they will flee if given a chance.

One gnome of every four encountered carries an invention or two. The invention is usually a single-use device that reduces the difficulty of any task it attempts by two steps. Alternatively, the invention may be a weapon. With it, the gnome attacks as a level 4 creature and inflicts 4 points of damage that ignores armor. The weapon can be anything you like—a flamethrower, a shock stick, or noise projector.

Interaction: Although clever and inquisitive, gnomes tend to be shy and avoid attracting attention to themselves. They can be drawn out of their shells if engaged about subjects that interest them, such as engineering, at which point they become talkative and friendly, showing off blueprints and going into elaborate detail about how their devices are intended to work.

Use: An explosion levels a city block somewhere in the city when a gnome invention goes awry.

Loot: One gnome in a large group will have a cypher or two.

GM Intrusion

When a gnome takes damage from an attack, one of his inventions explodes. Each character within an immediate distance of the gnome must get a success on a Speed defense roll or take 3 points of damage.

Goblin — 1 (3)

Goblins are wicked, grasping, and perversely resourceful. Usually no larger than children, they can seem like pesky rabble, but that illusion hides something altogether more cunning. Goblins in Dragon City gather around the strong and powerful, sometimes acting as lackeys and henchmen, other times using these individuals for protection. When gathered in groups, goblins work together to accomplish whatever wicked ends they might pursue, from theft to murder.

Motive: Greed and theft.

Environment: Dragon City, and in tunnels and caves, usually in groups of ten or more.

Health: 3

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Perception and stealth tasks as well as setting traps as level 5.

Combat: Goblins attack from the shadows with ambushes and hit-and-run tactics. When they have surprise, goblins attack as level 4 creatures and deal 2 additional points of damage. When fighting in their lairs, they attempt to draw larger prey into level 5 traps they've previously set. They often flee in the face of real danger.

Interaction: Many goblins are lying tricksters, while almost all are selfish, filthy, and prone to cruelty. They can be cowed into cooperating for short periods.

Use: Goblins occupy one of the lowest rungs in Dragon City's society, being just one step above the wretched kobolds. While considered pests, vermin, and scum by most in the city, goblins resort to theft and murder to survive, which can make them dangerous when desperate.

Loot: Aside from weapons, each goblin carries a personal stash, including bones, shiny rocks, sticks, and other bits of worthless trash, plus a few coppers.

GM Intrusion

The goblin poisoned his knife. If struck, the PC must get a success on a Might defense roll or immediately move one step down the damage track.

Golem, Clay — 6 (18)

The wizards of the Academy create golems to carry out specific tasks, using them as guards, workers, and laborers for jobs no one else is willing to perform. Fashioned from clay and imbued with potent magic, clay golems can have almost any appearance, though most have a crude, unfinished look to them. When not given a specific task by their creators, clay golems become inert, passing the time insensate until called to act again.

Motive: Seeks to fulfill the commands of its creator.

Environment: Anywhere that needs a sturdy magical guardian.

Armor: 5

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Intellect defense as level 2 due to dim intelligence; Speed defenses as level 4 due to slowness.

Combat: Clay golems strike with their heavy fists, making two attacks with a single action. If the clay golem hits the same target with both attacks, the golem inflicts 2 additional points of damage. Clay golems, as part of their attacks, can remold their appendages into different forms, from blades to spikes to bludgeons.



Golems cannot be stunned or dazed. They are immune to poisons and disease, and 2 of their 5 points of Armor protect against ambient damage (environmental damage, heat, cold, falling, and so on).

Even if a golem is completely destroyed, the rubble of its form slowly reassembles over the course of three days, unless that rubble is ground to the finest gravel and spread widely.

Interaction: Clay golems can't speak. They are little more than mindless automatons.

Use: Powerful wizards create golems and press them into service with their spells. Should their maker be destroyed, the golem may go on a rampage, freed from the magic that constrains its actions.

GM Intrusion

The character hit by the golem is also grabbed and head-butted for 6 additional points of damage. The PC must break or slip free, or else she remains in the golem's grip.

Golem, Flesh — 5 (15)

Most golems are fashioned from inorganic materials—stone, clay, iron, steel—but a few deranged wizards find ways to create these servants from the body parts of dead people. A dark practice, one often associated with necromancy, it has been forbidden in Dragon City. Those seduced by the promises of power sometimes defy the laws and delve into the dark arts to construct these terrifying monsters.

Flesh golems typically possess body parts from a wide range of people, of different races and genders. Some have parts harvested from animals.

Motive: Seeks to fulfill the commands of its creator or vent wrath through supremely destructive behavior.

Environment: Laboratories of renegade wizards, and in the sewers and tunnels under the city.

Armor: 2 (ineffective against fire damage)

Health: 25

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Might defense as level 7 due to inability to feel pain; Intellect defense as level 4 due to low intelligence.

Combat: Flesh golems attack with their fists, striking with incredible force. A flesh golem can make two attacks using a single action.

A golem's immunity to disease and poison makes it hard to kill. They are never dazed or stunned. They can shrug off most forms of ambient damage, having 2 points of Armor against anything other than fire.

Interaction: Most flesh golems are capable of rudimentary speech, though most make groaning, grunting noises. Flesh golems sometimes recall flashes of their former lives, which causes them to go berserk.

Use: The process of subjecting a flesh golem to its animating magic is harrowing and excruciating for the mind trapped inside the reanimated meat, so much so that flesh golems tend to be unstable servants at best. While largely obedient, they have a tendency to break free from their masters and go on rampages.

At the start of each of the flesh golem's turns, roll a d20. On a roll of 1, the flesh golem goes on a rampage, attacks as level 6 and inflicts 2 additional points of damage.

GM Intrusion

When the flesh golem misses with an attack, it lashes out in a rage, clipping another character within immediate range and inflicting 2 points of damage.

Golem, Iron — 8 (24)

Great, towering automatons made from iron and magic, the iron golems are counted as some of the mightiest creations to come from the Wizard Academy. Rare by the standards of other golems because of the expense in creating them, they tend to be found in service to the most influential magicians in Dragon City, acting as guards and walking siege engines.

Iron golems stand upwards of 20 feet tall and weigh many tons. Most have humanoid forms, looking like armored warriors from olden times, though a few have fantastical appearances, wrought to look like dragons or hybrid creatures.

Motive: Obedience to their creators.

Environment: In the company of wealthy and powerful wizards, but such individuals can rarely afford one of these constructs let alone two.

Armor: 6

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 10 points

Movement: Immediate.

Modifications: Might defense as level 10 due to composition; Speed defense as level 5 due to slowness; Intellect defense as level 2 due to dim intelligence.

Combat: Artificers typically build into the iron golems' appendages weapons such as swords, hammers, or axes, any of which the iron golem can swing with deadly force. The golem is so large that when it attacks, damage applies to the target and each creature within an immediate distance of it. If the attack hits only one target, the target flies a short distance away from the golem and lands prone, which inflicts 2 additional points of damage.

Iron golems ignore all ambient damage; they cannot be burned, electrocuted, or otherwise affected by energy. They cannot be diseased or poisoned, dazed or stunned.

A destroyed iron golem slowly rebuilds itself, a process that takes 1d6 days to complete, unless it has been melted down into slag.

Interaction: Iron golems cannot speak and are effectively mindless automatons.

Use: Although often used as symbols of status and power, iron golems are effective weapons of war. When two feuding wizards let their disagreement become open war, one might let loose his iron golem as a last-ditch effort to destroy his foe.

GM Intrusion

A character that takes damage from an iron golem must succeed on a Might defense roll or suffer several broken bones. The character immediately moves down one step on the injury track.

Griffin — 4 (12)

The majestic griffins wing through the skies above Dragon City and other mountainous lands, having retreated there from the roving bands of undead to make nests and hunt fresher fare. Griffins combine the traits of a lion and eagle, with great wings spreading from their back and a mane of feathers leading up to their raptor head. Fierce and aggressive, they make dangerous opponents when diving from the air.

Griffins raised from chicks can be trained to bear riders. Still, they are temperamental beasts, as quick to snap at their riders as they are their enemies.

Motive: Hunter.

Environment: High mountain aeries.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short or long when flying.

Modifications: Perception as level 6 due to keen eyesight; Speed defense as level 6 while flying.

Combat: Griffins use their talons and beaks, shredding clothing, skin, and armor. Griffins prefer to fight from the air, diving from above and attacking as a level 5 creature against targets on the ground. Should they be forced to fight on foot, they flap their wings and snap with their beaks.

Interaction: Griffins behave as wild animals, often unpredictable and showing aggression even without provocation. Griffins are always dangerous, but become savage when hungry, frightened, or feel their young are being threatened. In such situations, griffins fight to the death.

Use: Griffins sometimes attack airships carrying goods from elevated farmland or, when food becomes scarce, might drop into the city to snatch a goblin or halfling for a meal.

GM Intrusion

A flying griffin snatches a character it hits, flying off with it. The griffin may drop the character from a great height. If so, the character may make a Speed defense roll to cling to the griffin's limbs or fur.



Hobgoblin — 3 (9)

Of all the humanoids making their homes in Dragon City, hobgoblins have had the hardest time adapting to civilization. Before the Ruler of the Dead's rise, they were brutish and warlike, gathering in hordes and rampaging across the countryside, rivaling orcs for their brutality. Like others, hobgoblins came to Dragon City seeking refuge from the dead and bent their knees to the Dragon Emperor.

Hobgoblins resemble other goblins, but stand as tall as humans, have thick, muscular bodies, and broad features. Fangs sprout from their mouths and they have backswept pointed ears. They like brawling, feeding their vices, and eating. Rumors and whispers make hobgoblins out to be child-eaters; while there's little to substantiate these claims, they are not above eating other goblins.

Motive: Violence and selfishness.

Environment: Dragon City.

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Intimidation and perception tasks as level 4.

Combat: Hobgoblins love to brawl, and when given a chance to fight, they'll take it. They fight with whatever weapons are at hand, usually crude hatchets, cleavers, or stickers. When a hobgoblin attacks, it can choose to attack twice, but it does so as a level 1 creature.

Interaction: Crude and only barely civilized, hobgoblins are all about boasting and bluster. They trade insults with each other, some quite inventive, even if improbable. Temperamental, they're always a breath away from getting into a fight.

Use: Children start vanishing in the poorer parts of the city, especially near Goblintown. Locals pin the disappearances on the hobgoblins, though they know it's something much, much worse.

GM Intrusion

When a character strikes a hobgoblin, it takes half the damage, and until the end of its next turn, it attacks as a creature of one level higher.



Hydra — 7 (21)

A monster of legend, the hydra poses a considerable threat to any unfortunate creature that happens to stumble across its path. The hydra boasts seven heads atop long necks that merge to form the body of a gigantic serpent, easily 30 feet long. The heads are capable of independent action, but they aren't very bright. When suitable prey is absent, they snap at each other, tearing and gouging the flesh.

Motive: Hunger for flesh.

Environment: Encountered singly, hydras can be found in swamps or under mountains. Subterranean hydras tend to be albinos and feed on fish, diggers, creepers, and other peoples that share their territory.

Armor: 1

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Perception tasks as level 8 due to its multiple heads; Speed defense as level 5 from its great size.

Combat: When the hydra senses prey, it slithers forward to attack with all seven of its heads. The hydra can divide its attacks between multiple targets, in which case each head attacks as a level 4 creature. Or, the hydra can attack a single creature, inflicting 7 points of damage on a success.

The hydra's heads inject venom into prey. A character that takes damage from one or more bites must make a Might defense roll. The character makes the roll once, after the hydra's attacks have been resolved. The poison is level 4, plus 1 for each head that hit the character during the round. A failure indicates the character is poisoned and takes 3 additional points of damage, plus 1 point of damage per hit from the hydra. This additional damage ignores armor.

The hydra also has a supernatural ability to heal its wounds. At the end of each of its turns, the hydra heals 1d6 points of damage. If the hydra takes damage from fire or acid, it loses this healing ability until the end of its next turn.

Interaction: Hydras behave as wild animals, though they tend to be more vicious and spiteful than ordinary beasts.

Use: An earthquake causes several subterranean passages and chambers under Dragon City to collapse. Displaced, the hydra moves into the sewers and begins hunting people who live above its lair, snaking its heads out of manhole covers to snatch victims from the streets.

Loot: A hydra typically has 1d6 cyphers and an artifact or two in its lair.

GM Intrusion

The hydra clamps its fangs down on a character it hits and shakes it for 2 additional points of damage before casting it aside to fall prone a short distance away from it.

Kobold — 1 (3)

Kobold gangs have always been a problem in Dragon City's poorer districts. Individually, they are weak, cringing, little wretches, but when they work together they can take down creatures many times larger than themselves, all by swarming their enemies. Locals consider them to be little better than vermin and no one blinks an eye when an angered ogre smears one against a wall. Kobolds remember slights against them and their fellows and go to elaborate lengths to get revenge.

These dog-headed humanoids stand one foot tall and weigh about ten pounds. They typically clothe themselves in whatever scraps they can find.

Motive: Mischief and cruelty.

Environment: Bands of 6 to 12 kobolds roam Goblin Town and elsewhere in Dragon City.

Health: 2

Damage Inflicted: 1 point

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Deception and stealth tasks as level 3.

Combat: Kobolds turn ordinary objects into weapons, fighting with whatever they can grab. Many use kitchen knives, metal pots, and their own filth if they must.

One on one, kobolds are hardly a threat. However, a group of four kobolds can combine their actions to attack the same target, attacking as a level 4 creature that inflicts 4 points of damage.

Interaction: Cowards at heart, kobolds adopt cringing, obsequious postures when threatened by someone obviously more powerful than them. They find their courage in numbers, become bold with their insults and aggressive against anyone they think they can take down.

Use: While the characters move through Goblin Town, a group of kobolds picks up their trail and gradually add numbers to their group until they feel they can attack and win.

Loot: A group of kobolds typically have a few dozen coppers.

GM Intrusion

A character hit by a group of kobolds falls prone under the tide and cannot stand up until the kobolds are slain or succeeds on a level 4 Might task.

Last Breath — 4 (12)

A pall of smoke hangs over Dragon City, a miasma fed by the foundries and forges, the cook fires of the thousands living there, and incinerators destroying dead bodies before they rise as zombies. Sometimes this haze takes on a life of its own.

Born from the Dragon Emperor's own fire, last breath is sentient smoke that creeps through the city's streets, preying on the living out of sheer malice. Last breath looks like a billowing cloud of gray smoke with flecks of burning cinders swirling inside.

Motive: Hatred for living creatures.

Environment: Smoky places in Dragon City.

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Stealth tasks as level 6 or level 9 in smoky environments due to form.

Combat: A last breath billows toward its prey, flowing through cracks wide enough to permit the passage of air if need be, gathering around its victim and burning it with the cinders swirling in its form.

Whenever a character misses the last breath with an attack, it can move a short distance.

In addition, when a living character starts its turn within an immediate distance of the last breath, the character must get a success on a Might defense roll or breathe in the last breath, causing it to disappear inside the victim's body, inflicting 4 points of damage (ignores Armor). While inside the character's body, the last breath cannot take any action other than to leave its host. It moves with the character it inhabits.

While hosting a last breath, the character cannot breathe, which increases the difficulty of all tasks by one step. In addition, the host character takes 4 additional points of damage on each of his turns. The host character can use an action to make a Might roll and coughs out the last breath with a success.

Interaction: The last breath is malevolence incarnate and while sentient, it refuses to communicate with its victims in any meaningful way.

Use: Locals believe a disease is striking down the people of Downtown. Oddly, victims are always found in rooms reeking of smoke.

GM Intrusion

A character hosting the last breath becomes stunned for one round from coughing and choking.



Lizard Person — 2 (6)

In the dark and tangled swamps live the lizard people, an ancient race of reptilian humanoid who have long troubled those peoples living near their pestilential bogs and mires. Now that civilization has retreated behind the walls of Dragon City, the lizard people were left to face the shuffling hordes on their own, and thus they have retreated deeper and deeper into the swamps to escape the growing numbers of undead. Since they are amphibious, they gather in submerged and fortified villages to keep out the dead.

Lizard people stand a bit taller than humans, and their thick hide resembles that of crocodiles. They forgo clothing, but sometimes carry wicker shields and spears.

Motive: Survival and hunger.

Environment: Underwater in swamplands.

Armor: 1

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Swimming tasks as level 4 due to nature; trap-making tasks as level 3.

Combat: Lizard people have sharp claws and teeth, perfect for rending and tearing the flesh. Some use throwing spears to take down game from a distance.

Although primitive by human standards, lizard people have great skill as hunters and typically protect their lands with snares to catch prey. Lizard people monitor their traps so they can take down their prey while tangled up. A typical trap is a hidden snare. Unless the character gets a success on a Speed defense roll, they are ensnared and prevented from moving until freed. While ensnared, the difficulty for all tasks the character attempts worsen by one step. An ensnared character can use an action to cut the snare free or wriggle out from it with a successful Speed roll.



Interaction: Brutal and aggressive, lizard people make poor conversationalists. They talk to each other in sibilant tongue, but rarely bother to talk to outsiders when they can kill and eat them.

Use: The PCs stumble into snares set by the lizard people and must contend with the hungry savages while trying to escape the trap.

Loot: Bands of lizard people typically have 1d6 cyphers and valuables worth 3d20 gold in their camps, usually plundered from nearby ruins.

GM Intrusion

The lizard people have sharp claws. A character struck by their claws suffers a bleeding wound that inflicts 1 point of damage (ignores Armor) at the end of each of his turns until he or another character uses an action to stanch the wound.

Manticore — 5 (15)

To survive outside the walls of Dragon City, a creature must be stronger, tougher, and fiercer than the undead hordes. The manticores have everything they need to survive, and have adapted their diets to become scavengers, feasting on their victims' rotten flesh. While they sustain their diet on zombies, manticores crave the hot blood of living victims and never pass up chance for fresh fare.

From a distance, manticores resemble large lions with reddish fur and black manes. Close inspection reveals their monstrous nature, for they have snarling human visages and long tails that end in sharp spikes.

Motive: Hunger makes the manticore aggressive, and hatred makes it hunt anything that moves.

Environment: Wastelands beyond Dragon City, usually singly but sometimes in groups up to four.

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Jumping as level 6.

Combat: Manticores use their claws and teeth to rend their foes. As an attack, the manticore can attack one creature or split up its claws and teeth to attack up to three different creatures, though each divided attack inflicts just 2 points of damage.

Fast and bloodthirsty, once manticores sniff out a victim, they pursue their prey, even at risk to themselves. Manticores can use an action to move a short distance and attack with their natural weapons. As well, once per round when a character within an immediate distance moves away, the manticore moves up to a short distance to pursue.

Finally, while most comfortable fighting in close quarters, a manticore can use the spikes growing from its tail to attack enemies at a distance. As an attack, the manticore snaps its tail to fling a barrage of spikes at any number of characters within an immediate distance of each other, and within long range of the manticore. Each character must get a success on a Speed defense roll or take 3 points of damage.

Interaction: Wild and monstrous, manticores tend toward aggressive behavior, attacking without provocation. Some



manticores are capable of speech and may parrot their prey's words and noises as if mocking them.

Use: An airship laden with foodstuff crashes in the wastelands. A group of manticores circles the site, picking off the survivors one at a time.

GM Intrusion

When the manticore inflicts damage to a character, it does so in a way that maims the target. Increase the attack's damage by 2 and the character takes half the total as Might damage and half as Speed damage.

Merfolk — 2 (6)

An ancient people, masters of the waves, the merfolk dwell in great cities of coral built on the ocean floor. Their watery homes have sheltered them from the worst of the devastation loosed by the Ruler of the Dead, but has largely severed their connections to dry land, leaving them to fend for themselves against the world's many terrors.

Before the apocalypse, the merfolk maintained an uneasy peace with the other races. They traded, sometimes guided ships through troubled waters, and rescued drowning sailors. Others, resenting human intrusion and pollution, lured sailors to their doom with sweet songs and captivating looks, or sabotaged their vessels. Now, merfolk return to dry land only rarely, willing to resume trade if they can find trustworthy survivors, or to create corpses from the ones that aren't.

Merfolk have humanoid upper bodies, but below the waist that have the tails of fish covered in fine, glittery scales.

Motive: Survival.

Environment: Groups of 7 or more in warm, aquatic environments.

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Immediate on dry land; long in water.

Modifications: Perception tasks as level 4 and swims as level 4

Combat: Being an aquatic people, merfolk favor thrusting weapons such as spears, tridents, and knives, since they are all easier to use than heavy slashing or bludgeoning weapons.

Merfolk are nimble swimmers and can swim a short distance—they make an attack at any point during the movement using a single action.

Alternatively, a merfolk can use an action to attack with her weapon and then slap her opponent with her tail. A creature hit by the merfolk's tail is pushed a short distance away.

On dry land, merfolk are at a serious disadvantage, and the difficulty for all tasks they attempt worsen by two steps. Merfolk can, however, breathe air as easily as they breathe water.

Interaction: Most merfolk have curious minds and affable personalities. A few have suffered or know merfolk who have suffered at the hands of humans and other land-dwellers, which makes them more guarded and even aggressive in encounters with them.

Use: While sailing, the characters' ship founders on rocks and comes under attack by zombies. The merfolk come to their aid and can give them information about the area or help toward reaching their objective.

Loot: Merfolk collect treasures from wrecks littering the ocean floor and typically have jewelry and coin worth 1d6 gold per merfolk. Large groups can have 1d6 cyphers as well.

GM Intrusion

In aquatic combat, the force of a merfolk's attack causes the character to lose air and start drowning. At the end of each of the character's turns, she must get a success on a Might defense roll or move one step down the damage track.

Mummy — 5 (15)

In ancient kingdoms whose names and founders have passed from the annals of history wait the restless remains of the long dead for an afterlife promised them by priests and philosophers, an afterlife that will never come. Housed in elaborate tombs built to honor their lives and legacies, the dead, awakened by fell magic, have gone mad in their prisons, and rattle the lids of their sarcophagi in their futile efforts to escape. Yet when some treasure-hunter frees them, they respond with all the unhinged hatred of the too long imprisoned and crush them with their linen-wrapped hands.



Motive: Hatred for living things.

Environment: Sealed in tombs standing in or near ruined cities.

Health: 25

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short.

Combat: Mummies fight with their hands, battering foes with powerful strikes.

As an attack, a mummy can attempt to grab a creature within an immediate distance. On a success, the mummy grabs hold and prevents the character from using any action that would require physical movement other than to break free, which requires a successful Might or Speed roll. The mummy cannot attack any creature other than the creature it grabs, but its attacks against the creature automatically hit.

Mummies are extremely flammable thanks to the chemicals used to preserve their bodies, and the brittle linens covering them. A mummy that takes damage from fire takes half that damage again and catches fire. Each round on its turn until the flames are extinguished, the mummy takes 3 points of damage.

Mummies can see in the dark.

Interaction: Nearly mindless with hate, mummies regard anyone they find in their tombs to be intruders and act to destroy them.

Use: The PCs find an artifact that carries the mummy's curse. The only way to be rid of the curse is to return the item to the mummy-haunted tomb from which it came.

Loot: Mummies typically have chests of gold, 1d6 cyphers, and an artifact or two in their lairs. Sadly, these items almost always bear the mummy's curse.

GM Intrusion

When a character first sees the mummy, he must get a success on an Intellect defense roll or become paralyzed with fear, unable to use actions. The effect ends if the character takes any damage. Alternatively, the character can on each turn repeat the roll and throw off the effect with a success.

Mummy's Curse

The magic granting mummies unlife also protects the treasures they were to bring with them into the afterlife. Any character taking a piece of treasure from a mummy's tomb becomes cursed until the curse is lifted, usually by magic, or until the treasure is returned. While cursed, the character increases the difficulty of all tasks by one step and must roll two dice for recovery rolls, using the lowest result.

Needle Bush — 1 (3)

This weirdly mobile shrubs creeps across the wastelands, moving with an odd, lurching gait. Bands of them travel together in the same direction as if on a pilgrimage. Each needle bush has a trunk divided into "legs" that end in tangled roots. Sharp needles, as strong as iron, sprout in clumps from its tangled branches. At night, the bush stops moving and burrows its roots into the ground, becoming an ordinary plant until the sun rises.

Motive: Self-defense.

Environment: Needle bushes are found in clutches of six to twelve in outdoor, wilderness environments, where there is at least a little water.

Health: 3

Damage Inflicted: 1 point

Movement: Immediate.

Modifications: Might defense as level 3 because it's a plant; Intellect defense as level 4 due to its inscrutable mind.

Combat: Needle bushes become dangerous only when they feel threatened. They can attack in one of two ways. They can rake foes with their sharp needles or can launch their needles at a creature within a short distance.

Flammable, when a needle bush takes damage from fire, it immediately catches fire and moves a short distance in a random direction, igniting any flammables within an immediate distance of it as it moves, before it collapses in a pile of ashes.

Interaction: If needle bushes have sapience, they have not revealed it yet.

Use: Characters exploring the wastelands are bound to come across a clutch of needle bushes or evidence of their passage in the needle-speckled zombies wandering nearby.

GM Intrusion

A character hit by the needle bush's attack is momentarily blinded after a needle catches her near the eye.

Ogre — 4 (12)

The largest humanoids living in Dragon City are the ogres, a race of brutes notorious for being violent and aggressive. Bald, with great tusks jutting from their drooping maws, they decorate their bodies with tattoos they believe hold mystical power. The ogres have come a long way since civilization's fall and have learned, for most part, how to get along with other races.

Motive: Hunger and aggression.

Environment: Dragon City, usually acting as muscle for powerful criminals and gang leaders. The smarter ogres may lead their own gangs.

Health: 20

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

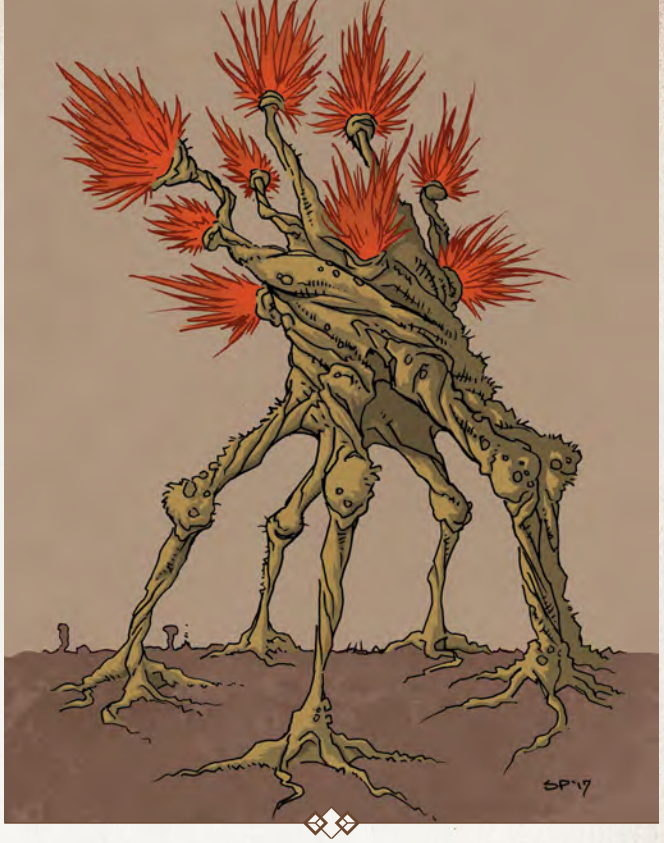
Movement: Short.

Modifications: Feats of raw strength as level 6; Intellect defense and seeing through deception as level 3; Speed defense as level 3 due to size.

Combat: Ogres typically use clubs and other weapons they can wield in both hand to take advantage of their great strength. Since they are accustomed to fighting smaller creatures, they are adept at using their size and strength to their advantage. If an ogre strikes a foe smaller than itself, either the victim is knocked back up to 5 feet, or it is dazed and the difficulty of its next action is increased by one step.

Ogres can also swing their huge weapons in wide arcs, attacking all foes within close range. The difficulty of defending against this attack is decreased by one step, and the attack inflicts 5 points of damage.

Ogres rarely flee from a fight, and only a foe of overwhelming power can force them to surrender.



Interaction: Ogres lack subtlety and much in the way of intellectual prowess. They can be fooled easily, but once they realize they've been duped, they become violent, lashing out at anyone and everyone they can reach.

Use: Characters exploring the seedier parts of Dragon City are bound to cross paths with one of these bullies.

Loot: An ogre is bound to have a few silver or gold coins on hand, usually stained with the blood of their previous owner.

GM Intrusion

The ogre's mighty blow (whether it strikes a foe or not) hits the ground or the wall, causing major structural damage and a possible collapse, cave-in, or landslide. It might also expose a hidden underground cave or chamber.

Ooze — 3 (9)

The deep places under Dragon City and elsewhere house all manner of strange and unwholesome things. The predatory oozes exemplify the strangeness of the subterranean ecology, as they are mobile slicks of slime, driven by hunger to hunt anything that creeps, crawls, or walks into their territory. Oozes adopt coloration to match their surroundings, making them hard to spot.

Motive: Hunger.

Environment: Anywhere underground, such as caves and sewers.

Health: 27

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Perception tasks as level 5 due to keen senses; Climbing and stealth tasks as level 6 due to nature.

Combat: Oozes form pseudopodia to bash their prey, but the slimy residue from their bodies corrodes flesh. A character struck by an ooze must get a success on a Speed defense roll or corrosive fluid inflicts 3 points of damage (ignores Armor).



Oozes can slither up walls and across ceilings, and cling there. Should a character pass under an ooze on the ceiling, it releases its hold and drops onto the character, unless he gets a success on a level 5 Speed defense character. If not, the ooze engulfs the character, inflicting 6 points of damage. While engulfed by the ooze, a character increases the difficulty of all tasks by 1 step and takes 3 points of damage from the corrosive slime at the end of each of its turns. A character can escape the ooze by using an action to make a Might roll. On a success, the character removes the ooze.

Oozes rely on senses other than sight to "see" their surroundings. They ignore illumination and visibility-related effects.

Interaction: Oozes are nearly mindless creatures, seeking only to fulfill their base needs.

Use: Oozes are common sights in the sewers. Some believe the Dragon Emperor introduced the species to keep these tunnels free and clear of detritus—living and otherwise.

GM Intrusion

The corrosive slime dissolves a cypher or piece of equipment belonging to the character it struck.

Phantom — 3 (9)

Although death means an end to living creatures, the magic within them may persist and manifest as an echo, an imprint in the world that acts as a simulacrum of the creature that was. Phantoms form from individuals with strong magical essence that linger in the world, taking on a spectral form of the person to whom it belonged. When they first appear, they are, in many ways, continuations of their living selves, but as the magic fades so too do their minds until they become tormented and confused, spirits made wild by the madness blossoming in their minds.

Most phantoms look like their living forms as they were at the time of death but formed from transparent green light.

Motive: Madness.

Environment: Ruins and other abandoned places in groups of one to six.

Health: 8

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short; a phantom can move through solid creatures and objects.

Modifications: Stealth as level 5; frightening others as level 4.

Combat: Since phantoms manifest with whatever they were wearing and carrying at the time of death, they typically wield a weapon, such as a sword or pistol. Although insubstantial, their weapons can harm other creatures and inflict Intellect damage (ignores Armor).

Phantoms never take damage from mundane physical sources such as bullets and blade. They take half damage from spells and energy attacks, and full damage from weapons or magic designed to affect spirits.

Phantoms move freely through solid objects and creatures of up to level 5. They cannot physically interact with objects, however, and they simply pass through them.

Phantoms can see in the dark.

Interaction: Many phantoms can communicate using the languages they knew in life and with the knowledge and memories they had when alive. They tend to find their spectral natures confusing, which can cause them to become distracted or erratic. The older the phantom, the more of itself fades with the magic sustaining it. Such creatures become quite dangerous as they become crazed and lash out at anyone they encounter.

Use: When the characters investigate a murder, the phantom of the victim manifests and may attack out of confusion or, if subdued, may give important clues about who or what is responsible.

GM Intrusion

When a character takes Intellect damage from a phantom, the character becomes frightened and must use an action during its next turn to flee by the safest available route.

Rat-King — 2 (6)

The people of Dragon City are no stranger to rats. These vermin breed in appalling numbers and infest the sewers, rubbish heaps, and the dank alleys of Goblintown in ever growing numbers. Professional rat catchers do their best to keep their numbers in check, but among them they whisper of nastier things in the dark, great, heaving swarms of tangled rodents, masses of gleaming eyes and flashing teeth. Rare sights to be sure, but wherever discovered, the rat catchers flee, knowing even with their skills and ratters, they stand little chance against these hordes.

Rat-kings are swarms of rats whose tails have become tangled and knotted. Adapting to their awful bindings, they attain a certain communal mind, being smarter, tougher, and nastier than the ordinarily tough rats of the city. Some rat catchers have even gone so far as to claim rat-kings can speak.

Motive: Hunger and madness.

Environment: Anywhere rats gather underground.

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Climbing, swimming, and squeezing through tight places as level 5.

Combat: Horrid swarms, rat-kings skitter toward their prey, engulfing them and subjecting them to their sharp claws and teeth.

Rat-kings are difficult to injure with weapons, taking only half the damage from attacks made using weapons. However, since they are clumped together, they take half as much damage from attacks that affect an area.

Interaction: While some rat catchers swear rat-kings can speak, nearly all behave as crazed animals, made desperate by their awful, tangled natures. They are aggressive to the point of suicidal.

Use: While pursuing a villain into the sewers, the characters stumble onto a nest of rats—at the center is a rat-king.

Loot: Rats sometimes collect small treasures such as a few coins, a piece of jewelry, or a cypher thought lost.

GM Intrusion

When a rat-king takes damage, it releases 1d6 giant rats that move to anywhere within an immediate distance of the rat-king.

Revenant — 4 (12)

Wrathful killers, undead driven by an insatiable need for vengeance, revenants rise from the dead to right wrongs done to them, and they keep coming back no matter how many times they fall until they secure the justice they demand.

Unlike most undead, the revenants do not answer to the Ruler of the Dead. Instead, the magic residing within their living bodies gives them the means to escape death, if for a time. As magic suffuses all living things, it sometimes absorbs the strong emotions the living feel in their final moments, and capture the will, intellect, and memories of that person, and give the corpse motility and purpose. Revenants look just as they did at the moment of death and can be quite ghastly, with broken bones jutting out through cold feet, heads dangling on broken necks, or guts hanging like aprons from wounds in their bellies.

Motive: Vengeance.

Environment: Anywhere.

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Frightening other creatures as level 6 due to horrific appearance. Intellect defense as level 6 due to iron will.

Combat: Revenants hunt the creatures responsible for their deaths, or for the wrongs done to them before death, so they typically ignore anyone else. If someone gets in their way, however, revenants attack with whatever they have at hand—a length of wood, sword, or their bare hands. Against the people they hunt, revenants attack at level 6.

A revenant's eyes are empty pools of darkness, and when the living peers into them they see the finitude of their existences. Whenever a revenant attacks a character that can see it, that character must also get a success on an Intellect defense roll. On a failure, the character becomes paralyzed with fear, unable to use actions. At the end of each of the character's turns, he can make another Intellect defense roll to throw off the effect. Once a character gets a success on this roll, he becomes immune to the revenant's gaze.

Revenants refuse to die. Whenever a revenant drops to 0 Health, secretly choose high or low and have one player roll a d20, treating a roll of 10 or less as low and 11 or higher as high. If the result of the roll is the same that you chose, the revenant heals all its damage, stands up, and takes an action. Otherwise, the revenant dies and remains dead for at least 24 hours.

Interaction: Revenants crave vengeance. They know all the languages they knew in life and may communicate to find out information about the people they hunt, if given the chance. Nothing else interests them and they typically ignore statements and questions about subject matters that lie outside the revenants' goals.

Use: A powerful bureaucrat comes to the characters for help, believing someone is following him. It turns out this someone is a revenant that wants vengeance for some wrongdoing committed by the politician.

GM Intrusion

When a character delivers a killing blow to the revenant, it twists away from the attack, reducing the damage to 0 and immediately attacks that character.



Sewer Beast — 7 (21)

In the dripping dark of Dragon City's noisome sewers, vile things slither and crawl, swim through the muck, and creep up and down the dank passages, hunting for flesh. Of all the dreadful things lurking below the city, it is the ferocious sewer beast that arouses the greatest fear for it is a monster of terrible aspect and nature, a beast all other denizens in the darkness fear and avoid. It is hunger given form, a great mass of sucker-covered tentacles and eyestalks that extend out from some misshapen knot of flesh dominated by a wide toothy maw.

The dreaded sewer beast lurks at the bottom of a deep pool of rainwater, effluvia, and other fluids mingled into a fetid stew. Resting there, it sends its tentacles down the many passages branching off from its lair to snatch rats, diggers, the occasional zombies, and explorers, crushing its victims in its adamantine grasp and dragging the broken remains back to disappear beneath the soup it calls home. When it depletes the population, it heaves out of the pool and squeezes down to the tunnels to find another place where it can feed.

Motive: Hunger.

Environment: Sewers under Dragon City.

Health: 60; each tentacle has 10 Health.

Damage Inflicted: 10 points

Movement: Immediate.

Modifications: Swimming as level 9.

Combat: The sewer beast has ten tentacles covered in suckers that it uses to manipulate the creatures it catches. The beast uses two tentacles to anchor its body, and it can attack with its other eight tentacles as one attack against targets within long range of its body, stretching around obstacles and through small openings. Each tentacle that hits a creature inflicts 5 points of damage plus 1 additional point of damage for each tentacle after the first.



A character struck by one or more tentacles must make a Might defense roll against a level equal to 4 + the number of tentacles that struck it. On a failure, the character becomes restrained and cannot move or use an action to perform any task that would involve movement other than to try to break free, making a Might roll against a level equal to the number of tentacles the beast uses to restrain it. If the beast is already grabbing a character when it attacks with its tentacles, the sewer beast automatically inflicts a number of points of damage (ignores Armor) to that character equal to 1 + the number of tentacles it uses to restrain. The sewer beast can release its grasp at any time.

Characters can attack the tentacles as if they were level 5 creatures. Dropping a tentacle to 0 Health either severs it or renders it useless. The sewer beast regrows severed tentacles at a rate of one per 24 hours.

As part of the sewer beast's attack, it can drag creatures it has restrained toward its body, moving from a long distance to a short distance or a short distance to a close distance. Since the sewer beast lives in watery environments, characters it restrains are likely pulled underwater, which increases the difficulty of all tasks by one-step.

Alternatively, as an attack, a sewer beast can attack a creature within close range using its teeth, inflicting 10 points of damage on a hit.

The sewer beast can see in the dark.

Interaction: The sewer beast is little more than a predatory animal and it seeks to feed its appetite, and nothing more.

Use: A sewer beast can be an unwelcome surprise to characters exploring the city's sewers. It should be clear to them that it's not something to fight, it is something to escape.

Loot: All manner of things can be found in the sewer beast's lair, from hundreds of gold and silver coins, to 2d6 cyphers, and an artifact or two.

GM Intrusion

When the sewer beast drags a character to a close distance, it can attempt to bite that character as part of the same action.

Skeletal Warrior — 2 (6)

Dark magic binds and powers the clattering bones of humanoid creatures, causing them to become quick and deadly servants of the Ruler of the Dead. Lacking the weight of flesh and blood, they move with shocking speed, able to snake their curved blades through their enemies' defenses and land telling blows. Skeletal warriors sometimes work as assassins, able to move quietly and slither through tight spots to reach their prey.

Motive: Kill for the Ruler of the Dead.

Environment: Wastelands.

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Speed defense as level 5.

Combat: Skeletal warriors usually carry curving swords but can use their bony claws when disarmed. Their preternatural quickness lets them always act first in combat.

Skeletal warriors can see in the dark.

Interaction: Skeletal warriors obey whatever commands they are given by figures they recognize as authorities. They do not speak or seem to understand what others say unless it is to command them. When given orders, skeletal warriors can carry out complex missions.

Use: The characters stumble across a team of skeletons scaling the wall to slip into the city and wreak havoc.

GM Intrusion

A skeleton destroyed by a melee attack explodes like a grenade. The bone shrapnel inflicts 5 points of damage to every creature in immediate range.

Specter — 5 (15)

When night falls, the vengeful specters of long dead creatures emerge from the cracked stones and fallen timbers to resume their hateful patrols of the lands they once called home. Like other spirits, specters are magical manifestations of people long gone, mere echoes of an older time. Although not truly the spirits of the people they resemble, they inherit their memories and knowledge.

Unlike phantoms and ghosts, specters sustain their unnatural existence by draining magic from living creatures. Failure to do so would cause them to fade from the world as their own energy dissipates. Thus, these spirits are hateful and cruel, their desperation driving them to suck the life from anyone they can catch.

Motive: Sustain existence by feeding on magical power.

Environment: Ruins in the wastelands.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short; a specter can move through solid creatures and objects.

Modifications: Stealth as level 7; frightening others as level 6.

Combat: Each time specters drain life and energy from living creatures, they steal some of their memories and features from them as well. Not only does this scramble the specters' minds, but it also causes their appearance to grow warped, twisted, and wrong. Characters that first see a specter must get a success on an Intellect defense roll or become frightened. While frightened, they increase the difficulty of all tasks by one step. A character frightened can use an action to shake off the fear.

A specter drains life from its victims by touching them. The touch inflicts 3 points of Intellect damage and 2 points of Speed damage, both of which ignore Armor. The touch feels like fire, but the skin at the point of contact is icy cold. Worse, when the specter inflicts damage this way, it increases its Health by 1.

Specters never take damage from mundane physical sources such as bullets and blade. They take half damage from spells and energy attacks, and full damage from weapons or magic designed to affect spirits.

Specters move freely through solid objects and creatures of up to level 7. They cannot physically interact with objects, however—they simply pass through them.

Direct sunlight erases specters from existence for as long as it falls on the area they inhabit. Once the sun slips behind a cloud or sets, the specter springs back into existence. This disappearance drains specters, inflicting 6 points of damage each time it happens.

Specters can see in the dark.



Interaction: The clash of personalities and memories stolen from other living creatures makes specters quite erratic. They babble and screech, start laughing and then bawl like children. The moments of lucidity are rare but are defined by their single-minded effort to feed on the living.

Use: When night falls on what seems to be an empty room littered with treasure, the specters emerge to add the characters' essence to their own.

Loot: Amidst the bones and rotting bodies of the specters' victims, one can find a couple hundred coins in gold and silver plus 1d6 cyphers.

GM Intrusion

When a character attacks the specter, it darts out of reach, plunging into a nearby object and causing the attack to miss.

Strangler — 5 (15)

Travelers beyond Dragon City's walls find the world much changed from the time before the dead walked. Tall grasses have all but covered the old roads. The foundation stones that still remain act as tombstones for the homes and villages that once stood there. Even the mighty cities have succumbed to nature's demands, lost in a dense tangle of overgrowth. The undead make such places

dangerous to explore, but they are not the only threats. Sometimes nature itself can be an even deadlier foe.

Among the many deadly plants travelers might encounter, the strangler is one of the worst. The plant—a thick green vine found climbing trees, broken walls, and other vertical surfaces—can uproot itself and slither toward its prey. The strangler hunts the living and the dead, finding sustenance in the juices released when it turns its victim into pulp using its powerful coils.

Motive: Hunger.

Environment: Anywhere.

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Perception as level 6 due to keen senses; Stealth in overgrowth areas as level 7.

Combat: A patient hunter, the strangler senses vibrations in the ground caused by movement within long range. Moving slowly, the strangler slithers, much like a serpent, through the overgrowth toward the disturbance. Its skill at sneaking is usually sufficient to attack with surprise.

When within close range, the strangler lets loose several tendrils at its prey and, on a hit, inflicts 5 points of damage and holds the character in place, preventing it from moving away. Furthermore, a character affected in this way increases the difficulty of all Might tasks by one step and all Speed tasks by two steps. An affected character can use an action to break free with a successful Might or Speed roll.

When the strangler attacks, it automatically inflicts 5 points of damage to any creature it holds and it can attack another character within an immediate distance as above.

Stranglers take double damage from fire and when they take damage from cold, the difficulty for all tasks they attempt worsens by one step until the end of their next turn.

Interaction: Stranglers are predatory plants, driven by their survival impulses.

Use: The characters, while exploring an overgrown ruin, discover a pile of shattered bones, suggesting that a strangler might be near.

Loot: Near the strangler's roots, one is bound to find 1d6 cyphers and 1d6 × 5 gold worth of coins.



GM Intrusion

A character hit by the strangler's attack has its airways cut off as a tendril wraps around her throat. While held by the strangler, the character increases the difficulty of all tasks by one step.

Troll — 6 (18)

Foul, stinking brutes, the trolls have plagued the civilized peoples for centuries, and though mankind and other races have ceded the wilderness to the dead, the trolls linger, finding the new world much to their liking.

Trolls are hard to kill; only fire can take them down. Trolls have nothing to fear from the zombies, as their incredible constitution is more than equal to the vile contagions the dead carry. Thus, many trolls keep zombies as livestock, keeping them penned in and plucking their meals from the herds.

Great variation plagues trolls, such that they all have distinctive appearances. They are all large, most being twice as tall as a grown human, but bigger specimens exist. Some trolls sport weird lichen on their bodies, have skin the consistency of stone, feature extra limbs and even extra heads. The only uniform trait seems to be their large noses, which tend to be red, veiny, and sprinkled with warts.

Motive: Hunger.

Environment: Singly or in groups of two to four, trolls live in the wastelands, hunting at night.

Armor: 2

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Feats of strength as level 7; Might defense tasks as level 8 due to hardy nature.

Combat: Trolls use boulders and the trunks of uprooted trees as weapons, but their hands and feet serve equally well.

Aside from their prodigious strength, trolls heal damage rapidly, so rapidly that they can recover from all but the most catastrophic damage in moments. A troll heals 5 points of damage at the start of each of its turns. Only fire can stop the troll's healing ability. Whenever the troll takes damage from fire, the damage is permanent and cannot be healed without using magic. Thus, a troll reduced to 0 Health by fire is dead.

A troll can also be killed by destroying its brain, which can be done to a troll that has not yet healed damage by punching a sharp object through its eye and into its skull.

Trolls don't like sunlight, as they cannot see when in areas lit by the sun. They can, however, see perfectly fine in total darkness.

Interaction: Ruled by their appetites, trolls are brutish, wicked, and cruel. They see all other creatures as food and treat them as such.

Use: Trolls sustain themselves on zombies, but they crave fresher fare. If the characters enter the trolls' territory, they are bound to attract attention.

Loot: Cutting open a troll's belly reveals a few dozen coins and a couple of cyphers.

GM Intrusion

The character hit by the troll is picked up and bitten for 6 additional points of damage. The troll then drops the character to the ground, where he falls prone.

Vampire — 6 (18)

Vampires are undead creatures, risen from the grave to drink blood. Their very nature and essence are evil and anti-life, even as they revel in their own endless existence. Most vampires are vain, arrogant, sadistic, lustful, and domineering. Their powers allow them to manipulate others, and they frequently toy with their prey before feeding. Vampires come out only at night, as the sun's rays will destroy them.

The bite of a vampire over three nights (in which it exchanges a bit of its own blood) ensures that the victim will rise as a vampire under the thrall of the one that killed it. While vampires are careful not to create too many of their kind (which amount to competition), each thrall conveys a bit more supernatural power to a vampire. Eventually, a vampire with a multitude under its command becomes a vampire lord.

Motive: Thirsts for blood.

Environment: Usually solitary, on the edges of civilization.

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Movement: Long.

Modifications: Climb, stealth, and perception as level 8; Speed defense as level 7 due to fast movement.

Combat: Vampires are strong and fast. They have impressive fangs, but these are usually used in feeding, not in battle. They typically fight with their fists or hands (which basically become claws) but sometimes use weapons.

A vampire can change into a bat or a wolf. This transformation does not change its stats or abilities except that, as a bat, it can fly. Vampires can also transform into shadow or mist, and in these forms they can't be harmed by anything (but also can't affect the physical world).

Vampires possess an unholy charisma and can mesmerize victims within immediate distance so that they stand motionless for one round. In subsequent rounds, the victim will not forcibly resist the vampire, and the vampire can suggest actions to the victim (even actions that will cause the victim to harm himself or others that he cares about). Each round, the victim can attempt a new Intellect defense roll to break free.

Vampires are notoriously difficult to hurt. Unless a weapon is very special (has specific magic enchantments against vampires), no physical attack harms a vampire. They simply don't take the damage. Exceptions include the following:

- **Fire:** Vampires burn, though the damage doesn't kill them. It only causes pain, and a vampire regains all health lost to fire damage within twenty-four hours.
- **Running water:** Complete immersion inflicts 10 points of damage per round. If not destroyed, the vampire can use a single action to regain all health lost in this way.



- **Sunlight:** Exposure to sunlight inflicts 10 points of damage per round. If not destroyed, the vampire regains all health lost to exposure in twenty-four hours.
- **Wooden stake:** This weapon inflicts 25 points of damage, effectively destroying the vampire in one blow. However, if the vampire is aware and able to move, the difficulty of this attack is increased by two steps.

Further, vampires have the following special weaknesses:

- **Garlic:** Significant amounts of garlic within immediate distance increase the difficulty of a vampire's tasks by one step.
- **Mirror:** Forceful presentation of a mirror to a vampire stuns it, causing it to lose its next action. While the object is brandished and the vampire is within immediate range, the difficulty of its tasks is increased by two steps.

Interaction: Most vampires look upon humans as cattle upon which to feed. They rarely have respect for anything but other vampires, and they often hate other supernatural creatures that they cannot enslave.

Use: Strange stories of shadows in the night, people disappearing from their beds, and graves missing their former occupants could portend the arrival of a vampire in the region.

If desired, a vampire can bite for only one round and then stop, starting the process of creating a new vampire. The victim becomes a transitional vampire the next night.

GM Intrusion

The character struck by the vampire is caught fast in its powerful grip. If she doesn't escape immediately, the vampire bites her automatically.

Vampire Thrall — 3 (9)

When a human is "visited upon" (bitten) by a vampire, she might be killed, or she might be left alive to begin a slow transformation into a creature of the night. If a victim is bitten three times, she becomes a vampire forever under the control of the one that bit her. From the time of the first bite until her complete transformation after the third bite, she is a vampire thrall. The only ways to return a vampire thrall to normal are by using special ancient rituals or by destroying the vampire that bit her in the first place.

Vampire thralls usually serve as guardians, consorts, or spies for their masters.

Motive: Thirsts for blood.

Environment: Anywhere, usually solitary but sometimes in groups of two or three.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Climb and stealth as level 4.

Combat: Vampire thralls can maintain a human existence during the day without any of a vampire's powers or weaknesses. However, they have a disdain for garlic and the sun. At night they take on all the characteristics of a vampire, and if confronted by any of the traditional vampiric weaknesses (a wooden stake, a mirror, and so on), they flee unless their master is present.

Interaction: Vampire thralls are utterly devoted to their master.

Use: Vampire thralls lie in the intersection of foe and victim. A loved one or trusted companion who has been turned into a transitional vampire will try to betray, defeat, and kill the PCs, but the characters are motivated to save him rather than destroy him.

It's possible for a vampire to turn a fresh corpse into a vampire thrall. Unlike others of its kind, it is truly undead—like a vampire—and cannot take on a human nature during the day. But it will never become a full vampire and always remains in its lesser state.

Vampire Lord — 9 (27)

The vampire lord is among the most powerful vampires in the world and is often (but not always) the most ancient of its kind. It has many vampires under its control, and even those that it did not create pay it respect and homage.

Motive: Thirsts for blood.

Environment: Anywhere, usually solitary.

Armor: 2

Health: 40

Damage Inflicted: 10 points

Movement: Long.

Modifications: Climb, stealth, and perception as level 10; Speed defense as level 10 due to fast movement.

Combat: Vampire lords have all the powers and weaknesses of regular vampires, plus one or two unique abilities. It's possible that the traditional methods of killing a vampire are only temporary setbacks for the vampire lord, and the only way to destroy it for good is mysterious and unique, such as an ancient ritual, a special weapon, or the like.

Interaction: As the apex predator among apex predators, the vampire lord is extremely arrogant. Interacting with it on any level other than supplication will likely arouse anger.

Use: The vampire lord is a villain for the end of a campaign—a deadly challenge for even the most powerful characters.

Loot: The vampire lord has at least one artifact and very likely 1d6 + 1 cyphers, as well as the wealth of kings.

Some vampire lords are also versed in sorcery.

Werewolf — 4 (12)

The curse of lycanthropy begins as nightmares about being chased or, somehow more terrifying, chasing someone else. As the dreams grow fiercer and each night's sleep provides less rest, the victim begins to wonder about the bloodstains on her clothing, the strange claw marks in her home, and eventually, the mutilated bodies she finds buried in her backyard.

When not transformed, many who suffer the curse seem like completely normal people, if emotionally traumatized by the fact that most of their friends and family have been brutally slaughtered over the preceding months. Some few, however, realize the truth of their condition, and depending on their natures, they either kill themselves before their next transformation or learn to revel in the butchery.

Motive: Slaughter when transformed; searching for answers when human.

Environment: Anywhere dark, usually alone but sometimes as part of a small pack of two to five.

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short; long when in wolf form.

Modifications: Attacks as level 6 when half lupine; Speed defense as level 6 when full lupine; perception as level 7 when half or full lupine.

Combat: In normal human form, a werewolf has no natural attacks, though it may use a weapon. It also lacks the abilities described below; its only power is to transform into a half-lupine form or full lupine form, which takes 1d6 agonizing rounds. A handful of werewolves can control their transformation, but most change at night in response to moon-related cues.

- **Half Lupine:** A half-lupine werewolf is part humanoid and part wolf, but completely terrifying. It attacks with its claws.
- **Full Lupine:** A full lupine werewolf is a particularly large and vicious-looking wolf. It normally bites foes and deals 2 additional points of damage (7 points total) but can also use its claws.
- **Half and Full Lupine:** Half-lupine and full lupine werewolves both enjoy enhanced senses and regain 2 points of health per round. However, a werewolf that takes damage from a silver weapon or bullet stops regenerating for several minutes.

Interaction: In human form, werewolves have the goals and aspirations of normal people, and they often don't recall what they did while transformed, or even realize that they suffer the curse of lycanthropy. In half- or full lupine form, there's no negotiating with one.

Use: When the moon is full, werewolves hunt.

Favorite methods for curing a werewolf include medicine (wolfsbane), surgery, or exorcism. Many "cures" are effective only because they kill the werewolf in human form before she's able to transform again.

The werewolf is but an example of lycanthropes found in the world. Others can adopt different animal forms: bears, boars, and even rats are all possible forms lycanthropes can take.

GM Intrusion

A PC who moves down one step on the damage track due to damage inflicted by a werewolf must succeed on a Might defense roll or be afflicted with the curse of lycanthropy.



Wyvern — 7 (21)

Where dragons are exceptionally rare, wyverns are quite common, leading some to speculate that wyverns are distant cousins. These enormous monsters have many physical traits in common with dragons, being that they are large, winged reptiles. They lack forearms, and their tail ends at a stinger, similar to that of a scorpion. Wyverns also lack dragon intelligence, being little more than wild animals.

Motive: Hunger for meat.

Environment: Mountains, singly or in groups of two or three.

Armor: 2

Health: 45

Damage Inflicted: 10 points

Movement: Short; long while flying.

Modifications: Perception as level 8; Speed defense as level 6 due to size.

Combat: A wyvern can bite one target and sting a different target as a single action. A character stung by the wyvern must get a success on a Might defense roll or the venom injected inflicts an addition 6 points of damage and the character becomes stunned for 1 round, losing his next turn.

Interaction: Wyverns lack the ability to speak. They behave as aggressive animals.

Use: Wyverns trouble the airships carrying cargo from the mountain farms that feed Dragon City.

GM Intrusion

A character bitten by the wyvern becomes immobilized until it succeeds on Might roll to break free.

Zombie — 2 (6)

The zombies created by the Ruler of the Dead represent the greatest threat the world has ever known. In one dark ritual, the Ruler of the Dead corrupted the magic residing in all thinking creatures in a region, causing them to rise from death as mockeries of life. With the dead outnumbering the living, the Ruler of the Dead amassed an army unlike anything the land had ever seen and has since driven the living into the few isolated strongholds where they huddle behind high walls in crowded conditions.

Zombies are walking corpses driven by an insatiable hunger for living flesh. The magic sustaining them does not arrest the decay of their flesh, so older zombies are mostly skeletons, while fresh zombies might appear to be living, at least from a distance.

Motive: Hunger for living flesh.

Environment: Anywhere outside Dragon City, in groups of five or six, or in hordes of tens to hundreds.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Immediate during the day, short at night.

Modifications: Speed defense as level 1.

Combat: Zombies never turn away from a conflict. They fight on, no matter the odds, usually attacking by biting, but sometimes by tearing with hands made into claws by the erosion of skin over their finger bones.

When zombies attack in groups of five to seven individuals, they can make a single attack roll against one target as one level 5 creature, inflicting 5 points of damage.

Zombies are hard to finish off. If an attack would reduce a zombie's health to 0, the zombie is destroyed only if the number rolled on the attack was an even number; otherwise, the zombie is reduced to 1 point of health instead. This might result in a dismembered, gruesomely damaged zombie that is still moving.

The magic animating zombies ebbs during the daylight hours and returns with a vengeance when night falls. Zombies attack as level 1 creatures during the day and as level 3 creatures at night.

Zombies can see in the dark at short range.

Interaction: Zombies groan when they see something that looks tasty. They do not reason, cannot speak, and never stop pursuing something they've identified as a potential meal, unless something else edible comes closer.

Use: Characters leaving the security of Dragon City are bound to encounter zombies.

GM Intrusion

When the character fails to kill a zombie because she rolled an odd number on an attack that otherwise would have destroyed the zombie, in addition to the normal effect, the zombie's arm comes free and animates as a separate level 1 zombie.





Chapter 14: Iconic Characters

Dragon City is filled with people of all kinds—thousands and thousands of them—but some individuals seem to stick out more than others. That includes the heroes, of course, but also the villains. You may come up with dozens of your own creations for your game, but to get you started, here's a list of many of the most important and outstanding people in Dragon City and beyond.

A Gallery of Characters

The characters described here are presented in alphabetical order.

Alcina — 7 (21)

After becoming a vampire over two hundred years ago, Alcina became reclusive, preferring to do everything she could to maintain the façade that she was still mortal. As the years wore on, though, she became bored with that life and began to take lovers. She stayed with them for years—even decades—at a time, feeding on them just enough to sustain her and leave them alive, and when they became too old, she finished them off in a final feast.

Having lost her most recent lover, Alcina began dating Max Gibson and aimed to make him her latest conquest. He managed to stop her cold and turned her over to the Imperial Dragon's Guard, and they imprisoned her in the Garret, where she remains to this day.

Alcina is a dark-haired woman with reddish eyes and pale skin, plus retractable fangs.

Motive: To survive forever.

Health: 27

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Movement: Long

Modifications: Climb, stealth, and perception as level 8; Speed defense as level 7 due to fast movement.

Combat: Like all vampires, Alcina has incredible strength and speed, able to outmatch most opponents in her path. Despite her unnatural advantages, Alcina prefers to avoid combat, and she only attacks when she knows it's safe for her to do so. She can fight with her hands and feet, though she's not above using weapons to bring down enemies so she can feed on them.

Alcina can change into a bat or a wolf. This transformation does not change her stats or abilities except that, as a bat, she can fly. She can also transform into shadow or mist, and in these

forms she can't be harmed by anything (but also can't affect the physical world).

Alcina possesses an unholy charisma and can mesmerize victims within immediate distance so that they stand motionless for one round. In subsequent rounds, the victim will not forcibly resist her, and she can suggest actions to the victim (even actions that will cause the victim to harm himself or others that he cares about). Each round, the victim can attempt a new Intellect defense roll to break free.

Alcina is difficult to hurt. Unless a weapon is very special (has specific magic enchantments against vampires), no physical attack harms her. She simply doesn't take the damage. Exceptions include the following:

- **Fire:** Fire can burn Alcina, though the damage won't kill her, only causes her pain, and she regains all health lost to fire damage within twenty-four hours.
- **Running water:** Complete immersion inflicts 10 points of damage per round. If not destroyed, Alcina can use a single action to regain all health lost in this way.
- **Sunlight:** Exposure to sunlight inflicts 10 points of damage per round. If not destroyed, Alcina regains all health lost to exposure in twenty-four hours.
- **Wooden stake:** This weapon inflicts 27 points of damage, effectively destroying Alcina in one blow. However, if she is aware and able to move, the difficulty of this attack is increased by two steps.

Further, Alcina has the following special weaknesses:

- **Garlic:** Significant amounts of garlic within immediate distance increase the difficulty of her tasks by one step.
- **Mirror:** Forceful presentation of a mirror to Alcina stuns her, causing her to lose her next action. While the object is brandished and Alcina is within immediate range, the difficulty of her tasks is increased by two steps.

Interaction: Alcina is sly and seductive. She emerges at night, pretending to be entirely human—until it's too late for her victims to do anything to stop her. She rarely emerges from the Garret these days.

Use: Alcina has lived a long, long time. She could be a useful source of information and potential ally, provided she receives a supply of fresh blood.

GM Intrusion

Alcina catches the eye of one of the characters, who must get a success on an Intellect defense roll or become charmed by her. While charmed, the character regards her as a trusted friend and ally and will take risks to help her. The effect lasts for 1 hour or until after Alcina attacks the character.

Emily Bates — 2 (6)

Emily is the only daughter of Danto's favorite niece, Eileen. Since Danto never had any children of his own, he saw Eileen as a surrogate daughter and Emily as his granddaughter. However, they both watch over him night and day, nervous that he might someday take off adventuring again and lose everything he's worked so hard to gather for them.

Although Emily had a hard early childhood, once Danto gave up adventuring, he set out to spoil her rotten. He succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. Emily now looks down her nose at the people who once lived near her in the Village, and she aspires to be accepted in Dragon City's high society. The only problem is that Danto's antics make him as much a hindrance as a help in that regard.

Emily hides behind rules and decorum and accuses Danto of violating both. All she really wants, though, is for him to retire gracefully—and soon.

Emily is a human woman with light hair and dark eyes who wears a perpetual sneer on her lips.

Motive: Emily wants to protect her family, including her great-uncle Danto—to make sure that no one can knock them back down into poverty.

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Tasks involving etiquette and diplomacy as level 3.

Combat: Emily prefers to move in nonviolent circles, keeping the company of Dragon City's aristocracy rather than mucking about in the gutter. Being tied to Danto, however, means she sometimes finds herself in tough situations and she always has her wand at the ready to dispatch a hostile foe. Should her magic fail her, she resorts to a slim dagger she keeps hidden in her skirts.

Iconic Characters by Level

Ford 1
Stubby 1
Emily Bates 2
Nit Erdini 2
Johan Steinmetz 2
Elisabetta Becchino 3
Aleks Drupov 3
Thumper 3
Schaeffer Tolliver 3
Henrick Bricht 4
Ingo Dunkel 4
Richard Gibson 4
Celia Parson 4
Righty 4
Fiera Sanguigno 4
Margit Schüler 4
Heinrich Braun 5
Benno Bricht 5
Ames Kearns 5
Fergus O'Malley 5
Sig 5
Moira Erdini 6
Constantine Selvaggio 6
Voice of the Dragon 6
Bill Whitman 6
Alcina 7
Kai 7
Jack Kells 7
Cindra Paxson 7
Bellezza Sanguigno 7
The Black Hand 8
Yabair Durante 8
Max Gibson 8
Maurizzio Vendetti 8
Danto Wu 8
The Dragon Emperor 10
The Ruler of the Dead 10

Emily has magical training and has learned a number of spells to help her move through high society, such as illusions to enhance her clothing and appearance and charms to open doors to places normally forbidden to her. Such magic might prove useful in a fight, either to cover her escape or turn her enemies into allies, if only for just a few moments.

Interaction: Emily likes to keep people from disturbing Danto—especially if she thinks it might involve something dangerous for him.

Use: If someone wants to reach Danto while he's at home, they have to go through—or around—Emily.

GM Intrusion

Emily browbeats Danto, convincing him to withdraw his offer of assistance.

Elisabetta Becchino — 3 (9)

Elisabetta was born here in Dragon City, and when she was old enough, she joined the city's original mortician—her cousin Gilberto—to work in the Dragon City morgue. Immortal and ageless, she was always fascinated with death, particularly the way other races passed away naturally over the course of advancing years, and she put her passion to good work there.

Elisabetta works the front office, admitting bodies, recording their details, and dealing with the families. Gilberto manages the actual disposition of the remains. She also handles the morgue's collections, flying around the city on an enchanted carpet to bring bodies back for their final arrangements.

Elisabetta is an elf with dark hair and ice-blue eyes. She often wears a wry grin.

Motive: To properly dispose of the remains of the dead inside Dragon City and thereby keep the city safe.

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short or long using her flying carpet.

Modifications: Tasks involving anatomy, assessing the cause of death, or the instruments of murder as level 5.

Combat: Elisabetta has seen enough death that she no longer believes in violence. She strives to put an end to any fight peacefully if she can. If forced into a fight, she uses whatever weapon she has on hand to drive off her attackers until she can escape.

Interaction: Elisabetta offers a sympathetic ear to anyone who enters the morgue to ask after a family member or friend. She's suspicious of others, although she still appreciates the break in the morgue's routine.

Use: Elisabetta is the public face of the Dragon City morgue. Characters visiting this location interact with her first and, if they would inspect any recent arrivals, must negotiate with her.

GM Intrusion

Elisabetta interferes with a character's attack to stop the violence. The difficulty of the attack is worsened by one step.



The Black Hand — 8 (24)

The Ruler of the Dead realized long ago that she sometimes needed breathing minions to carry out her plans. To that end, she created the Black Hand, an elite strike team consisting of five of the greatest orc assassins, banded together to comprise a near-mythical killing team.

Members of the Black Hand usually work alone, since one of them is often more than enough to complete any job. They sneak unseen through the shadows of the city at night, dressed in black from head to toe. They slip silently into their victims' homes, slaughter them, and slide back out into the night without anyone the wiser—until the bodies are discovered the next day.

Members of the Black Hand appear as muscular orcs dressed all in black, leaving only their yellow eyes visible.

Motive: To carry out the commands of the Ruler of the Dead.

Health: 30



Damage Inflicted: 9 points, or 13 points with surprise.

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Tasks involving deception, hiding, perceiving, or sneaking as level 9.

Combat: Members of the Black Hand prefer to sneak about and assassinate their victims using long, curved swords. Against tough opponents, they sometimes smear their blades with poison. Any living creature that takes damage from a poisoned blade must succeed on a Might defense roll or take 8 additional points of damage and worsen the difficulty of all tasks by one-step for 1 minute.

When pressed into full-on combat, they break out their wands and use them to hurl lightning bolts at targets at up to long range. They resort to magic only when they have no other choice and when it won't matter if they draw attention to themselves.

Interaction: Most of their victims never see them coming. They wind up dead before they know what's happening.

Use: Most people in Dragon City consider the Black Hand a myth, and that's just the way they (both the Black Hand and the citizens) like it.

GM Intrusion

An injured Black Hand disappears in a puff of black smoke, leaving almost no trace that he or she was ever there at all.

Heinrich Braun — 5 (15)

Heinrich was part of the Imperial Dragon's Guard and served as the captain of the Guard in the Stronghold for nearly a century. The Dragon asked him to become the warden of the Garret after the last warden died in a riot, and Heinrich accepted the job without an instant's hesitation. He's been the warden now for over fifty years—the longest streak on record—and he shows no sign of looking forward to a retirement.

Heinrich takes his job of keeping criminals imprisoned seriously, but he's more amicable to bribes when it comes to how those criminals are treated while in his custody. Many families send a lot of their monthly earnings his way to ensure that their convicted relatives live in relative comfort. The alternatives Heinrich is happy to describe to them in unsettling detail are far worse.

Braun is a hale, battle-scarred dwarf with streaks of gray in his black hair and beard.

Motive: To keep Dragon City safe from the worst scum living within its walls—and to line his pockets.

Health: 20

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Might defense as level 6; tasks related to earth and stone as level 6; intimidation and threats as level 6; Speed defense as level 4.

Combat: Heinrich doesn't care for weapons. He prefers to tear his foes apart with his bare hands.

Interaction: Heinrich maintains a calm and confident air, but it doesn't take much for him to turn vicious, especially with an inmate in private.

Use: Heinrich controls access to anyone inside the Garret, and his reputation alone is enough to scare some crooks straight.

GM Intrusion

Heinrich demands expensive payment for access to one of his prisoners.

Benno Bricht — 5 (15)

Benno Bricht has led the Bricht family since the founding of Dragon City, and he hasn't done it by playing nice. He used his leverage as the lead builder of the Great Circle to catapult his clan into power, and he keeps a stranglehold on it by the ruthless administration of both social standing and force. Dwarves that cross him wind up with their beards cut, and if that doesn't work, then he cuts their throats too.

Benno is a hard-nosed dwarf, unafraid to use his considerable power when he must. After centuries of living in Dragon City, though, he's all too aware of how much the Stronghold depends on the other parts of the city. He has no wish to rock the mountain, although he will not tolerate any challenges to his iron grip on his people's fate.

He is an elderly dwarf with gray hair and a long gray beard he wears braided and tucked into his belt. One of his eyes has gone a milky white, while the other is a sharp black.

Motive: To control the Stronghold and keep his people safe from all external threats.

Health: 20

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Might defense as level 6; tasks related to earth and stone as level 6; intimidation and threats as level 6; Speed defense as level 4.

Combat: Benno keeps an enchanted shotgun with him at all times, but when he's spoiling for a fight, he carries a double-bladed battleax, although maybe more for show.

Interaction: Benno is a powerful dwarf, and he goes out of his way to make sure everyone knows it. He expects to be treated with respect—willingly or not.

Use: Benno only deals with the most important issues facing the dwarves. He doesn't have time for anything else.

GM Intrusion

Benno refuses the characters' request for an audience.

Henrik Bricht — 4 (12)

Henrik Bricht is a constant and ongoing embarrassment to the Bricht clan. Having climbed through the family's ranks by a combination of amoral violence and naked ambition, he now finds further progress blocked by the dwarves who run the Core in the heart of the Stronghold. Unable to bully such staunch and stalwart dwarves about, Henrik takes out his frustrations on anyone around him who dares to contradict him, occasionally resulting in a blood-soaked murder in which he carves the victim's heart from their chest.

As long as he doesn't attack elves or dwarves in this way, Henrik has been able to get away with such abuses, believing that Benno won't turn him over to the Guard for such "lesser" crimes. So far, he's been right, and that only makes him creep even closer to lines he should not cross for fear of bringing the wrath of the Guard—or even the Dragon himself—down on his head.

Short, even for a dwarf, Henrik has a dark beard and dark eyes, and is either leering or scowling at all times.

Motive: To wriggle out from under Benno's thumb—and then to take over the Stronghold for himself.

Health: 16

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Might defense as level 5; tasks related to earth and stone as level 5; intimidation and threats as level 5; Speed defense as level 3.

Combat: Henrik usually lets hired muscle do his bruising for him. Should he be forced into a fight, he uses cleavers and long knives—anything that makes his victims bleed. When he kills, he likes to rip out the victim's heart as a trophy.

Interaction: Henrik is a smug jackass who likes to lord what power he has over anyone he can get away with. He's an obsequious toad to those who can crush him.

Use: Henrik enjoys bullying anyone he can.

GM Intrusion

Two of Henrik's henchmen show up to protect their employer.

The Dragon Emperor — 10 (30)

The Dragon Emperor is the last of his kind—as far as anyone knows. He lives in the Dragon's Spire, which sits atop the peak of the mountain on which swarm the occupants of Dragon City, and he rules over all he can see—as long as it lies within the city's walls, a limitation which irks him to no end. He is the oldest living creature in the area, including the elves and the Ruler of the Dead.

The Dragon makes few public appearances in the city, preferring to exert his will through the Voice of the Dragon and the Imperial Dragon's Guard. Once a year, he takes part in the parade that commemorates the creation of the Dragon City Compact, upon which the city was founded. On rare occasion, he takes to the skies to stretch his wings, blasting fire into the air to remind those who witness it what a tremendous force of destruction he can be.

The Dragon is covered with reddish-gold scales that emanate enough heat to make the air around him shimmer.

Motive: To keep the people of Dragon City safe so they can in turn help defend his empire against the Ruler of the Dead.

Armor: 5

Health: 60

Damage Inflicted: 10 points

Movement: Long.

Modifications: Speed defense as level 8 due to size.

Combat: Easily one of the most powerful creatures in the world, the Dragon Emperor proves a terrifying foe when roused to battle. With teeth like knives and claws like swords, the Dragon can tear apart lesser creatures without effort. As a single action, the Dragon can attack twice with its claws, once with its teeth, and once with its long, sinuous tail, dividing these attacks between at least two creatures.

The Dragon is also a skilled flier. Using a single action, the Dragon can fly up to a long distance and attack up to four creatures at any four points during its movement.

The deadliest weapon in the Dragon's arsenal is its fiery breath, which it can use once every other round and it can use in place of its claws and teeth while flying. When the dragon breathes fire, it spews a line of fire, 10-feet wide, out to a long distance from its maw.

Interaction: The Dragon does not speak directly with others. He communicates telepathically with the Voice of the Dragon, who speaks for him.

Use: The Dragon can call on any of his subjects to complete tasks for him—or to suffer his wrath.

GM Intrusion

The Dragon roars. Each character must succeed on an Intellect defense roll or become frightened for 1 minute. While frightened, the difficulty for all tasks the character attempts worsen by one step.



Aleks Drupov — 3 (9)

As the medical examiner for the Imperial Dragon's Guard, Aleks is responsible for establishing the cause of death for all murders the Guard investigates. It's a grim and grisly job, but he attacks it with all the seriousness it deserves. He knows that he's often the only person who can make sure the right person goes behind bars, and he's careful to use that power wisely.

Aleks has seen the Guard go off half-cocked on case after case, and he hates to see that happen. He refuses, however, to let them rush him into coming to a conclusion on any case until he has all the facts. He's not one to engage in idle speculation. He indulged that impulse in his younger years, and it almost always went bad.

Pale-haired, Aleks is a male gnome who wears magnifying goggles when doing close-in work. He often has blood on his clothes.

Motive: To help the Imperial Dragon's Guard administer justice—on the right people.

Health: 8

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Tasks involving anatomy, assessing the cause of death, or investigating as level 5.

Combat: Aleks would rather run than fight, but when cornered, he's mean with a scalpel.

Interaction: Aleks is always studious and careful, trying to make sure he neither says too much nor offends. Despite that, he's not above bragging when he figures something out.

Use: Aleks can help get to the truth behind any killing.

GM Intrusion

Aleks discovers a clue on a victim's body that suggests one of the characters is responsible for the murder.

Ingo Dunkel — 4 (12)

When Ingo was a young boy, his parents ran afoul of the Bricht family by running up terrible gambling debts. When they disappeared, Hermann Bricht—one of Benno's nephews—took Ingo in and raised the boy as his own son. As an adult, Ingo became a top soldier for the Brichts, proving his loyalty to them over and over again. He eventually became the private driver of Benno Bricht, piloting his distinctive craft: an armored black palanquin that flies like a carpet but protects its occupants like a tank.

Ingo doesn't harbor any fantasies about avenging his parents' death. They weren't good people, and in his eyes they committed the ultimate dishonor: not being able to cover your debts. He recognizes that Hermann didn't have to take him in, and he's eternally grateful for the life the Brichts have provided for him in exchange for his faithful service. Driving Benno's palanquin beats scratching ore out of the inside of the mountain any day.

Ingo is a dwarf with blond hair and beard, Ingo has bright blue eyes and he always dresses sharp.

Motive: To serve the Bricht family as best he can.

Health: 16

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Might defense as level 5; tasks related to earth and stone as level 5; intimidation and threats as level 5; Speed defense as level 3.

Combat: Ingo carries a pistol with him at all times, and he keeps a loaded shotgun in the palanquin as well. He prefers to flee when he can, but he's also not shy about ramming someone with the palanquin if he has to.

Interaction: Ingo is a loyal employee of the Bricht clan. He does what they tell him to—whatever it may be—and makes no bones about it.

Use: Those who want to approach the Brichts might notice that Ingo spends more time in public, watching over the palanquin, than his employers do.

GM Intrusion

Ingo slams his palanquin into up to three characters within an immediate distance of each other. A character must get a success on a Might or Speed defense roll or be thrown a short distance away and knocked prone.

Yabair Durante — 8 (24)

As one of the captains of the Imperial Dragon's Guard, Yabair oversees the Guard's business within the city's walls. Jaded by centuries of dealing with the worst elements of Dragon City, Yabair wears a perpetual sneer. He generally believes the worst of people and is rarely disappointed by them.

Yabair is used to seeing people scatter before him like cockroaches before a glowglobe. Those who stand their ground

can win his grudging respect, although that won't keep them out of a prison cell if they've done anything wrong.

To Yabair, Dragon City is rotting from the wall on up. It's his job to contain that disease as best he can. If that means busting a few heads—or ending a few lives—he considers that a fair price to pay.

Tabai is an elf with short-cropped blond hair and piercing blue eyes. He's always seen wearing his Guard uniform.

Motive: To protect the people of Dragon City from the worst their fellow citizens have to offer.

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Speed defense as level 9; perception as level 9.

Combat: Highly trained in blade and pistol, Yabair proved a daunting opponent in battle. While competent, he's almost always encountered with several members of the Guard who bear the brunt of the violence.

Interaction: Yabair speaks in condescending tones to anyone not in the Imperial Dragon's Guard.

Use: Yabair leads the Guard's attempts to bring in people who commit crimes, but he's not above quietly guiding others to do dirty work for him.

GM Intrusion

Yabair sees through a deception and calls out the character's bluff.





Moira Erdini — 6 (18)

Moira is the baby of her family, the third of three children, behind her two brothers, Finn and Clancy. Her father Nit and mother Nora spoiled her from the moment she was born, and she's rarely had to work for anything in her entire life.

When she came of age, her parents—who own the Barrelrider restaurant in the Big Burrow—pressed her into work, and Moira immediately began sloughing it. She became a thief, stealing from fat, ripe targets inside the city. Eventually, she fell in with Max Gibson and his crew of adventurers.

Since the crew disbanded, Moira's turned back to petty crime, including dealing dragon essence to those who can afford it. She moved into an apartment of her own in Gnometown, where she lives with her lazy slob of a boyfriend, Stubby.

A halfling with blond hair, Moira has blue eyes and a quick smile.

Motive: Moira has expensive tastes and a poor work ethic.

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Tasks involving picking pockets and locks as level 8; tasks involving hiding and sneaking as level 7; Speed defense as level 7.

Combat: Moira avoids combat when she can. If pressed, she likes to rely on small knives—even razors—and small pistols too.

Interaction: Moira is affable and charming but entirely unreliable. She's the champion of poor life decisions.

Use: Moira wanders freely from Goblintown to the Elven Reaches. She makes money selling dragon essence to the right buyers.

GM Intrusion

Some thugs show up looking to collect on Moira's debts.

Nit Erdini — 2 (6)

Nit Erdini and his wife Nora own and operate the Barrelrider, a restaurant in the Big Burrow district, out of which they serve fantastic food and the surreptitious dram of dragonfire. Nit also operates as one of the best fences in the Dragon City, matching stolen goods—or those illegally recovered from the lands outside the Great Circle—to the buyers willing to pay the highest prices for them. He takes ten to fifty percent of that, depending on how hard it is for him to move a particular item.

Nit's involvement with the halfling underworld has made him a notorious figure in the city, one most people aren't willing to cause trouble. The biggest exceptions are his children—Finn, Clancy, and Moira—who all seem determined to give him ulcers. Despite this, Nit adores his children and recognized that he bears the responsibility for both spoiling them and exposing them to his less-than-honest life. He only hopes they'll find a way out—with or without him.

Nit is a curly haired halfling with a beaming smile that masks a conniving mind. Gray streaks his dark locks and laugh lines seam his face.

Motive: To offer his wife and kids the best life he can manage—and not get caught at it.

Health: 3

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Cooking as level 5; identifying and appraising valuables as level 5; deception as level 4; hiding and sneaking as level 3; Speed defense as level 3.

Combat: Nit doesn't care to fight, but he keeps a folding knife in his pocket, just in case.

Interaction: Nit is always warm and friendly until someone threatens his family, at which point he becomes deadly serious.

Use: Nit can move illegal goods and launder money, and he's also an excellent source for those who want to know what's in demand at the moment.

GM Intrusion

Nit flings a pot of hot soup or coffee at a character, blinding her for 1 round.

Ford — 1 (3)

Ford is the latest in a long line of human servants who have worked for the Sanguigno family, going back to the founding of Dragon City. Although he has a first name, he never uses it. All of the butlers who have served the Sanguignos have stuck with their surname instead, out of convenience for their employers.

With the exception of Belle—who learned better after joining Max Gibson's adventuring team—the Sanguignos don't see much difference between the various Fords who have served them over the years. In effect, "Ford" means "butler." As long as the current Ford serves as well as his forbears, there's no reason to give them any more thought than that.

For his part, Ford takes great pride in his position with the Sanguignos. While he would never consider himself the equal of an elf, his heritage of long and excellent service puts him far above anyone living in the Village. He makes no effort to disguise his arrogance.

Ford is an elderly human with a white beard, who always dresses in the finest formal wear.

Motive: To serve Sanguigno family, as his line has done for centuries.

Health: 3

Damage Inflicted: 1 point

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Etiquette as level 5, insight and perception as level 3

Combat: Ford isn't much use in a fight, although he has a pistol hidden in his quarters—and he knows where all the knives in the Sanguigno estate are.

Interaction: Ford defers to any elf, especially his employers. He looks down his long nose at anyone who lives downslope—especially other humans.

Use: Speaking to any of the Sanguignos involves going through Ford. He also knows a lot more about the Elven Reaches and its secrets than anyone living downslope.

GM Intrusion

Ford calls out for help and 1d6 guards show up to save his ass.

Max Gibson — 8 (24)

Max Gibson never wanted to be a wizard, but when your father is on the Wizards Council—and you're the direct descendant of Gib, one of the legendary heroes from the time of Dragon City's founding—you don't have much of a choice. While studying at the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship, though, he fell in with the wrong crowd of people and decided to investigate alternative careers. To that end, he formed a crew of adventurers that included Cindra, Danto, Anders Gütmann, Kai, Ames Kearns, Kells, Moira Erdini, Belle Sanguigno, and Sig.

Anders Gütmann

Anders Gütmann was a down-on-his-luck dwarf who'd been kicked out of the quarries when he ran into Max Gibson and joined his adventuring crew. Over time, he and Max became best friends, building a trust that allowed them to work together like the gears in a well-oiled machine. Sadly, Gütmann died on the crew's final venture, and without him around, the team fell apart.

Max brought Gütmann's family his share of their final score, which set them up in a pricey place in a classy part of the Stronghold. Anders left behind his wife Heidi and their four children. The two boys—Carsten and Guenter—became slackers living off their family's largesse. The elder daughter, Dörthe (Dotty to her friends), recently moved out of the Gütmanns' place and married a promising quarryman named Johan Schmidt. Little Gerte (Gertie to those who love her) keeps the entire family on their collective toes.

Anders was a boulder of a dwarf, strong and tough, with a long, braided beard and a mischievous twinkle in his eye.

Gibson's crew explored the ruins outside of Dragon City, fighting zombies and recovering treasures of all kinds. Over the next five years, they became one of the greatest adventuring teams ever, during which time, Max fell in love with Belle, an elf wizard far beyond his station in Dragon City. While making their biggest score ever, though, they lost Anders, and the crew broke up shortly thereafter.

Max blew his fortune on purchasing his favorite bar, the Quill. He now spends his time as a freelance, taking on various jobs for hire that both suit his skills and needs. He lives in an office/apartment above the Barrelrider (Nit Erdini's restaurant) in the Big Burrow. His mother has passed away, and he hasn't spoken to his father, Richard Gibson, in years. He drinks too much dragonfire and, according to his father, is wasting his skills. He still carries a torch for Belle, although they haven't spoken in years.

Max is a human with brown eyes and skin and black hair. He was once trim and rugged, although time may have blunted his edge a bit.

Motive: Max wants to stay out of trouble, but it has a way of finding him and exploiting his loyalties to his friends.

Health: 27

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Investigating, perceiving, and resisting fear and intimidation as level 9.

Combat: Max prefers to use his wand, which he wears in a shoulder holster. He uses it to let loose blasts of eldritch energy, fire, or lightning. He's also handy with a pistol or a sawed-off shotgun.

Interaction: Max is warm to those he knows, guarded around strangers, and cagey with people who want something from him.

Use: Max can be hired to help out for the right price, and he's been known to work for free for the right cause.

GM Intrusions

Max takes a swig of dragonfire and attacks with magic as a level 9 creature for 1 minute.

When Max would be taken down, dumb luck saves him and he heals half his damage and moves a short distance away.

Richard Gibson — 4 (12)

Richard is the direct descendant of Gib (one of the founders of Dragon City) and the father of Max Gibson, in whom he is constantly disappointed. He is proud of his family name and the doors it can still open for him in Dragon City, and he always strives to make the most of his potential. He worked his way up to being a member of the Wizards Council, although he secretly fears that they admitted him because of his name more than his actual skill.

Richard hoped that his son Max would leverage all of his hard work to outdo him at the Academy. Instead, the boy washed out early on and took up with the city's worst scum to lead a life Richard could most gently describe as questionable. Richard lost his wife several years back, and rather finding a way to reconcile with his son, he accused him of driving her to her death. Since then, he has dedicated himself fully to the Wizards Council, if only so he doesn't have to go back so often to his dark and empty home.



The elder Gibson is a skinny man with thin gray hair and dark, accusing eyes. He looks like he may never have smiled.

Motive: Richard won't admit it, but deep down he believes that his estrangement with his son is his own fault. Someone who could find a way to reconcile father and son might find Richard to be a powerful patron. Whether Max is interested… well, that remains to be seen.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Knowledge about magic and history as level 6.

Combat: Richard doesn't care for combat, but he knows how to use his wand should it come to it.

Interaction: Richard is a serious man who is dedicated to magic and going about unlocking its secrets in the proper way. Those who see the world his way will get along with him fine.

Use: Richard is one of the most influential wizards in Dragon City, even if his interests tend to be more academic than practical.

GM Intrusion

Richard weaves a potent magical shield, granting him Armor 3 for 1 minute.

Kai — 7 (21)

Kai was born and raised in Goblintown, one of several siblings. He knew from the start that the only way he was going to be able to make a living without killing people in Dragon City was to escape the city—so he could kill things someplace else. After establishing himself as dangerous and overconfident, he began hanging around the Quill, hoping to find a way out. That's where he met Max Gibson and became part of Max's crew.

Once he was in with Max, Kai dragged his cousin Sig into the mix for some extra muscle. Even after the crew broke up, Kai and Sig still worked together, using their combat experience to line up decent gigs as bodyguards and enforcers. Kai still doesn't understand why the crew fell apart. He thought Gütmann was a decent dwarf, but he would never have let the team fall apart over a single death like that.

Kai likes to spend money even more than he likes making it. He blows through it fast and often finds himself borrowing more from the wrong kind of people. This leads him to making desperate plans to balance his books.

Kai is an orc with green skin, yellow eyes, and a golden nose ring. He's tall and rangy with many scars.

Motive: Kai is a hustler, always looking for a quick coin. Laws don't concern him nearly as much as making a profit.

Health: 24



Damage Inflicted: 7 points or 8 points with melee weapons.

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Climbing and jumping as level 8, intimidation as level 8, resisting fear and intimidation as level 9; Intellect defense as level 6; tasks involving patience, willpower, or discipline as level 6.

Combat: Kai carries a shotgun slung over his back. He's aggressive in a fight, preferring to crush his foes as hard as he can.

Interaction: Kai is blunt and forward, but for an orc, he's reasonably well-mannered. He's a facile liar and will reluctantly betray his friends when they're of no other use to him.

Use: Kai regularly roams outside of Goblintown. He's often on the hunt for his next gig or, preferably, next big score.

GM Intrusion

Kai loses his temper. For 1 minute, he attacks as a level 6 creature, but his attacks inflict 2 additional points of damage. While enraged, he doesn't recognize friends from foes.

Ames Kearns — 5 (15)

Ames is as tough as they come. She grew up in a shack on the wrong side of Low Pavement, where the orcs picked on her and the better-off humans shunned her. She joined up with Max Gibson's crew as a means of clawing her way out of Goblintown, insisting that he allow her to join.

Ames is good with a gun and even better with the stabby kind of knife she learned to use in the back alleys of Goblintown. Once Gibson's crew broke up, she couldn't stomach going back to her old life, so she became a member of the Dragon's Auxiliary Guard instead, working to keep the streets safe from the kind of scum that used to try to prey on her.

A human with short blond hair and gray eyes, Ames's face bears the scars of many battles, but they can't hide her perpetual snarl.

Motive: Ames missed being part of something bigger than herself and joined the Auxiliary Guard to fill that hole.

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Attacking with a knife or similar weapon as level 6; intimidation as level 6.

Combat: Ames uses a gun when necessary, but she's a genius with a knife.

Interaction: Ames doesn't trust anyone she doesn't know—and not too many of them either. As a member of the Auxiliary Guard, though, Ames takes pride in keeping the peace in the Village—and sometimes even Goblintown—as best she can.

Use: Ames thinks of her friends and the Guard as "us" and everyone else as "them." She won't let anyone get away with anything on her watch.

GM Intrusion

Ames lashes out with a blade, leaving a bleeding wound. The character takes 1 point of damage each round until he or another character uses an action to stanch the wound.

Jack Kells — 7 (21)

Kells dabbled with magic from an early age, and his parents were thrilled when he was accepted into the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship. His studies there were stymied by instructors who tried to shunt him toward more traditional magic. His love of mechanics, and in particular, weaponry, led him to become a magineer—one who uses magic and mechanics to solve problems, instead.

Frustrated by his instructors' reluctance to allow him to turn his talents toward weaponry, Kells was only too happy to take up with Max Gibson when he formed his adventuring crew. Kells knew he'd never find a better way to field test his theories.

While working with the crew, the relatively shy Kells fell in love with the boisterous Cindra. After the crew broke up, the two married, and they now have two children: a nine-year-old girl and a five-year-old boy.

Jack is a human with gray eyes and curly dark hair, graying at the temples. He's often unshaven and he's skinny with an intent gaze.

Motive: Kells does everything for his wife, Cindra, and their kids. And to satisfy his urge to build new weaponry.

Health: 21

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Creating cyphers as level 9.

Combat: Kells prefers to offer combat support. He would rather pick off stragglers than throw himself into the center of a fracas.

Interaction: Kells is a gifted magineer who specializes in weaponry. He supplies well-heeled patrons who help fund his experiments.

Use: Kells constructs cyphers for a living, and he's happy to supply promising adventurers ready to pay a fair price.

GM Intrusion

Enchanted ammunition supplied by Jack misfires, ruining the weapon from which it was fired.

Fergus O'Malley — 5 (15)

Fergus grew up in the Big Burrow district, the favorite son of Maggie O'Malley, the longtime mayor of the district. When she was ready to retire, she endorsed her son in the next election, and he's been running the place ever since—with Maggie helping to handle things behind the scenes, of course.

Fergus has since come into his own, mostly due to his cunning success in dealing favors back and forth throughout not just the Burrow, but the entirety of Dragon City. He's not a violent man by nature. He prefers to exert his influence by showing people how easy it is to work with him—and how damn hard it is to work against him. It not only keeps him in office, it keeps him from having to watch his back.

A curly-haired male halfling, Fergus has red cheeks and a charming smile.

Motive: To control the Big Burrow district and keep its residents happy and safe.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Persuasion and diplomacy as level 7; Speed defense as level 7; knowing and getting access to important people as level 7; hiding and sneaking as level 6

Combat: Fergus would rather run than fight—or at least order others to protect him.

Interaction: Fergus is a glad-handing politician who tries to charm everyone, even—maybe especially—people he sees as a threat.

Use: If you want something in the Big Burrow, Fergus is the man to talk to. He knows everybody, and they all owe him a favor.

GM Intrusion

Fergus blathers a bit and defuses a tense situation, causing combatants to pause long enough for cooler heads to prevail.

Celia Parson — 4 (12)

Celia is one of the top wizards of her generation, at least according to the Wizards Council, for which she functions as their primary aide. She oversees the many assistants who help her keep the Wizards Council happy and effective, and by all accounts, she does an excellent job. She also vets any outsiders who seek an audience with the council, and although she wants to help everyone, her default answer tends to be, "Not right now, I'm afraid."

Celia was one of Max Gibson's classmates at the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship. After he left, she spent her days climbing the ladder at the Academy and later through Wizards Way. She's purportedly next in line to join the Wizards Council—or would be if she wasn't so invaluable in her current position.

Celia is a merry woman with pink cheeks on a wide face framed by long auburn hair pulled back into a braid.

Motive: To keep the Wizards Council running smoothly.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Knowledge of magic as level 7, persuasion and diplomacy as level 6.

Combat: Celia doesn't like to fight, but she carries her wand with her at all times.

Interaction: Celia is always happy to see anybody, even when she's not.

Use: Those who wish to speak to the Wizards Council have to go through Celia, and it's going to take a fantastic story for her to let that happen.

GM Intrusion

Celia weaves a spell to hold fast one character, who cannot move for 1 minute.

Cindra Paxson — 7 (21)

Cindra grew up on tales of her mother's adventures as part of the Dragon's Auxiliary Guard, and she wanted nothing more than to become a great warrior herself. From an early age, she trained to make that dream a reality. After her mother was killed in the line of duty, though, Cindra's father refused to let her join the Guard as well.

Frustrated, Cindra secretly kept up her training, and she joined Max Gibson's adventuring crew as a means of embracing a life of action otherwise forbidden to her. She soon established herself as a fantastic and fearless fighter who perhaps scared even herself with how much she enjoyed the heat of battle.

While working with the crew, Cindra fell in love with Kells, who made her the most amazing weapons and encouraged her to use them. After the crew broke up, the two married, and they now have two children: a nine-year-old girl and a five-year-old boy.

Cindra is a human woman with brown eyes, blond hair, a pert nose, and a perfect smile. She's loud and enthusiastic, moving like an athlete.

Motive: Cindra loves only one thing more than adventure: her family. She would do anything to keep them happy and healthy.

Health: 21

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Speed defense as level 8; attacking with rifles as level 8.

Combat: Cindra isn't afraid of mixing it up in hand-to-hand combat, but she's a crack shot with a rifle. These days, she prefers to snipe at dangerous targets from a safe distance.



Interaction: Cindra is always friendly, interested, and happy.

Use: Cindra is mostly interested in dispensing advice than help, though she might be willing to train a promising student.

GM Intrusion

Cindra takes time to line up her shot and attacks with her rifle as a level 10 creature for 1 round.

The Ruler of the Dead — 10 (30)

The Ruler of the Dead is the greatest necromancer of her age. It was she who unleashed the undead horde upon the continent over five hundred years ago and nearly wiped out all life across the land. Were it not for the efforts of the Dragon Emperor and the free people who founded Dragon City with him, her victory would have been complete. Exactly who she was and how she came to be the Ruler of the Dead remains shrouded in secrecy, as is the location of her sanctum.

She has not been seen by anyone inside Dragon City since its founding, although her creatures constantly scratch against the city's walls, serving as a never-ending reminder of the threat she embodies. Every so often, she mounts a massive attack against the city, but the Dragon Emperor and the Guard always manage to repel her army's efforts. It's been decades since her last attempt, though, and people often remark that she's due to attempt another assault soon.

Once human, she is slim and withered, her skin like old parchment. Her wholly black eyes sit sunk deep into her skull, and she wears a tattered dress of lace the color of fresh-turned dirt.

Motive: The annihilation of all living things.

Armor: 3

Health: 60

Damage Inflicted: 10 points

Movement: Short.

Combat: She uses a wand that looks like it was fashioned from a child's forearm, and with it she controls the actions of every undead creature within hundreds of miles.

The Ruler of the Dead can cause a dead creature she can see that was not already undead to rise up as a zombie as part of her action.

Armed with vast and terrible magic, the Ruler of the Dead can cast spells that snuff out the life of living creatures, cause bones to twist in their skin, cause flesh to slough from the bone, and other terrible expressions of her necromantic knowledge.

Interaction: She never interacts directly with any living creature, although she sometimes speaks through one of the creatures she controls.

Use: She may try to persuade those who cross her path to attempt to overthrow the Dragon or drive him from the city, which would leave it vulnerable to her desires.

GM Intrusion

Ten level 1 zombies pull free from the ground and join the fight.

Righty — 4 (12)

Righty was one of Max Gibson's first choices for his adventuring crew, but when Moira challenged his skills, it didn't end well. Righty always thought of himself as one of the greatest thieves in Dragon City, but he pushed it too far and paid the price for it—in the form of his right hand. That set him back hard, shattering not only his dreams but his confidence.

Despite his injury, Righty is still a fantastic burglar, but when he lost his hand, he also lost his nerve. He's taken to supporting himself by pickpocketing, although he refuses to become a beggar on the street. He might be pressed into becoming a criminal consultant, though, for the right people.

Righty is a dark-haired, blue-eyed halfling with a shifty look about him. He has a hook in place of his right hand.

Motive: Righty wants his hand back. Everything in his life that has gone wrong since then, he attributes to the loss of his hand. Perhaps there is some ancient artifact or cypher that could restore his lost limb. Unfortunately, with his nerve broken, Righty needs someone to prop him up and push him into taking chances.

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Opening locks and disarming traps as level 6; hiding and sneaking as level 5; fleeing as level 6; Speed defense as level 5.

Combat: Righty only fights when cornered. Until then, he hides or flees at the first sign of trouble.

Interaction: Righty is cagey and nervous, never sure who he can trust. He always expects betrayal and disaster around every corner.

Use: Righty doesn't want to commit serious crimes anymore—but for a cut of the action, he'd be happy to help plan them.

GM Intrusion

Righty ducks under an attack, causing it to miss, and moves a short distance away. For his next attack, he does so as a level 5 creature.

Bellezza Sanguigno — 7 (21)

Belle is unusual for an elf in that she's not only willing to venture outside of the Elven Reaches, she actually enjoys it. She finds the chilly ennui that surrounds the upper parts of the mountain stifling and dull, and she's much happier when she can wander into the lower altitudes, which she thinks of as teeming with vibrancy and life.

Belle's parents, Nicoló and Chiara, were around for the foundation of Dragon City, but the years have cost them. They spend much of their time lounging about in a drug-induced stupor, leaving her to run the household and ensure that the family isn't impoverished and disgraced.

To keep the family coffers full, Belle took up with Max Gibson and his adventuring crew. The money they earned helped secure the Sanguignos against financial disaster, but while working with the crew, Belle fell in love with Max. After the crew broke up, Belle left Max too. While it broke her heart, she felt the duty to her family trumped everything else.



Belle has a younger sister named Fiera, who is jealous of Belle and disapproves of the unorthodox methods she's used to keep her family intact. Despite this, Belle refuses to abandon her sister.

Belle is an elven woman with blue eyes and blond hair. She is gorgeous, but in a way far more accessible than most elves.

Motive: Belle is torn between loyalties to her friends and her family. Her family usually wins.

Health: 21

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Speed and Intellect defense as level 8; persuasion and seduction as level 8; perception as level 8.

Combat: Belle uses a wand in combat, which she carries in a pocket sewn into her sleeve. She prefers to keep her distance and use canny tactics to take down others before they become real threats, but she can be dangerous up close too.

Interaction: Belle is unusually warm for an elf, due to both her relative youth and her experiences outside of the Elven Reaches.

Use: Belle is not the saint she might appear to be. She might hire someone to do her dirty work for her so she can keep her hands clean.

GM Intrusion

Belle moves with sudden swiftness and can take another action.

Fiera Sanguigno — 4 (12)

Fiera is the younger sister of Belle, the elf who was part of Max Gibson's adventuring team, and she disapproves of everyone who lives downslope from her family. That includes everyone who's not an elf or a dragon—and throws in more than a few elves to boot.

Fiera hoped that Belle would somehow get herself lost or killed on one of her insane adventures, but Belle just kept coming back. Although it's been ten years since Belle's last adventure, Fiera constantly berates her for her actions during that time, mostly because a decade is nothing to an elf. She sees that Belle has developed a pattern of misbehavior that's sure to bring shame upon the entire family, and she wants to distance herself from it all as thoroughly as she can.

Like her sister, Fiera has blue eyes and blond hair. She is gorgeous, but in a manner both icy and ferocious.

Motive: Fiera wants only to protect her family's name—which she seems sure that Belle is doing her best to ruin.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Speed and Intellect defense as level 8; intimidation as level 8; perception as level 8.

Combat: Fiera thinks of guns as vulgar. When she wants someone's attention, she uses her wand instead.

Interaction: Fiera prefers only to speak with elves. To all others, she gives a shoulder cold enough to make ice out of their tears.

Use: Those who wish to become regular guests in the Elven Reaches may find Fiera mobilizing her people against them.

GM Intrusion

Fiera hurls an enchanted bauble at the characters, something that explodes and throws shards of glass in all directions. Characters within a short distance of the exploded bauble must succeed on Speed defense rolls or take 3 points of damage.

Margrit Schüler — 4 (12)

Margrit comes from a large family in the Stronghold, most of whom work for the Brichts in one way or another. She showed some promise with basic magic, but her parents forbade her from applying to the Academy of Arcane Apprentices. She got around that by convincing Danto to make her one of his first students.

Since signing on with Danto, Margrit's skills as a wizard have blossomed. She is far and away Danto's favorite student—even over his great-niece Emily Bates. She's become far more than a mere apprentice, running the day-to-day business of Danto's tower. She earned this position not only by means of her fierce loyalty to Danto but by her exceptional organizational and management skills.

On top of that, Margit covers for Danto when he succumbs to his addiction to dragon essence. Without her, he would have been thrown in the Garret long ago, and he's grateful to her for all her service.

Margrit is a dwarf woman with auburn hair and a determined air.

Motive: To look out for Danto's best interests and keep his tower open as an alternative to the Academy.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Might defense as level 5; tasks related to earth and stone as level 5; knowledge of magic and attacks with her wand as level 5; Speed defense as level 3.

Combat: Margrit relies on her wand in most cases, but she comes from a large family and is a capable brawler too.

Interaction: Margrit exudes competence and pragmatism. She doesn't care to jaw about nonsense.

Use: Anyone who wants to work with Danto is best served by talking with Margrit, who knows his business better than he does.

GM Intrusion

Margit clocks a character with such force that she leaves him stunned for 1 round and unable to take actions.

Constantine Selvaggio — 6 (18)

A powerful and vicious elf who has been around since Dragon City's founding. He's openly bigoted against "the lower races," although he's not above dealing with them when he deems it necessary. His wife Faustina rules over their home—and their spoiled, wastrel children, Chiara and Oscuro—but outside of its walls, Constantine is one of the major powers in the Elven Reaches.

Constantine doesn't consider transgressions against non-elves to be crimes, the same way he wouldn't be bothered over butchering a pig. However, should anyone move against him or his family, they are bound to face his full fury. He repays every slight in kind, at least twofold—sometimes far more.

Constantine looks tired and even a little heavy for an elf. He has dark hair, green eyes, and a perpetual frown.

Motive: To maintain his family's position within Dragon City and beyond.

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Knowledge about history and politics as level 8; perception as level 8.

Combat: Constantine lets his underlings kill people for him. When he has to get his hands dirty, he uses a stiletto for close-in work.

Interaction: Constantine looks down on anyone who's not an elf, with the possible exception of the Dragon, whom he fears. He's dismissive, callous, and cold.

Use: Constantine likes to hire outside help he can dispose of with few regrets, if necessary.

GM Intrusion

Four level 4 henchmen show up to keep the characters busy while Constantine slips away.

Sig — 5 (15)

To Sig's mind, the greatest day of his life was when his cousin Kai pressed him into joining Max Gibson's adventuring crew. That set him upon a path that he hoped would haul him out of the worst slums of Goblintown once and for all. For a while, Sig's dream came true, but once the crew disbanded, Sig ran through his money fast. It wasn't long until he was dreaming of better days again, although they never came.

Despite that, a large part of Sig is actually relieved not to be venturing outside the Great Circle anymore. There are nights that he still wakes up screaming about the zombies coming to kill them all. He would never admit this to anyone else, though. Not even Kai.

Sig is an orc with green skin and yellow eyes. He's bald, wiry, and nervous.

Motive: Sig wants to be as tough and strong as his cousin Kai, but he can't seem to master the cold-hearted attitude he needs.

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Attacks as level 6 against targets unaware of his presence; otherwise, attacks as level 4; Intellect defense as level 4; tasks involving patience, willpower, or discipline as level 4.

Combat: Sig is a jumpy fighter who prefers to shoot or stab his targets in the back while the louder fighters distract them.

Interaction: Sig is always on the hunt for his next gig, but he often lets Kai handle the negotiations.

Use: Sig knows the worst parts of Goblintown better than anyone, and he's willing to share that knowledge for the right price.

GM Intrusion

Sig freaks out in a fight and runs away, leaving the characters to fend for themselves.

Johan Steinmetz — 2 (6)

Johan is a good dwarf in a hard position. He plays by the rules, working his way up through the Bricht clan's organization, but he knows that the higher up he makes it, the dirtier he has to get. The Brichts aren't good people, but they're powerful. If you call the Stronghold home, they run the only game worth playing, no matter how crooked it might be.

Despite that, Johan has kept his hands as clean as possible. He recently was promoted to management with the Brichts, and he used the extra income to marry Dörthe Güttman, the eldest daughter of Anders Gütmann, and provides her with an excellent home.

A sharp dwarf with no gray yet in the braids of his auburn beard, Johan wears a suit to work these days, rather than a miner's jumpsuit.

Motive: To provide for Dotty and their future family as best he can, without compromising himself too much.

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Might defense as level 3; tasks related to earth and stone as level 3; Speed defense as level 1.

Combat: Johan's a miner, not a fighter, but he swings a mean pickaxe.



Interaction: Johan presents himself as the perfect young business-dwarf, always well-mannered and sharp-minded.

Use: Johan knows more about the Brichts than just about anyone outside of the family. Despite that, he's not keen to take them all down so much as sort out the bad rocks.

GM Intrusion

Johan anticipated the character's plans and increases the difficulty of one of their tasks by two steps.

Stubby — 1 (3)

Stubby is a halfling slob who spends most of his time sponging off his girlfriend (Moira Erdini) and getting stoned on pipeweed, dragonfire, and whatever dragon essence he can bum off his friends. His one redeeming factor is that he's no threat to anyone, except perhaps by means of his smell.

Stubby's family kicked him out long ago, but he's crashed with a series of friends since then. The latest may be Moira, but given Stubby's history of overstaying his welcome at every other place he's been, it's only a matter of time before she shows him the door as well.

Stubby is a particularly fat halfling with long greasy hair, a scruffy hint of a beard, and bloodshot eyes.

Motive: To not have to work a day in his life if he can help it.

Health: 2

Damage Inflicted: 1 point

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Hiding and sneaking as level 2; Speed defense as level 2.

Combat: Stubby's only move in a fight is to hide. If that seems like too much trouble, he just cowers where he is instead.

Interaction: Stubby is spacey but easy-going. The only thing that gets him riled up is the thought that someone's trying to come between him and whoever he's sponging off at the moment.

Use: Stubby's always getting himself in trouble and looking for soft-hearted people to help him out of it.

GM Intrusion

Stubby trips and knocks over a pile of crates, boxes, or something else to create a mess and make it hard to move through the area.



Thumper — 3 (9)

Thumper has been a bartender at the Quill for nearly twenty years. He applied to the Arcane Academy of Apprentices but didn't make the cut. Instead, he uses his eidetic memory to make himself the best bartender in the city. If you've ever been to the Quill, he knows your regular drink, and if you stroll in and ask him for something you've never had before, he can produce an excellent choice for you on the spot.

While Max Gibson technically owns the bar, in every other way, it belongs to Thumper. He runs the place and serves as its public face. He's also a fountain of knowledge about the patrons and their business, although he's careful not to spread anything around that's meant to be kept secret.

Thumper is a stout human with short, dark hair, brown eyes, and a well-trimmed beard.

Motive: To keep the Quill running smooth and his patrons happy.

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Diplomacy and local knowledge as level 4; eavesdropping as level 5.

Combat: Thumper keeps an enchanted shotgun behind the bar, and he's not afraid to use it, especially against strangers bothering his regulars.

Interaction: Thumper is friendly and attentive, always offering a sympathetic ear.

Use: Thumper doesn't care to do much more than sling drinks, but if you need something, he's the guy who knows someone who can help.

GM Intrusion

When a fight breaks out in the Quill, someone throws a glass at Thumper, who responds with a loaded shotgun, aimed at the character he thinks was responsible.

Schaeffer Tolliver — 3 (9)

Schaeff is a happy halfling who aches to see more of Dragon City—if not more of the world. To that end, he bought himself a flying carpet, financed on easy terms via Nit Erdini. The only way he could afford the payments, though, was to hire himself out as a hack, transporting passengers throughout the city—although not to Goblintown, if he can help it.

Schaeff prides himself on his friendliness and service. He has lots of regulars he flies around the city on demand, but he likes to cruise around in his spare time and pick up fares from anyone who can flag him down. He's a chatty sort, and he keeps his ears open for any chances to make a quick coin, especially if he can make use of his carpet in the process.

Schaeffer is a shaggy, brown-haired halfling with mischief in his eyes.

Motive: To keep making the payments on his flying carpet so he can stay in business.

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short or long when on his flying carpet.

Modifications: Knowledge of Dragon City as level 5; Speed defense as level 4; hiding and sneaking as level 4.

Combat: Schaeff keeps a pistol in his pocket for emergencies, although he's rarely had to use it. He avoids dangerous parts of town when he can get away with it.

Interaction: Schaeff is friendly, warm, and easy to like, especially when he's angling for a good tip.

Use: Few people know Dragon City as well as Schaeff. As a hack, he can fly to parts of the city that most people never get to see—and get paid handsomely for it too.

GM Intrusion

A level 3 murderer with a bone to pick with Schaeff shows up out of nowhere and attacks.

Maurizzio Vendetti — 8 (24)

Maurizzio led the elven forces against the Ruler of the Dead's army in the days before the founding of Dragon City. Today, he continues his work by overseeing the Guards who are charged with keeping vigilance over the Great Circle. He is an unforgiving commander who expects nothing less than excellence from those who serve beneath him.

Maurizzio is the elder cousin of Yabair, and the two of them often meet to coordinate their protection of the city. Maurizzio often needles Yabair about his struggles to keep order within the city's walls. Yabair regularly points out that, while the Great Circle hasn't been officially breached since the city's founding, adventurers move right past the Circle Guard every week.

Maurizzio is a rugged-looking elf with auburn hair and green eyes. He's always in uniform.

Motive: To keep Dragon City safe from the roaming hordes of undead that scratch at its walls.

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Speed and Intellect defense rolls as level 10.

Combat: Maurizzio uses a rifle to pick zombies off the wall. He also carries a wand and a sword.

Interaction: Maurizzio doesn't put up with nonsense of any kind. He's too busy keeping Dragon City safe.

Use: Those who wish to enter or leave the city may run afoul of Maurizzio, who won't look on them kindly.

GM Intrusion

Maurizzio brushes off the characters, having no time for their nonsense.



The Voice of the Dragon — 6 (18)

The Voice of the Dragon has established a telepathic connection with the Dragon Emperor and has been designated as the Dragon's speaking voice in all things. The robes of his office burn continually, but he never seems to notice. If he has a family or friends outside of the Dragon, he has long since given them all up in service to the Dragon.

If there's any limitation to distance the Voice can be from the Dragon, it's never been established, mostly because the two are rarely apart—and also because the Voice never leaves Dragon City. On the rare occasion the Dragon leaves his home in the Dragon's Spire, he carries the Voice in a large golden basket suspended from the Dragon's neck by golden chains.

The Voice is a bald and ageless male elf. He wears a flaming robe that does not harm him in the slightest.

Motive: To transmit the will of the Dragon to the people of Dragon City.

Armor: 1

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Resist damage from fire and heat as level 10; persuasion and intimidation as level 8; perception as level 7.

Combat: The Voice carries no weapons, but he is rarely far from the Dragon's reach. The fiery robes he wears might spare him from the scorching heat, but any creature that strikes him with a melee weapon takes 3 damage.

Interaction: The Voice is dedicated to speaking for the Dragon and only rarely adds his own thoughts.

Use: The Voice can go places the Dragon cannot, but he always bears the Dragon's full authority.

GM Intrusion

The Dragon swoops down to pluck the Voice from danger.

Bill Whitman — 6 (18)

As the headmaster of the Academy of Arcane Apprentices and the chairman of the Wizards Council, Bill is the most powerful wizard in Dragon City, at least in political terms, if not practical. He achieved that position not by relying on his mojo but his manners. He's capable of smiling in your face while stabbing you in the back. While he hopes it never comes to that, he's not shy about acting swiftly when the time comes.

Bill maintains his grip on power by systematically hamstringing anyone courageous enough to challenge him. He does so in the passive-aggressive ways favored by academics everywhere, flavored

with a dose of magic that makes for a devastating combination that's kept him in control of the Academy for decades. Despite this, he believes he's the best person for the job and is only taking such measures for the good of the Academy and all of Dragon City's wizards.

Tall, balding man with gray hair and blue eyes. Often wears glasses and seems astonished at the world around him.

Motive: To protect the students and faculty of the Academy of Arcane Apprentices and the others on the Wizards Council.

Health: 21

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Casting spells and attacking with magic as level 7; knowledge of magic as level 8.

Combat: Bill relies on others to fight his battles, but he's still a hell of a wizard when pressed into it. He can use a variety of spells to deal with his enemies, hurling balls of fire that spread out to a short range from a point within long range and inflict 6 points of ambient damage from the flames. Creatures in the area can halve the damage with a successful Speed defense roll. He can also loose fiery darts, blasts of lightning, and other naked expressions of arcane power.

Interaction: Bill is warm and friendly to everyone he meets. It's only in private that he reveals his conniving side.

Use: Bill always hopes to recruit wayward wizards into the Academy, consolidating its control over the city's magic.



GM Intrusion

When attacked by a spell, Bill counters it, sending the spell back at its caster.

Danto Wu — 8 (24)

Back in his late forties, while he was working as an instructor at the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship, Danto realized that he was stuck in his job and would likely never advance from his position, despite his ambitions. He was just too unconventional for the Wizards Council to ever ask him to become one of their own. Instead, he turned to his students for their approval, and he found it in young Max Gibson.

When Max formed his adventuring crew, Danto left his teaching position to join him. With his spells and his knowledge of the history of the lands around Dragon City, he made an invaluable member of the team. He didn't always get along with the others members of the team, but he treated Max like the son he never had.

Danto's family never cared for his stint as an adventurer, but that didn't stop them from angling to enjoy his ill-gotten gains when he returned to build one of the most spectacular towers on Wizards Way. He spurned most of them, but he has a soft spot for his niece Ellen. Her daughter Emily is one of his apprentices.

Danto is an old human with thinning white hair, a scruffy white beard, and hazel eyes.

Motive: Danto has managed his money well and wants for nothing. He secretly yearns for the one thing he can never have: acceptance by his peers on the Wizards Council.

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Knowledge of magic as level 9.

Combat: Danto's reflexes aren't what they once were, and he avoids combat when he can. Pressed into it, he relies on his wand, but he prefers to help his teammates rather than mount a direct attack.

Interaction: Danto is brilliant and not afraid to show it. He speaks fast, challenging others to keep up.

Use: While Danto once was an adventurer, he prefers to work through others these days. He normally employs his apprentices, but there are sometimes things he needs done they likely wouldn't understand.

GM Intrusion

A spell Danto casts narrowly misses its target and instead strikes a nearby object, causing it to explode. Each character within a short distance of the object must succeed on Speed defense roll or take 4 points of damage.



Chapter 15: Generic NPCs

While wandering around Dragon City, the heroes are bound to run into all sorts of people, from shopkeepers to petty thieves to children playing in the streets. It's a vibrant city full of thousands of subjects of the Dragon Emperor. Here are some profiles for a small selection of them.

A Selection of NPCs

The characters described below are presented in alphabetical order.

Bartender — 2 (6)

Bartenders can be found in any inn or tavern in the city, from the nastiest dives in Goblintown to the most exclusive private clubs in the Elven Reaches. They oversee the main hospitality room in such places and interact directly with the customers.

Motive: Tend the bar and keep the peace.

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Short.

Combat: Bartenders typically keep a weapon handy for when rowdy patrons get out of control. A shotgun or a stout bludgeon can usually restore order.

Interaction: Bartenders can be friendly, easy to talk to, and personable. Others are cold and suspicious.

Use: They also act as communication hubs for the neighborhood. Patrons come in and bend their ears with problems, and the stalwart bartender points them in the direction of people who might be able to provide solutions.

GM Intrusion

A bartender claims not to have heard anything. A bribe might loosen his lips.

NPCs by Level

Healer 1
Bartender 2
Magineer 2
Hustler 3
Imperial Auxiliary Dragon's Guard 3
Muscle 3
Imperial Dragon's Guard 4



Healer — 1 (3)

It's easy to get hurt in Dragon City, and when that happens, you're going to need someone to help you get patched back up. Healers work in various spots throughout the city. The best ones work out of Dragon City Hospital, which sits in the Village, below the outcropping on which sits the Academy of Arcane Apprentices.

The Academy trains most of the healers in the city, especially those who rely on magical solutions rather than herbal or scientific means. The healers of Goblintown are the exception, as they hand down their knowledge from one generation to next via local mentors and students.

Motive: Patch up the wounded.

Health: 3

Damage Inflicted: 1 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Healing as level 3.

Combat: Healers tend the injured and don't add to their numbers. Thus, healers look for ways out of a fight, fleeing if possible.

Interaction: Most healers avoid asking questions about how their patients got hurt, as that sort of information invites trouble. They typically do their work and hurry on their way.

Use: Seriously injured characters might seek out a healer for a bit of relief before jumping back into the action.

GM Intrusion

A nervous healer might make an injury worse.

Hustler — 3 (9)

Living in Dragon City isn't free, and there aren't always enough jobs to go around. Some folks seem allergic to honest work either way. Rather than giving up and starving, they decide it's time to hustle others by way of theft, mugging, pickpocketing, burglary, con jobs, and other petty crimes. They also buy and sell ill-gotten gains.

Motive: Rip off the gullible and make money through deception and subterfuge.

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Deception as level 5.

Combat: A good hustler avoids trouble by duping prey enough that they never suspect the deception. Not every mark is easy, and so hustlers typically keep a pistol hidden somewhere on their body.

Interaction: Hustlers shade every lie with the truth to make their deceptions more believable. If they think they can outwit a potential mark, they leap at the chance.

Use: The hustler may be trouble if they pick your character as a target. If your character is bent on breaking the law, hustlers can help manage it.

GM Intrusion

A hustler distracts a character enough that she slips away through a crowd.

Imperial Dragon's Auxiliary Guard — 3 (9)

While the proper Guard mostly sticks to the Elven Reaches and Stronghold—or maybe Gnometown and the Big Burrow—the Imperial Dragon's Auxiliary Guard is in charge of the rest of the city. Auxiliary Guards are mostly human, with the occasional gnome or halfling tossed in. They sometimes brave Goblintown, but they mostly stick to keeping the peace from Gnometown to the Village.

Motive: Force people to respect their authority.

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short.

Combat: The members of the Auxiliary Guard carry bludgeons with which they beat the populace into line. Many carry nastier weapons: long knives, knuckle-dusters, or even firearms.

Interaction: Most members of the Auxiliary Guard are bullies and thugs, their violence legitimized by service to the Dragon Emperor. They beat suspects first and ask questions later.

Use: The Auxiliary Guard is notoriously corrupt. Criminals often pay off fines on the spot to keep out of prison—and to avoid a beating that will cost them a lot more at the local healer, assuming they survive it.

GM Intrusion

The Guard strikes a character with such force that he falls to the ground.

Imperial Dragon's Guard — 4 (12)

If you do break the law in Dragon City, your greatest fear is having the Imperial Dragon's Guard hunting you down and bringing you in. If you're lucky, you might survive arrest, get hauled in front of a magistrate, and tossed in the Garret for anywhere from a few weeks to what's left of your life. If you're not so lucky, well, lots of people wind up dead while trying to escape the Dragon's long arm.

Only elves and the occasional dwarf can be members of the Imperial Dragon's Guard, and their patrols rarely reach even as far downslope as the Village, unless they're stationed on the Great Circle.

Motive: Enforce the law.

Armor: 1

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Perception as level 5.

Combat: The Guard members carry swords, cudgels, and pistols. They use them if given any excuse.

Interaction: No-nonsense and all businesslike, the Guard members are a humorless lot. They do their job and are hard to corrupt.

Use: Any illicit activities in the City is bound to attract the Guard's attention.

GM Intrusion

A call for reinforcements brings 1d6 members of the Auxiliary Guard into the fight.

Magineer — 2 (6)

A magineer uses their magical ability to enchant inanimate objects, making them better, tougher, and more useful than before. They enhance weapons, imbue ammunition with magical powers, create glowglobes, and much, much more. They create most of the cyphers that can be found in the city, and they sell them for a good profit.

They also work on the larger magical items throughout the city, like the baskets that transport people from the Village up to Wizards Way. They aren't full-blown wizards, but their work is often a lot more useful to the world on a daily basis.

Motive: Craft magical objects.

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Craft cyphers as level 4.

Combat: Magineers typically have several nasty devices on hand with which they can protect themselves. Explosive ammunition and bombs can ensure the stingiest customer makes good on his bill.

Interaction: Magineers are more interested in the stuff they make than chatting up others. They might come off as distracted or cold.

Use: Characters looking to score a few cyphers might do well hunting down the local Magineer. Likewise, if they need a bit of information about something they've uncovered, a magineer will be of great assistance.

GM Intrusion

The magineer has something the characters want, but it doesn't work exactly as promised.

Muscle — 3 (9)

Some people in Dragon City make a living by providing muscle to other folks. They work as soldiers in a gang or as security for a wealthy patron, even as bouncers at a bar. They're known by their serious demeanor and their way with weaponry and bare fists.

Motive: Protect their employers and hurt their employers' enemies.

Armor: 1

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Might defense as level 4, Intellect defense as level 2.

Combat: Muscle use whatever weapons they have available, even their bare hands.

Interaction: People working as muscle aren't prized for their smarts, rather they're sought for their obedience and toughness. Muscle tend to be, but not always, dim-witted and eager to pound to a pulp anyone that crosses their employers.

Use: People working as muscle are almost never found in the employ of someone who would live downslope from them, although there are rare exceptions. It's far more likely to see someone from upslope reaching down to hire muscle from lower on the mountain.

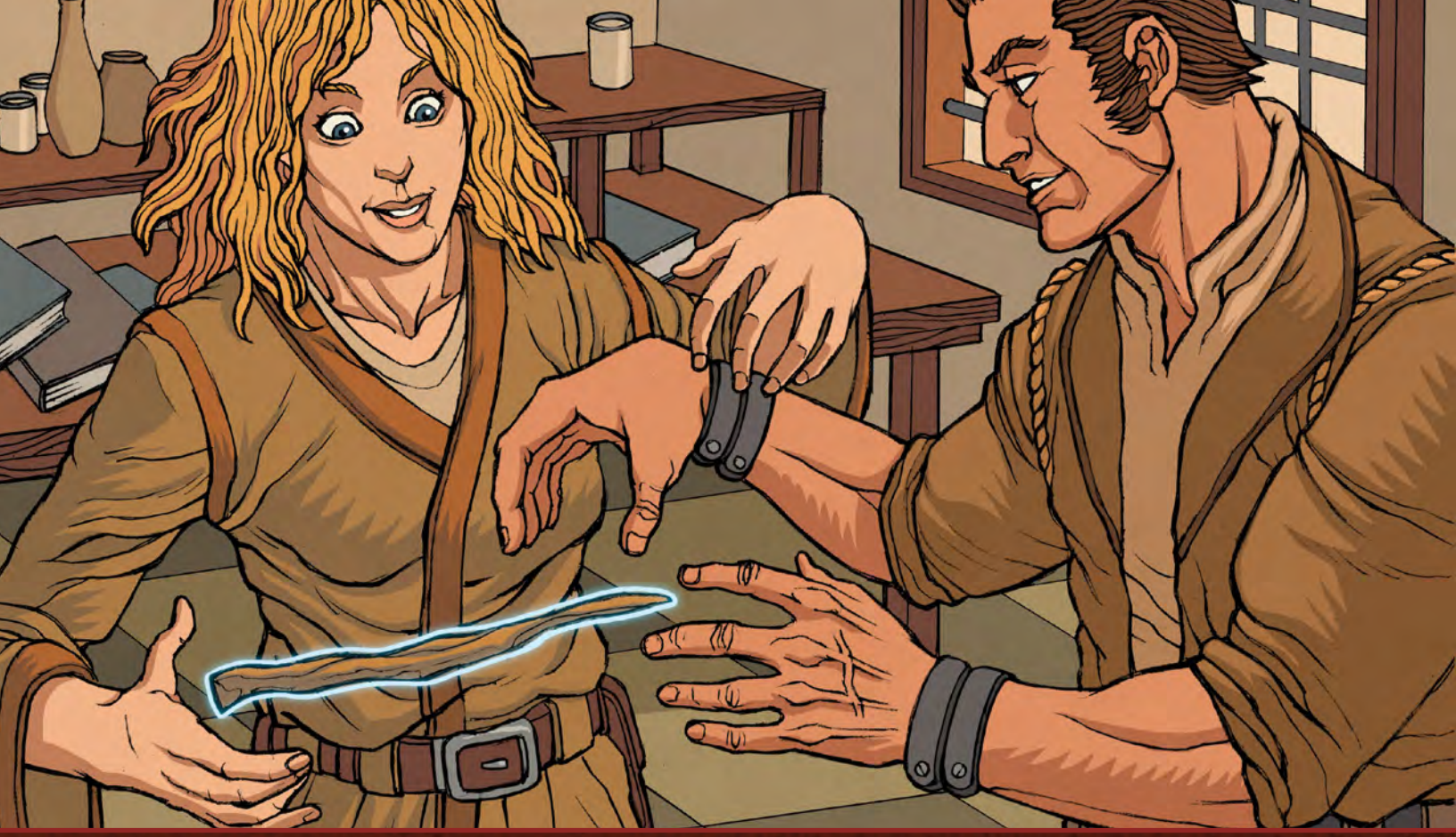
GM Intrusion

The muscle shrugs off an attack, taking no damage.





Part 6: Magic Items



Chapter 16: Magic Items

Trinkets, treasures, enchanted devices, and wondrous relics can all describe the various objects imbued with magical power found in the world of Dragon City, but «magic item» is a useful shorthand for all the manifestations such objects might take. Magic items can be relics left over from a time before the Ruler of the Dead let loose the zombie apocalypse, bizarre devices created for inexplicable purposes, or the commonplace wonders that make life in Dragon City a bit easier to endure. Some of these items are so common that they can be readily purchased in the marketplaces and are described in Chapter 8 of this book. Others have special rules, limited or erratic power, or properties that make them mysterious and dangerous.

The magic items described in the following chapters fall into one of three broad categories—cyphers, artifacts, oddities, and discoveries.

Magic Items in the World

Magic is everywhere in the world of Dragon City. It lurks inside creatures, stains inanimate objects, and flows across the blasted landscape, an energy source largely undetectable by ordinary means. Even though magical power proves elusive for most people, no one denies its existence since its effects can be seen everywhere, from the glowglobes lighting Dragon City's streets to the zombies crowding around the city's walls. Thus, while few people have any deep understanding of how magic works, it remains an important part of their lives, and most encounter it every day.

The founding of Dragon City made it possible to preserve the old lore and to pass on the traditions of magical mastery to new generations. The Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship takes in promising students, teaches them the rudiments, and those who master the elementary forms are ushered into the higher mysteries. Graduates might stay behind to teach others, put their training to use in the city as magineers by blending magic with technology, find work as hired wands, or labor in any of the other mundane professions pursued by the common folk. Magineers and some wizards, through extensive study and practice, can fashion astonishing devices of substantial power.

In Dragon City, magic items offer conveniences much in the same way that technology helps people get along in the 21st century. If a person needs to get from one side of the city to another, and has the coin, why not take a flying carpet or a hovering palanquin? Rather than light torches, people use

glowglobes to find their way in the dark. People use magic for cooking, cleaning, mending clothing, and even for labor, with the great lumbering golems toiling without needing food, water, or rest. Magic has insinuated itself in all facets of life in Dragon City and without it, survival against the Ruler of the Dead's armies would be far, far harder.

Describing Magic Items

Shotguns & Sorcery categorizes magic items as cyphers, artifacts, oddities, and discoveries. The category tells you how the characters interact with the item, and whether or not the item is useful to them. Beyond these categories, it's up to the GM to decide what the item looks like and where it comes from. A GM might cover an item in mystery, giving it an unknown origin, or may weave a story around it, potentially creating possible adventures centered on its use or acquisition.

For the purposes of describing magic items, you can generally use one of the following four stories.

Recovered

Fleeing the tide of undead loosed by the Ruler of the Dead, the refugees escaped with only those things they could carry, and what remains of their former lands now stand in ruins. Many of these sites still hold treasures waiting to be unearthed, chests of gold and silver, but also wondrous items of magical power, remnants from the world before the zombie apocalypse. The treasures' function and purpose are not always clear, being unmarked bottles of strange liquid or packets of powder, and sometimes experimentation is required to divine their properties. Other items, rune-encrusted swords recovered from tombs, old grimoires, pages stained in bloody scrawl, amulets, and strange wands might offer clues to their function in their design, while others keep their powers secret, requiring research and magic to expose.

Composite

Some magic items are made from combining two or more other magic items, weaving the powers to produce an entirely different effect. A wand affixed to a rifle could cause it to shoot fiery bolts instead of bullets, while an amulet attached to a wagon could let it move without need of draft animals. The energy imbuing magic items is useful in and of itself, even if its normal effect is mundane or too bizarre for ordinary use.

Modified

Many magic items see modification beyond their initial design. A skilled magineer can change and improve items of lasting power—artifacts—and alter their design to suit their owner. A magineer could etch gleaming runes on the blade of an ancient sword, naming the weapon or its owner, or weave a spell into it that causes it to emit dim light when drawn from its sheath. Cosmetic modifications of any kind can be made to a magic item.

Fashioned

Finally, magineers, wizards, alchemists, and artificers can produce magical items in workshops and laboratories. Many items the people of Dragon City take for granted are created in enough numbers to keep their prices low, as can be seen in some of the magical equipment described in this book. Other items can be commissioned, though the price is high and the materials to create such items are rare and expensive.

Harmful Effects of Magic Items

Some magic items are dangerous to use and might harm or adversely affect characters that wield them. Typically, such negative effects require a roll to resist. If the character being affected is a PC, the player makes the defense roll the GM feels is most appropriate to resist the effect. For example, anything that would affect health, such as a poison, calls for a Might defense action. Anything that could be dodged or avoided with quick reflexes would be a Speed defense action. Finally, anything that affects the character's mind ought to require an Intellect defense action.

For NPCs, the player makes the roll based on the stat the GM deems appropriate. Most effects for items are Intellect based, but when an item is clearly a melee attack, it would involve a Might roll, while an obvious ranged attack would typically use Speed.





Chapter 17: Cyphers

The most common kinds of magic items characters find in the world of Dragon City have only fleeting power. They take the form of magical potions, spells inscribed on scraps of paper, eldritch powders, enchanted bullets, and similar things. Collectively called cyphers, they are one-use abilities characters gain over the course of play. The game expects characters to find and use cyphers often. Since PCs can have only a small number of cyphers at a given time, and since they're always finding more, they should use them at a steady pace.

The widespread use of such items makes many of them readily available in Dragon City for the right price. Other cyphers, such as those discovered in ruins outside or plundered from places inside the city might be determined randomly, though the GM can choose specific cyphers as well. Cyphers can heal, make attacks, or produce effects such as nullifying gravity or turning something invisible. Cyphers are single-use items and are always consumed when used.

Cyphers don't have to be used to make room for new ones. It's perfectly acceptable for the PCs to stash an extra cypher elsewhere for later use. Of course, that doesn't mean the cypher will still be there when they return.

Cypher Limits

A character can bear a limited number of cyphers as noted in their type. If a character carries more cyphers than this limit, a randomly determined cypher instantly loses its magical power or disappears. Repeat until the character is once more at his or her maximum number of cyphers. Cyphers lost in this way are gone forever and cannot be recovered.

Cyphers are meant to be used regularly and often. If PCs are hoarding or saving their cyphers, feel free to give them a reason to pull the devices out and put them into play.

Finding and Identifying Cyphers

Cyphers are often found in groups of one to six (the GM can roll 1d6 to determine the number), usually because the PCs are looking for them. They might be among the possessions of a fallen foe, hidden in a secret room, or scattered amid the debris of a burned out castle. The GM can prepare a list ahead of time of what successful searchers find. Sometimes this list is random, and

sometimes there is some logic behind it. For example, the PCs might find four different magic potions in the same location in a warlock's laboratory.

If the characters search for cyphers, the GM sets the difficulty of the task, typically 3 or 4. Scavenging takes anywhere from fifteen minutes to one hour. Characters can also obtain cyphers as gifts from allies, traded with merchants, or purchased from magineers, alchemists, and artificers.

Once the PCs find a cypher, identifying it is a separate task, based on Intellect and modified by knowledge of magic, typically. The GM sets the difficulty of the task, but it is usually 1 or 2. Thus, even the smallest amount of knowledge means the character can identify what the cypher does. Attempting to identify a cypher takes one to ten minutes. If the PCs can't identify a cypher, they can bring it to an expert for identification and perhaps trade, if desired.

Buying and Selling Cyphers

Magic is a cornerstone of Dragon City's society. Artificers and magineers produce enchanted ammunition, special crystals to focus mojo, scribe spells on scrolls, and produce other wonders, while alchemists toil in laboratories to brew concoctions that enhance their imbiber's existing abilities or grant them new ones. For this reason, most cyphers can usually be purchased in the various markets and bazaars scattered across the city.

While cyphers can be purchased or bartered for, the GM controls access, deciding what's available and what isn't. If a cypher is available, the GM decides what the NPC will take in exchange. Typically, a cypher's value equals its level × 10 gold. Characters can sell unused cyphers for the same.

Using Cyphers

A character can use any cypher she has identified. If the character has not yet identified it, she can attempt to use it as an Intellect task, using the cypher's level to determine the difficulty. Failure might mean nothing happens, the cypher is used incorrectly, or the cypher does something strange, as the GM decides.

The action to use the cypher is Intellect based unless described otherwise or logic suggests otherwise. Firing a pistol loaded with enchantment ammunition would still be a Speed task, whereas letting loose a beam of flesh-decaying energy from an amulet would be an Intellect task. Because cyphers are single-use items, cyphers used to make attacks can never be used with the Spray (page 67) or Arc Spray (page 68) abilities that some characters have. They are never treated as rapid-fire weapons.

A cypher with ongoing effects applies those effects only to the character who activated it. A PC can't activate a cypher and then hand it to another character to reap the benefits.

Cypher Properties

All cyphers have three basic properties: level, form, and effect.

Level: This entry tells you the cypher's level, which is usually expressed as a die roll. Level can determine an aspect of the cypher's power (how much damage it inflicts, for example) but otherwise only determines its general efficacy (the same way level works with any object).

Cypher Table

When giving out cyphers, either choose one from the table below or roll 1d100 to determine it randomly.

1 Alchemist's Grease	26 Epiphany Nail	51 Obedience Chain	76 Skull of Terror
2 Amulet of Defense	27 Exploding Round	52 Oil of Buoyancy	77 Sleep Dust
3 Amulet of Escape	28 False Face	53 Oil of Resistance	78 Spellscribed Weapon
4 Antitoxin	29 Fetch	54 Panacea	79 Storm Cloak
5 Aptitude Powder	30 Flame Oil	55 Piercing Goggles	80 Sunwine
6 Armor-Piercing Round	31 Force Cube	56 Portable Gate	81 Tracer
7 Banishing Oil	32 Gas Grenade	57 Portable Window	82 Treachery Charm
8 Battle Wand	33 Ghost Mantle	58 Potion of Brawn	83 Truesight Ointment
9 Blinding Ammunition	34 Giant's Dust	59 Potion of Cunning	84 Ultimate Acid
10 Burning Manacles	35 Handy Sack	60 Potion of Ferocity	85 View Lens
11 Chameleon Grease	36 Ice Round	61 Potion of Healing	86 Wand of Hobbling
12 Climbing Unguent	37 Impersonator's Kit	62 Potion of Invisibility	87 Wand of Paralysis
13 Clockwork Henchman	38 Incense of Meditation	63 Potion of Quickness	88 Water Breather
14 Comprehension Bead	39 Instant Barrier	64 Potion of Reflexes	89 Web Grenade
15 Compulsion Charm	40 Instant Shelter	65 Potion of Rejuvenation	90 Winged Cloak
16 Darksight Ointment	41 Lightning Grenade	66 Potion of Speed	91 Winged Eye
17 Deafening Ammunition	42 Lozenge of Sustenance	67 Privacy Ring	92 Words of Blinking
18 Death Rune	43 Luck Jewel	68 Rage Dust	93 Words of Dismissal
19 Death Spike	44 Medallion of Telepathy	69 Reality Spike	94 Words of Illusion
20 Desiccating Ammunition	45 Memory grenade	70 Repeater	95 Words of Knowledge
21 Diadem of Madness	46 Memory Lens	71 Seeing Orb	96 Words of Levitation
22 Diamond Oil	47 Mind Over Matter Ring	72 Sending Mirror	97 Words of Protection
23 Disruption Oil	48 Mojo Juice	73 Sentry Stone	98 Words of Sealing
24 Dragon Dust	49 Muting Fork	74 Shock Staff	99 Words of Shielding
25 Elixir of Longevity	50 Null Stone	75 Silent Shoes	00 Words of Summoning

Forms: The cypher's form tells you how the cypher commonly appears, and how you activate it or call forth its power. Cyphers can be *consumable* items, in which you drink, inhale, or eat it. Some consumables might be applied to the body or a weapon. You can consume such a cypher or you can administer it to a willing creature you can reach.

Other cyphers are *wearable*, such as a cloak, pin, or amulet. You have to be wearing the cypher to activate it. Finally, some cyphers are just *usable*. You have to hold the cypher to call upon its magic. A usable cypher could be a piece of ammunition or a wand. Regardless of the form the cypher has, anything remaining of it after using it becomes an ordinary object, stripped of its magic.

Each cypher includes a description of its form, but you can always alter the form to suit your needs. A cypher that is a magical bullet could be a magical grenade, for example. An amulet could be a bracelet or a cloak. A scroll could be a page in a book or carved on a tablet. The descriptions are starting points only, so let your imagination run wild.

Cypher Descriptions

All the cyphers commonly available in the world of *Shotguns & Sorcery* are described here in alphabetical order.

Alchemist's Grease

Level: 1d6

Form (Usable): A bottle of rancid, slippery grease.

Effect: You can pour the contents of the bottle, or hurl the bottle up to a short distance so that it releases its contents on striking a solid creature or object. Wherever the grease is released, it spreads over all surfaces within an immediate distance, making them extremely slippery. The grease retains potency for one hour, during which time it increases the difficulty of movement tasks across the area by three steps. Picking up or holding an item covered by the grease requires a successful Speed task.

Amulet of Defense

Level: 1d6

Form (Wearable): A silver shield-shaped charm made from metal hanging from a matching chain.

Effect: The charm surrounds you with a field of magical force that grants you +2 to Armor for twenty-four hours.



Amulet of Escape

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Wearable): A door-shaped talisman hanging from a chain.

Effect: You, along with everything you wear and carry, disappear and instantly reappear at any open space you describe, within a number of feet equal to 100 × the cypher's level.

Antitoxin

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Consumable): A small bottle filled with a bitter alcohol solution.

Effect: The solution neutralizes any poisons affecting the creature that imbibed it that are of the cypher's level or lower. As well, the imbiber becomes immune to such poisons for a number of hours equal to the cypher's level.

Aptitude Powder

Level: 1d6

Form (Consumable): An inhalable fine white powder contained in a paper packet.

Effect: You have an asset for one task you attempt within the next twenty-four hours that involves the use of a tool or weapon. This asset can exceed the normal limit of two assets.

Armor-Piercing Round

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A silver bullet or slug for a firearm, usually found in sets of 1d6. The round can be loaded into any firearm.

Effect: Attacks with weapons using this ammunition ignore Armor and inflict 1 addition point of damage.

Banishing Oil

Level: 1d6

Form (Consumable): A sparkling green oil contained in a glass bottle. You smear the oil on a weapon or up to ten arrows, bolts, or similar pieces of ammunition, but not bullets or slugs for firearms.

Effect: Magic infuses the weapon to which the oil is applied to for twenty-four hours. Whenever you strike a creature or unsecured object with the affected weapon or piece of ammunition, the target disappears and reappears in a random open space an immediate distance away from the space it left. The difficulty of the creature's actions (including defense) worsens by one step until the end of the next round.

Battle Wand

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A slender length of wood, bone, or metal inscribed with runes and, possibly, capped with some exotic material.

Effect: Once activated, the wand can be used a number of times within a twenty-four hour period equal to its level. Each time the wand is used, it lets loose a beam of energy at one creature or object within long range. The beam inflicts damage equal to the number of uses remaining in the wand (minimum 1).

Roll a d6 to determine the type of damage the energy inflicts:

1	Heat
2	Cold
3	Magical Force
4	Flesh-eating energy
5	Lightning
6	Light

Blinding Round

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A black bullet or slug for a firearm, usually found in sets of 1d6. The round can be loaded into any firearm.

Effect: When the round strikes a solid creature or object, it explodes, filling an immediate radius with flashing light that blinds everyone in the area for one minute.

Cyphers designated as rounds can also be made as grenades that can be thrown a short distance and explode out to an immediate distance, affecting all creatures in the area if the round does not do so already.

Burning Manacles

Level: 1d6

Form (Usable): A pair of red-steel manacles.

Effect: After the manacles are placed and locked on the wrists of a creature the manacles remain locked until you use an action to unlock them. If the manacles' wearer attempts to remove them, the metal grows hot, inflicting ambient damage equal to the cypher's level. The manacles retain their power for twenty-four hours or until removed.

Chameleon Grease

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Consumable): A pot of grease that must be smeared into clothing and skin to activate.

Effect: For one hour per level of the cypher, you have an asset for hiding tasks.

Climbing Unguent

Level: 1d6

Form (Consumable): A clay pot filled with a sticky viscous substance that must be applied to the hands and feet.

Effect: For twenty minutes, you can automatically climb up, down, or across vertical surfaces and overhangs.

Clockwork Henchman

Level: 1d6

Form (Usable): A 2-foot-tall brass manikin with a large key embedded in its back. Turning the key activates the cypher, causing its internal mechanisms to come to life.

Effect: The cypher becomes a creature with a level equal to the cypher's level. It remains so for a number of hours equal to its level.

The clockwork henchman understands your verbal commands, though it cannot speak. Commanding the henchman is not an action, and it makes attacks or performs actions as ordered to the best of its abilities.

The henchman has short-range movement but never goes more than a long distance from you.

At the GM's discretion, the henchman might have specialized knowledge, such as how to operate a particular device. Otherwise, it has no special knowledge. In any case, the servant is not intelligent or capable of initiating action; it does only as commanded.





Comprehension Bead

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form (Consumable): A tiny bead, about the size of a rice grain, on which is inscribed the name of one language. You activate the cypher by placing it in your ear.

Effect: The cypher is keyed to one language chosen by the person who made it. Activating it grants you permanent understanding of the language whenever you hear it spoken.

Compulsion Charm

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Wearable): A tiny heart-shaped trinket made from gold that hangs on a bracelet or necklace.

Effect: One creature you can see within long range must obey the next verbal command given (if it is understood) to it from you—or someone else—before the end of the next round.

Corroding Round

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A green bullet or slug for a firearm, usually found in sets of 1d6. The round can be loaded into any firearm.

Effect: When the round strikes a solid creature or object, it explodes, throwing acid out to an immediate distance. The acid inflicts damage equal to the cypher's level to all creatures in the area, but inflicts a minimum of 2 points of damage to those in the area regardless of the attack or defense roll.



Darksight Ointment

Level: 1d6

Form (Consumable): A small, dark, glass container filled with a tarry substance that must be smeared into the eyes.

Effect: You can see in the dark for eight hours.

Deafening Round

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A white bullet or slug for a firearm, usually found in sets of 1d6. The round can be loaded into any firearm.

Effect: When the round strikes a solid creature or object, it explodes with a deafening noise. Each creature within an immediate radius of the impact point becomes deafened for one minute.

Desiccating Round

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A bone-white bullet or slug for a firearm, usually found in sets of 1d6. The round can be loaded into any firearm.

Effect: When the round strikes a solid creature or object, it cracks open and draws the moisture from everything within an immediate distance of the point it struck. Creatures in the area take damage equal to the cypher's level and any water in the area immediately evaporates.

Death Oil

Level: 1d6

Form (Consumable): Thick black oil contained in a small metal canister. You smear the oil on a weapon or up to ten arrows, bolts, or similar pieces of ammunition, but not bullets or slugs for firearms.

Effect: Evil magic infuses the weapon or pieces of ammunition that retains potency for one minute. When you use the weapon or ammunition and strike an NPC or creature whose level is equal to or less than the cypher's, you can choose to make a second attack roll. If the second attack roll is a success, the target dies. If the target is a PC, the character instead moves one step down the damage track.

Death Spike

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form (Usable): A foot-long spike made from bone and capped with a small skull. You activate the item by planting the spike into the ground.

Effect: A burst of necromantic energy erupts from the spike traveling out to an immediate distance. The energy inflicts damage equal to the cypher's level to all living creatures in the area.

Diadem of Madness

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Wearable): A tiny gemstone on a chain.

Effect: A coruscating beam leaps from the stone at one creature you can see within long range. The beam inflicts Intellect damage equal to the cypher's level and prevents the target from taking actions for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level.

Diamond Oil

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form (Consumable): A bottle of thin gray oil that must be smeared all over the body.

Effect: Roll a d6 to find out how the oil affects you. The oil's effects wear off after a number of hours equal to the cypher's level.

1	+1 to Armor
2	+2 to Armor
3	+3 to Armor
4	+2 to Armor, +5 against damage from fire
5	+2 to Armor, +5 against damage from cold
6	+1 to Armor, +5 against all forms of ambient damage

Disruption Oil

Level: 1d6

Form (Consumable): Thin, effervescent fluid contained in a small bottle. You smear the oil on a weapon or up to ten arrows, bolts, or similar pieces of ammunition, but not bullets or slugs for firearms.

Effect: The weapon or ammunition absorbs the fluid, imbuing it with magic that lasts for twenty-four hours. Until the effect ends, each time you strike a solid creature or object, the magic from the rune inflicts 1 additional point of damage to the target and causes it to lose its next action.

Dragon Dust

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Consumable): A small bag of inhalable, glittering powder.

Effect: Add 1 to the imbiber's Speed Edge for one hour.

Elixir of Longevity

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form (Consumable): Sweet, liquid contained in a bottle shaped like the face of an attractive man or woman.

Effect: Each day, your body sheds years, causing you to appear physically younger. After seven days, you appear to be in the prime of your life. The cypher cannot regress your age beyond this point.

Epiphany Nail

Level: 1d6

Form (Usable): A small iron nail festooned with magical glyphs.

Effect: You apply one level of Effort to a noncombat task without spending points from a Pool. The level of Effort provided does not count toward the maximum amount of Effort you can normally apply to one task.

Exploding Round

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A red bullet or slug for a firearm, usually found in sets of 1d6. The round can be loaded into any firearm.

Effect: When the round strikes a solid creature or object, it explodes, throwing fire and shrapnel in all directions out to an immediate distance. The explosion inflicts damage equal to the cypher's level to everything in the area, but inflicts a minimum of 2 points of damage to those in the area regardless of the attack or defense roll.

False Face

Level: 1d6

Form (Wearable): A blank, porcelain mask.

Effect: Your appearance changes to look like that of a human-sized creature and remains this way for twenty-four hours or until you remove the mask.

Fetch

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A small statuette of a grotesque and ugly humanoid. You activate it by smearing it with fresh blood.

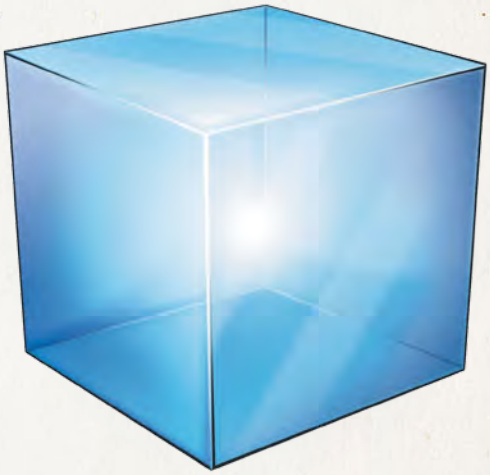
Effect: The statue instantly transforms into a creature of flesh and blood that can reveal secrets about one creature you choose within long range. The fetch, in a throaty voice, tells you the most salient details about the target including its level, origin, race, name, and other facts the GM chooses to reveal. Once it spews this information, it reverts to its normal, stone form. You can use the fetch a number of times in the same day it was activated equal to its level before it loses its power.

Flame Oil

Level: 1d6

Form (Consumable): Thick, oily jelly contained in a clay bottle. You smear the oil on a weapon or up to ten arrows, bolts, or similar pieces of ammunition, but not bullets or slugs for firearms.

Effect: The weapon or ammunition erupts in flames that last for twenty-four hours and resist any effort to extinguish them. The flames do not harm the item, however. When you attack with the weapon, the flames inflict 2 additional points of damage.



Force Cube

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form (Usable): A glass cube, 1-inch on a side, gleams with faint light.

Effect: The cypher disappears and a cube composed of six planes of solid force, each 30 feet to a side, springs into existence on a spot you can reach. The planes conform to the space available. The cube remains in place for one hour.

Although a force cube's walls are not permeable, there is likely enough air within for trapped creatures to breathe for the hour it lasts.

Gas Grenade

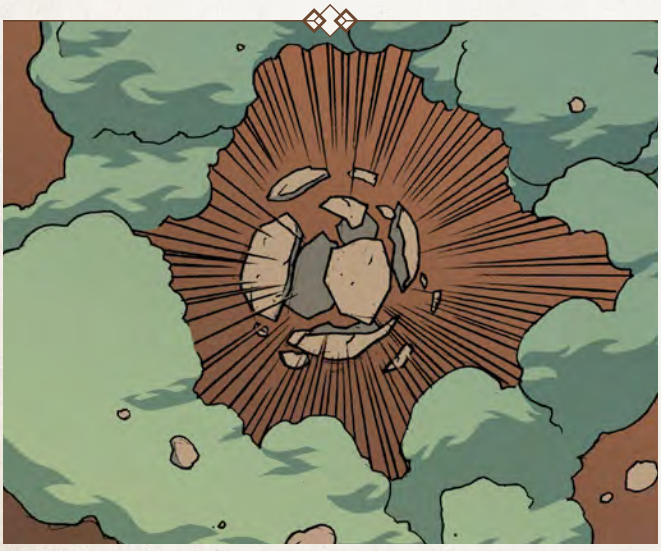
Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A clay ball filled with liquid.

Effect: Thrown a short distance, the grenade bursts to release a cloud of gas that spreads out to an immediate distance from the point of impact. The cloud lingers for 1d6 rounds unless conditions dictate otherwise. The effects of the grenade vary.

Roll 1d100 to determine the kind of gas released:

01–10	Thick Smoke occludes sight until the cloud dissipates.
11–20	Choking Gas causes living and breathing creatures to choke and cough for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level. Such creatures lose their actions.
21–50	Poison Gas inflicts damage equal to the cypher's level to living and breathing creatures.
51–60	Corrosive Gas inflicts damage equal to the cypher's level to everything in the area.
61–65	Madness Gas causes living and breathing creatures to lose their actions as they contend with hallucinations and visions for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level.
66–70	Paralysis Gas inflicts Speed damage equal to the cypher's level to living and breathing creatures.
71–80	Confounding Gas inflicts Intellect damage equal to the cypher's level to living and breathing creatures.
81–83	Fear Gas causes living and breathing creatures to flee in a random direction in fear (or become paralyzed with fear) for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level.
84–86	Forgetting Gas causes living and breathing creatures to permanently lose all memory of the last minute.
87–96	Sleep Gas causes living and breathing creatures to fall asleep for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level, or until awoken by a violent action or an extremely loud noise.
97–00	Rage Gas causes living and breathing creatures to make a melee attack against the nearest creature to it and continue to do so for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level.



Ghost Mantle

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form (Wearable): A cloak made from soft gray cloth.

Effect: You become as a ghost for one minute. During this time, you can pass through solid objects. You cannot make physical attacks or be physically attacked.

Giant's Dust

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Consumable): An inhalable powder that smells sour and unpleasant.

Effect: Add 1 to the imbiber's Might Edge for one hour.

Handy Sack

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form (Usable): An ordinary-looking burlap bag.

Effect: You reach into the bag and draw forth one piece of equipment whose level does not exceed the cypher's, and that is not an artifact. The piece of equipment persists for up to twenty-four hours, unless its fundamental nature allows only a single use, such as a grenade.

Healing Round

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A green bullet or slug for a firearm, usually found in sets of 1d6. The round can be loaded into any firearm.

Effect: When the round strikes a solid creature, the attack does not inflict damage. Instead, the attack restores points to the target's Health or Might Pool equal to the damage the attack would have inflicted.

Ice Round

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A blue bullet or slug for a firearm, usually found in sets of 1d6. The round can be loaded into any firearm.

Effect: When the round strikes a solid creature or object, it releases a blast of cold that inflicts ambient damage equal to the cypher's level and freezes the target in place, preventing it from moving for a round.

Incense of Meditation

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Consumable): A stick of incense, which must be lit.

Effect: Breathing in the smoke from this burning incense restores a number of points to your Intellect Pool equal to the cypher's level.

Impersonator Kit

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A small box of cosmetics.

Effect: Choose one person with whom you have previously interacted. For the next hour, your features become almost identical to those of the person you chose. You reduce the difficulty by two steps when you attempt to disguise yourself as the chosen person. You can end this effect at any time using an action.

Instant Barrier

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): Multicolored light swirls inside this clear crystal disk. You break the disk to activate it.

Effect: A wall appears anywhere you choose within short range and remains there for ten minutes. The wall is up to 30 feet by 30 feet by 1 foot and conforms to its space. The wall inflicts damage equal to the cypher's level to anything passing through it.

Each disk releases a different kind of wall, which is determined by rolling a d6.

1	Cold
2	Heat
3	Lightning*
4	Fire*
5	Blades*
6	Acid

* This energy obscures everything behind the barrier.

Instant Shelter

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form (Usable): A small metal box.

Effect: The cypher expands into a simple one-room structure with a door and a transparent window, measuring 10 feet by 10 feet by 20 feet. The structure remains in place until something destroys it.

Lightning Grenade

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form (Usable): A metal canister wrapped in copper wires.

Effect: You can throw the cypher up to a short distance. When it impacts against a solid creature or object, it lets loose sheets of lightning that spread out from it in an immediate distance, inflicting ambient damage equal to the cypher's level to each creature in the area.

Lozenge of Sustenance

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form (Consumable): A small, smooth stone that you place under your tongue where it dissolves.

Effect: You can go without food and water for a number of days equal to the cypher's level without ill effect.

Luck Jewel

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Wearable): A jewel set in a ring or necklace.

Effect: You gain the result of having rolled a 20 on your next action.

Medallion of Telepathy

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form (Wearable): A medallion typically features an open eye on one side and a glyph on the back hanging from a metal chain.

Effect: You can communicate with any creature you can see—if it is within short range—without having to speak. The creature with whom you communicate understands what you "say" regardless of the languages it knows, and can answer you in the same manner.

Memory Grenade

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A small metal canister.

Effect: You can throw the grenade a short distance. When it strikes a solid creature or object, it explodes, releasing sparkling motes out to an immediate distance. All thinking creatures in the area are dazed and can take no actions for one round. When they shake off the effect, they have no memory of the preceding hour.

Memory Lens

Level: 1d6

Form (Wearable): A glass lens set in a silver frame designed to be worn as a monocle.

Effect: The cypher captures everything you see for thirty seconds. Once it finishes recording, the monocle no longer counts as a cypher. You can view the recording as many times as you wish using an action.

Mind Over Matter Ring

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Wearable): A bronze band.

Effect: Once activated, you can use it a number of times in the same day, equal to its level. Each time you use the ring, choose an object you can see within long range that is not heavier or bulkier than you could normally lift. You manipulate the object. The effect of the manipulation must occur over the course of a round and can include closing or opening a door, turning a key in a lock, moving an object a short distance, wresting an object from another creature's grasp (on a successful Might-based roll), or pushing a creature an immediate distance.

Mojo Juice

Level: 1d6

Form (Consumable): A syringe filled with bright blue fluid.

Effect: The creature injected with the syringe decreases the difficulty of the next action it takes by three steps.

Muting Fork

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A tuning fork that activates when chimed.

Effect: All sound within long range of the cypher stops for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level. No sound can emanate from this area or reach into it until the effect ends.

Null Stone

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form (Usable): A smooth, round metal ball adorned with runes marking it as anathema to magic.

Effect: You can throw the cypher or touch it to any magical effect produced by an artifact, another cypher, or a special ability within long range. That magical effect ends.

Obedience Chain

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A length of chain made from bronze links.

Effect: To activate the cypher, you must succeed on a melee attack against a creature about the size of the user and whose level does not exceed the cypher's level. The cypher wraps around one of the target's limbs causing the target to immediately become calm. The target awaits your commands and carries out every order you give it to the best of its ability. The target remains enslaved in this way for a number of hours equal to the cypher's level minus the target's level. (If the result is 0, the target remains enslaved for one minute.)

Oil of Buoyancy

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Consumable): A thin blue oil contained in an oddly-shaped bottle.

Effect: One object no larger than you that is smeared with the oil loses weight until it weighs less than air. It rises 1d20 feet into the air where it remains. The object can be strapped down or carried, but the effect is permanent.

Oil of Resistance

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form (Consumable): A thick, viscous oil contained in a metal canister. You must smear the oil all over your clothing and body.

Effect: You have a chance for additional resistance to directly damaging effects of all kinds, such as fire, lightning, and the like for a day. (It does not provide resistance to blunt force, slashing, or piercing attacks.) If the level of the effect is less than or equal to the level of the cypher, you gain an additional defense roll to avoid it. On a successful defense roll, you treat the attack as if you had succeeded on your regular defense roll.

Panacea

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Consumable): An herbal concoction.

Effect: You are cured of all diseases of the cypher's level or lower, and become immune to such diseases for a number of days equal to the cypher's level.



Piercing Goggles

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form (Wearable): A pair of goggles with black lenses.

Effect: For one minute, you can see through up to 2 feet of any solid material whose level is equal to or less than the cypher's level.

Portable Gate

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form (Usable): A cube of stone, with a different number on each face that changes whenever you turn the cube in your hand.

Effect: Choose a location you have seen or visited before that is within a number of miles equal to the cypher's level × 100. You, along with everything you wear and carry, instantly travel to that place.

Portable Window

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A set of four collapsible silver rods connected by thin cords, you activate the cypher by snapping the rods together to form a rectangle and place it against a solid surface such as a wall or floor.

Effect: The surface inside the area of the frame becomes insubstantial. Creatures and objects can pass into it and through it as if it were not there. The cypher can affect up to a 10-foot cube of solid material. If the surface was opaque before being affected by the cypher, it remains so.

Potion of Brawn

Level: 1d6

Form (Consumable): A bottle of brown liquid that smells like sorghum.

Effect: For one hour, the imbiber decreases the difficulty of any noncombat task involving raw strength—such as breaking down a door, lifting a heavy boulder, competing in a weightlifting competition, and so on—by two steps.

Potion of Cunning

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Consumable): A bottle of clear liquid.

Effect: For one hour, the imbiber adds 1 to her Intellect Edge.

Potion of Ferocity

Level: 1d6

Form (Consumable): A small glass bottle filled with an alcohol solution that tastes of copper.

Effect: For the next twenty-four hours, the imbiber's attacks with melee weapons inflict 2 additional points of damage.

Potion of Healing

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form (Consumable): A small glass bottle filled with a milky fluid.

Effect: The potion restores a number of points to the imbiber's Might Pool equal to the cypher's level.

Potion of Invisibility

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Consumable): A bottle filled with murky fluid.

Effect: The imbiber becomes invisible for ten minutes, during which time she is specialized in stealth and Speed defense tasks. This effect ends if she does something to reveal her presence or position—attacking, using an ability, moving a large object, and so on. If this occurs, she can regain the remaining invisibility effect by taking an action to focus on hiding her position.

Potion of Reflexes

Level: 1d6

Form (Consumable): A bottle of tasteless fluid.

Effect: The imbiber decreases the difficulty by two steps for any task involving manual dexterity—such as pickpocketing, lockpicking, juggling, operating on a patient, defusing a bomb, and so on. The potion wears off after one hour.

Potion of Rejuvenation

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Consumable): A bottle containing a sweet, flavorful liquid.

Effect: The potion restores a number of points equal to the cypher's level to one random stat Pool. Roll 1d100:

01–50 Might Pool

51–75 Speed Pool

76–00 Intellect Pool

Potion of Quickness

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Consumable): A bottle of spicy liquid.

Effect: The potion restores a number of points to the imbiber's Speed Pool equal to its level.

Potion of Speed

Level: 1d6

Form (Consumable): A bottle of silvery liquid.

Effect: For one minute, whenever the imbiber uses an action to move a short distance, he can move a long distance instead.

Potion of Weightlessness

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form (Usable): An effervescent liquid contained in a bottle.

Effect: The imbiber floats into the air, moving vertically up to a short distance per round (but not horizontally, without taking some other action, such as pushing along the ceiling). The cypher works on the imbiber if she weighs less than 50 pounds per level.

Privacy Ring

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Wearable): A small black metal ring.

Effect: The area within immediate range of the ring becomes hidden from everything outside it for twenty-four hours. Creatures beyond the area cannot see into it or hear any noise emanating from within it.

Rage Dust

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form (Consumable): Red-brown snuff contained in a small leather bag.

Effect: For the next hour, you can apply one level of Effort to any task (including a combat task) without spending points from a Pool. The level of Effort provided by this cypher does not count toward the maximum amount of Effort you can normally apply to one task.

Reality Spike

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form (Usable): A foot-long iron bar.

Effect: The cypher does not move—ever—even if activated in midair. A successful Might action can dislodge it, but then it is ruined.

Repeater

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form (Usable): A loading device that clamps onto a pistol, rifle, shotgun, or some other firearm.

Effect: For the next minute, the ranged weapon fires one additional time with ammo fabricated by the cypher. You can aim the free shot at the same target as the initiating shot, or at a target next to the first one.

Seeing Orb

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form (Usable): A polished metal ball with strange shapes swirling on its surface.

Effect: You observe a location you visited previously, regardless of how far away it is from you. This vision persists for up to ten minutes.

Sending Mirror

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A small mirror of polished metal.

Effect: Think of one person you know. The person's likeness appears on the mirrored surface. You can send up to ten words to the person, regardless of distance, who instantly hears them in her mind.

Sentry Stone

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A jagged piece of rock on which is inscribed a rune.

Effect: The rock rises into the air and hovers there for one hour. Until the effect ends, whenever movement occurs within short range of the rock, and when large creatures or objects move within long range (the cypher distinguishes between the two), the stone makes a chiming noise for each creature or object that moved. The length of the chime also indicates the creature or object's size, such that the longer the sound, the larger the creature or object.

Shock Staff

Level: 1d6

Form (Usable): A metal staff capped with copper ferrules.

Effect: For the next twenty-four hours, each time you strike a solid creature or object, the weapon generates a burst of electricity, inflicting 1 additional point of damage.

Silent Shoes

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Wearable): A pair of soft-soled shoes that activate when worn.

Effect: For twenty-four hours, or until you remove the shoes, you make no sound when you move by walking or running, even across surfaces that would normally be noisy, such as gravel, broken glass, or dry leaves.

Skull of Terror

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A skull harvested from a zombie and scrawled with runes.

Effect: One creature that can see the cypher must flee in terror for one minute.

Sleep Dust

Level: 1d6

Form (Usable): A packet of dust activated by blowing the dust into the face of another creature.

Effect: The creature falls down and goes to sleep for ten minutes or until awoken by a violent action or an extremely loud noise.



Spellscribed Weapon

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A melee or ranged weapon. If ranged, it bestows the effect on ammunition fired from it, if any.

Effect: Activating the cypher causes the spell embedded in the weapon to take effect for one hour. Roll 1d100 for the effect:

01–10	Decreases difficulty of attacks by one step
11–20	Deals bonus electrical damage equal to cypher level
21–30	Deals bonus cold damage equal to cypher level
31–40	Deals bonus poison damage equal to cypher level
41–50	Deals bonus acid damage equal to cypher level
51–60	Deals bonus fire damage equal to cypher level
61–70	Deals bonus sonic damage equal to cypher level
71–80	Deals bonus radiant damage equal to cypher level
81–90	Knockback (on 18–20 on successful attack roll, target knocked back 30 feet)
91–95	Holding (on 18–20 on successful attack roll, target can't act on its next turn)
96–97	Decreases difficulty of attack by two steps
98	Banishing (on 18–20 on successful attack roll, target is sent to random location at least 100 miles away)
99	Explodes, inflicting damage equal to cypher level to all within immediate range
00	Heart-seeking (on 18–20 on successful attack roll, target is killed)

Storm Cloak

Level: 1d6

Form (Wearable): A cloak made from wool and thin copper wire.

Effect: For the next twenty-four hours, anyone striking you receives a small burst of electricity that inflicts 1 point of damage (no action or roll required).

Sunwine

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Consumable): A bottle of sweet, golden liquid.

Effect: The imbiber restores a number of points equal to the cypher's level to his Stat Pools. The imbiber may distribute these points in any way he chooses between the Pools.

Tracer

Level: 1d6

Form (Usable): A small metal disk and a small mirror.

Effect: To activate this cypher, you must succeed on a melee attack roll against a creature or touch the device to an object. On a success, or if used against an object, the metal disk affixes itself to the target and remains there for twenty-four hours.

Until the effect ends, the mirror shows an overview of the terrain, as well as two points of light, one representing the mirror's position and the other representing the target. The closer the points are to each other, the more the mirror zooms in on the terrain.

Treachery Charm

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Wearable): A trinket wrought to look like a broken heart hanging from a bracelet or necklace.

Effect: Choose one creature you can see within long range. The creature must attack the ally nearest to it for one round.

Truesight Ointment

Level: 1d6

Form (Consumable): A bottle of thick yellow salve, you must apply the ointment directly to your eyes.

Effect: You can see ten times as far as normal for one hour.

Ultimate Acid

Level: 1d10

Form (Usable): A treated glass beaker with clay stopper that contains a highly corrosive liquid.

Effect: When poured on a solid surface, the liquid dissolves 1 cubic foot of material each round. After one round per cypher level, the cypher becomes inert.

View Lens

Level: 1d6

Form (Usable): Two small loops of metal, one of which wraps around a glass disk and the other is just a ring.

Effect: For one hour, you can see everything going on near the loop without the glass by looking into the loop with the glass.

Wand of Hobbling

Level: 1d6 + 2

Forms (Usable): A slender wand of rosewood.

Effect: You project a ray of energy from the wand up to 200 feet that numbs one limb of the target, making it useless for one minute. A small number of these wands (5%) induce numbness that lasts for one hour.

Wand of Paralysis

Level: 1d6 + 2

Forms (Usable): A slender wand of wood capped in iron at either end.

Effect: You project a ray of energy up to 200 feet that paralyzes one creature for one minute. A small number of these wands (5%) induce paralysis that lasts for one hour.

Water Breather

Level: 1d6

Form (Wearable): A mouthpiece made from rubber and steel.

Effect: For eight hours, while you wear the device, you can breathe underwater and operate at any depth (without facing debilitating consequences of changing pressure).

Web Grenade

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Usable): A clay ball filled with liquid.

Effect: You can throw this grenade out to a short distance. When it impacts against a solid creature or object, it explodes in an immediate radius, releasing sticky strands of goo. PCs caught in the area must use a Might-based action to get out, with the difficulty determined by the cypher level. NPCs break free if their level is higher than the cypher level.

Winged Cloak

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form (Wearable): A thin, lightweight cloak.

Effect: You can fly at your normal running speed for one hour.



Winged Eye

Level: 1d6

Form (Usable): A tiny brass ball etched with flowing lines activated by pressing on a hidden panel.

Effect: A hole dilates, opening like an eye on one side, while two long, feathering wings sprout from ball and beat with incredible speed to carry it into the air. It then speeds off in a direction you choose. The winged eye moves up to 500 feet per level, recording everything it observes around it within 50 feet as it travels. When the eye encounters a barrier, it changes direction, moving off in a way it has not yet traveled, only doubling back when it has no other options. When it reaches its limit on distance, it disappears and reappears in the palm of your hand as a ball.

Activating the cypher again causes it to project everything it recorded on a flat surface within a short distance of it until it returned to your hand. The device can be used in this way a number of times equal to its level before the magic fails. Generally, a winged eye can identify an area's basic layout, creatures, and notable features.

Words of Blinking

Level: 1d6

Form (Usable): A scroll or page in a book.

Effect: You rapidly jump in and out of existence. This effect lasts for twenty-four hours. Until it ends, once each round when you take damage (other than ambient damage) you teleport an immediate distance away in a random direction (not up or down). Since you are prepared for this effect and your foe is not, the difficulty of your defense is modified by one step to your benefit until the end of the next round.

Cyphers designated as words are spells in written form. They might be on scrolls, on pages in old books, etched on tablets, or inscribed on a wall. Once used, the words disappear, as does the memory of them from the mind of their speaker and the minds of anyone who heard them spoken.

Words of Dismissal

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form (Usable): A scroll or page in a book.

Effect: One nonliving object within long range that is your size or smaller, and whose level is less than or equal to the cypher's level. The object disappears and reappears in a random location at least 100 miles away. If the GM feels it appropriate to the circumstances, only a portion of an object is transferred (a portion whose volume is no more than yours).

Words of Illusion

Level: 1d6

Form (Usable): A scroll or page in a book.

Effect: An illusion appears 25 feet away from you. The illusion takes a random form, determined by rolling 1d100. It can move, make appropriate sounds, and has an appropriate smell, strong enough to conceal normal odors that might emanate from the area.

01–20	A terrifying monster appears inside a 10-foot cube
21–40	A huge structure that obscures sight appears inside a 30-foot cube
41–50	A beautiful pastoral scene fills a 50-foot cube
51–60	Food that looks delicious but may not be familiar covers all surfaces inside a 10-foot cube
61–80	Solid color obscures sight inside a 50-foot cube
81–00	An incomprehensible scene, disorienting and strange, fills a 20-foot cube

Words of Knowledge

Level: 1d6

Form (Usable): A scroll or page in a book.

Effect: You gain training in a predetermined skill. The skill could be anything (including something specific to the operation of a particular device). Choose an appropriate skill, or roll 1d100:

01–10	Melee attacks
11–20	Ranged attacks
21–40	One type of academic or esoteric lore (history, magic, nature, and so on)
41–50	Repairing (sometimes specific to one device)
51–60	Crafting (usually specific to one thing)
61–70	Persuasion
71–75	Healing
76–80	Speed defense
81–85	Intellect defense
86–90	Swimming
91–95	Riding
96–00	Sneaking

It is easy to get addicted to the quick hit of training that comes from words of knowledge cyphers. Characters who rely on them too often may find themselves at a disadvantage when they run out, presenting a great opportunity for GM intrusion.

Words of Protection

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form (Usable): A scroll or page in a book.

Effect: An invisible field springs into existence around you—out to an immediate distance. You and each creature within the field gain +5 to Armor against damage of a specified kind for one hour. Roll 1d100 to determine the effect.

01–12	Fire or heat
13–27	Cold
28–39	Acid
40–52	Ballistic
53–65	Sonic
66–72	Electrical
73–84	Poison
85–95	Blunt force
96–00	Slashing and piercing

Words of Sealing

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form (Usable): A scroll or page in a book.

Effect: An immobile plane of magical force appears anywhere you choose within long range. The plane can be up to 20 feet by 20 feet, though it conforms to the space available, and it lasts for one hour.

Words of Shielding

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form (Usable): A scroll or page in a book.

Effect: You gain an asset to Speed defense rolls for twenty-four hours.

Words of Summoning

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form (Usable): A scroll or page in a book.

Effect: One object you can see within long range that is neither worn nor carried by a creature other than you, and is your size or smaller, disappears and reappears 1 round later, in your hands or at your feet if your hands are full.



Chapter 18: Artifacts and Trinkets

Among the many forms magic might take, artifacts command the greatest value, for they are objects of lasting magical power. Where cyphers are items that typically produce a single magical effect and then become nonfunctional, artifacts can be used repeatedly. The power they offer makes them far more valuable and rare than cyphers, and thus finding these treasures can be the object of an entire expedition, either to find the artifact or to find coin enough to purchase it outright.

Acquiring Artifacts

Characters can come by artifacts in a variety of ways. In almost all cases, artifacts are found singly.

The cheapest method is to find them. Ruins abound outside Dragon City, and who knows what treasures might hide in civilization's wreckage? An artifact might lie in plain view, guarded by a nasty trap, or hidden. Characters could find an artifact by searching (an Intellect task made easier with knowledge of magic) or recover an artifact from the body of a powerful enemy.

Artifacts can also be gifts from powerful benefactors, rewards for service, or property stolen from a notable's personal store of magic items. Characters can also purchase artifacts in Dragon City, but the price for such items is always high, with a typical value being the artifact's level × 100 gold. A character can also sell an artifact for the same price or trade it for a different artifact of the same or lesser value, provided the artifact is available.

Identification

Where cyphers usually reveal their powers easily, artifacts can be much more difficult to identify. Artifact identification is an Intellect task against a difficulty equal to the artifact's level. Knowledge of magic can reduce the difficulty.

Once the PCs find an artifact, identifying it is a separate task, based on Intellect and modified by knowledge magic, typically. The GM sets the difficulty of the task, but it is usually 1 or 2. Identification takes anywhere from ten minutes to twenty-four hours or longer. Success means the character learns what the artifact does and how to activate it, while failure indicates the artifact is beyond the character's knowledge and its properties remain a mystery. Characters can always take unidentified artifacts to experts who can reveal the properties to them, usually for a price equal to one-tenth to one-quarter of the artifact's value.

Using Artifacts

Characters can use an artifact they have successfully identified or had identified for them. Unless otherwise mentioned in an artifact's description, the character uses an action and the artifact's effect applies.

A character can attempt to use an unidentified artifact as an Intellect task, typically against a difficulty equal to the artifact's level + 2. On a success, the character produces the artifact's effect and counts as if she had identified it. On a failure, the artifact has no effect or an unexpected effect as the GM decides.

Artifact Properties

An artifact, which is a specific item, has a description of the item, a level, an effect, and exhaustion.

Level: This entry tells you the artifact's level, which is usually expressed as a die roll. Level tells you generally about the artifact's power, but it can also define the artifact's capabilities.

Form: Each artifact entry tells you what the item looks like. You can modify the description to suit your campaign, or just use the description as presented.

Effect: Finally, the effect tells you what the artifact does. It might modify some other activity or it could produce an entirely different effect. Some artifacts can be used repeatedly, while others can be used a limited number of times in a single twenty-four hour period, with uses replenishing at specific times or when the user takes a particular action.

Exhaustion: Even though artifacts can be used multiple times, the magic bound to them might be exhausted after too much use. Items at risk of exhaustion express the change as a range of numbers that appear on the indicated die roll, such as 1-in-3 on a d10 or 1 on a d20. If the number rolled falls within the range, the magic powering the item is lost. Some items have no risk of exhaustion and are indicated as such with a "—."

Artifact Special Properties

In addition to their normal effects, many artifacts have a special property that sets the same artifacts apart from each other. An artifact's special property could hint at its origins, such as who made it and for what purpose, or they could reflect a quirk in the magic, either a flaw in the design or an evolution of the power the artifact contains. You can choose a property for the artifact, roll a die to determine it randomly, or forgo the special property altogether.

Artifact Special Properties

Roll	Special Property
01–04	The artifact activates only when the user smears it with fresh blood.
05–08	The artifact functions only in sunlight.
09–12	The artifact functions only in total darkness.
13–16	The artifact requires the user to speak a phrase to activate it.
17–20	The artifact only functions when the user is angry, frightened, or experiencing some other extreme emotion.
21–24	The artifact reeks of rot, perfume, blood, or something else.
25–28	The artifact makes an odd noise at random intervals.
29–32	The artifact is mildly magnetic.
33–36	The artifact emits bright light out to a short distance for 1d6 minutes each time it's used.
37–40	The artifact makes a shrieking, screaming noise whenever it's used, causing all creatures within an immediate distance to become deafened for one round.
41–44	The artifact drains 2 points from the user's Might Pool each time it's used.
45–48	The artifact drains 2 points from the user's Speed Pool each time it's used.
49–52	The artifact drains 2 points from the user's Intellect pool each time it's used.
53–56	The artifact lowers temperatures around it by a few degrees.
57–60	The artifact increases temperatures around it by a few degrees.
61–64	The artifact "likes" a particular PC. Its effective level is increased by 1 when used by that character, or when that character is within an immediate distance.
65–68	The artifact "dislikes" a particular PC. Its effective level is decreased by 1 when used by that character, or when that character is within an immediate distance.
69–72	Music sounds from the artifact when used.
73–76	The artifact glows when within a long distance of undead creatures.
77–80	The artifact sheds light as a torch.
81–84	The artifact appears corroded, fractured, and in poor repair.
85–88	The artifact appears new, gleaming even.
89–92	The artifact has a sharp ozone smell about it.
93–96	The artifact, when left on a solid surface, forms a slimy puddle around it.
97–00	The artifact functions intermittently. When used, roll a d6. On a 1, the artifact has no effect and ceases to function for 24-hours.

Artifact Table

When you award an artifact, you can choose one from the following list, or grant one randomly.

1 . . . . . All Environments Coat	26 . . . . . Dragonscale Amulet	51 . . . . . .Inferno Wand	76 . . . . . .Shadowsuit
2 . . . . . Anonymity Mask	27 . . . . . Dutiful Porter	52 . . . . . .Instant Bridge	77 . . . . . Shielding Talisman
3 . . . . . Armored Cloak	28 . . . . . .Elemental Mail	53 . . . . . .Lethal Weapon	78 . . . . . .Shimmer Cloak
4 . . . . . .Assassin's Foil	29 . . . . . Elven Mail	54 . . . . . Lightning Rod	79 . . . . . .Shock Wand
5 . . . . . Belt of Strength	30 . . . . . .Enchanted Weapon	55 . . . . . Lover's Paint	80 . . Skullcap of Concentration
6 . . . . . Boom Stick	31 . . . . . Entropy Orb	56 . . . . . .Magineer's Bag	81 . . . . . Sniper's Rifle
7 . . . . . .Boots of Swiftness	32 . . . . . Eternal Lock	57 . . . . . .Marksman's Gloves	82 . . . . . Spellbound Pistol
8 . . . . . Bottomless Satchel	33 . . . . . .Eternal Rations	58 . . . . . Mechanized Panoply	83 . . . . . Stop Time
9 . . . . . Bound Elemental	34 . . . . . .Far Sight Spectacles	59 . . . . . Memory Crystal	84 . . . . . Storm Chalice
10 . . . . . .Broach of Faces	35 . . . . . .Feather Cloak	60 . . . . . Mighty Guardian	85 . . . . . Stunner
11 . . . . . .Capture Box	36 . . . . . .Finder Stone	61 . . . . . Moment Thief	86 . . . . . Sunstone
12 . . . . . Change Clothes	37 . . . . . .Flaming Sword	62 . . . . . Quicksilver Gloves	87 . . . . Talisman of the Dragon
13 . . . . . Circlet of Authority	38 . . . . . Floating Disk	63 . .Quiver of Unerring Missiles	88 . . . . . Talisman of the Mind
14 . . . . . Circlet of Knowledge	39 . . . . . .Flying Broomstick	64 . . . . . Radiance Wand	89 . . . . . Talisman of Virtue
15 . . . . . Compulsion Ring	40 . . . . . .Flying Carpet	65 . . . . . Radiant Net	90 . . . . . Tracer Pistol
16 . . . . . Conflagration Pistol	41 . . . . . .Flying Knife	66 . . . . . Reflection Shield	91 . . . . . .Twain Cloak
17 . . . . . .Corpse Caller	42 . . . . . .Force Wand	67 . . . . . Refuge Key	92 . . . . . .Twin Tomes
18 . . . . . Crystal Ball	43 . . . . . Frost Wand	68 . . . . . Ring of Defense	93 . . . . . .Ultimate Boots
19 . . . . . .Darksight Goggles	44 . . . . . Ghost Hand	69 . Ring of Jumping and Leaping	94 . . . . . Undead Bane
20 . . . . . Death Ward Amulet	45 . . . . . Groundbreaker Rod	70 . . . . . Ring of Shielding	95 . . . . . Useful Staff
21 . . . . . .Devoted Servant	46 . . . . . Hat of Alertness	71 . . . . . .Ring of Truth	96 . . . . . .Venomous Staff
22 . . . . . Dimensional Gloves	47 . . . . . .Headsman's Axe	72 . . . . . .Scepter of the Dead	97 . . . . . .Warding Staff
23 . . . . . Doorknocker	48 . . . . . .Healing Periapt	73 . . . . . Serpent Rope	98 . . . . . Watchful Spiders
24 . . . . . .Dragon Helm	49 . . . . . .Hell Cannon	74 . . . . . .Serpentine Blade	99 . . . . . Wizard's Ring
25 . . . . . Dragon Tiles	50 . . . . . .Helm of the Deep	75 . . . . . Shadow Cape	00 . . . . . .Zephyr Boots

Artifact Descriptions

A selection of artifacts characters might find in the world of *Shotguns & Sorcery* is described here in alphabetical order.

All Environments Coat

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: A long coat made from leather and cloth.

Effect: The coat counts as light armor but grants a +1 bonus to Armor above the normal 1 point light armor provides. In addition, while wearing the coat, you reduce the damage you take from extreme cold or heat by the artifact's level.

Exhaustion: —

Anonymity Mask

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: An unpainted porcelain mask with eyeholes and no other features

Effect: You must be wearing the mask to activate it, which causes creatures interacting with you to forget you one minute after you leave their presence. The mask's power lasts one hour each time it's activated.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10

Armored Cloak

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A soft, leather cloak.

Effect: While you wear it, the cloak grants you a +1 bonus to Armor. The cloak stiffens to protect you from attacks.

Exhaustion: —



Assassin's Foil

Level: 1d6

Form: A small gray stone marked with a dwarven runes.

Effect: The stone becomes cold and blue when it is within short range of a poisonous substance or creature.

Exhaustion: —

Belt of Strength

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A wide, leather belt with a steel clasp.

Effect: While wearing it, the belt grants you a +5 bonus to your maximum Might Pool.

Exhaustion: —

Boom Stick

Level: 1d6

Form: A shotgun with a flared barrel, scrawled with glowing blue runes.

Effect: You activate this artifact by attacking with it. When you do, it lets loose a thunderous boom that deafens for one minute all creatures other than you within short range. The sound can be heard up to one mile away.

If the artifact becomes exhausted, it still functions as a shotgun.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d100

Boots of Swiftness

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A pair of red thigh-high boots made from leather.

Effect: While wearing both, the boots grant you a +5 bonus to your maximum Speed Pool.

Exhaustion: —

Bottomless Satchel

Level: 1d6

Form: A leather satchel, two feet long, two feet wide, and one foot tall.

Effect: Not quite bottomless, the interior dimensions of the satchel are four feet by four feet by six feet. No matter what you put inside the satchel, it always weighs the same.

Exhaustion: —

Bound Elemental

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: An object with strong ties to an element such as a feather for air, a lump of magnetic metal for earth, or a piece of volcanic rock for fire.

Effect: The device contains an elemental of a type determined by on the artifact's level.

3–4	Fire elemental or water elemental
5–6	Air elemental or earth elemental
7–8	Any

Activating the artifact causes the elemental to appear in an open space within short range and remain for one minute or until it's destroyed. The elemental is under your control for one round. You can use an action on your turn to maintain control as an Intellect task. If the elemental escapes your control, it becomes hostile to you and attacks until you regain control.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d6

Broach of Faces

Level: 1d6

Form: A porcelain broach that displays a human face.

Effect: When you activate the broach, your face transforms to assume the appearance of a different person, while the broach transforms to assume your normal appearance. The change to your appearance applies only to your head and can be of any likeness, even that of someone else. The change lasts until you use an action to resume your normal appearance.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10

Capture Box

Level: 1d6

Form: A fist-sized box fitted with a dark lens on one side and dark glass window on the other.

Effect: When you activate the artifact, it flashes a bright light and creates a picture of everything in front of the lens on the glass window. You can look at different pictures captured by the artifact by swiping the glass to the left or right.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d20

Change Clothes

Level: 1d6

Form: A plain one-piece coverall.

Effect: You activate the artifact while you wear it, which causes it to assume any appearance you wish. The transformation lasts until you remove the clothing or you activate the artifact again. The transformation can alter your footwear, add jewelry, cosmetics, or even turn the clothing into armor. If you remove a piece of the altered clothing, such as dropping an earring, the removed item evaporates into a puff of smoke if you move more than an immediate distance from it without harming the artifact.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d100

Circlet of Authority

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A headband made from gold.

Effect: When you activate the artifact, choose one creature you can see within short range. You decide how one creature uses the next action it takes before the end of the next round.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10

Circlet of Knowledge

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A thin braided band of gold.

Effect: While wearing it, the circlet grants you a +5 bonus to your maximum Intellect Pool.

Exhaustion: —

Compulsion Ring

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A simple gold band, it changes size to fit any wearer's finger.

Effect: Activating the ring causes a creature you can see within long range to come under your power for a round. On the creature's next turn, you decide what action it takes.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d6

Conflagration Pistol

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: A heavy pistol with a barrel resembling a roaring dragon.

Effect: This artifact functions as a heavy pistol. Whenever you get a minor effect on an attack with this weapon, the attack inflicts 3 additional points of fire (ambient) damage. Whenever you get a major effect, the attack inflicts the additional damage from a minor effect and the target catches fire, taking 3 points of fire (ambient) damage each round on your turn until it or another creature uses an action to extinguish the flames. The benefits from minor and major effects are in addition to other minor and major effects you might have.

Exhaustion: —

Corpse Caller

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: A heavy, steel gauntlet decorated with a skull motif.

Effect: If you activate the artifact while wearing it and touching the remains of a dead creature, the artifact restores life and vigor to the creature's head, allowing it to talk and answer your questions. You can ask the animated remains up to three questions and the remains answers the questions based on what it knew and experienced in life.

The artifact sometimes has unpredictable results. There's a 1% chance each time it's used that the magic causes a ghost to crawl out from the remains and attack.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10

Crystal Ball

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: A clear crystal sphere, about 9 inches in diameter, that fills with light when activated and clears to reveal what the user wishes to see.

Effect: Each crystal ball is locked with a catchphrase, such as "show me" or "let's see what we can see." Speaking aloud the phrase allows you to concentrate on a place or person you have seen or visited at some point before. The subject on which you concentrate appears in the crystal, letting you see the spot or person you visualized and everything a short distance away. Crystal balls typically allow a user to see the visualized person or place, but 1 in 20 crystal balls allow the user to see and hear.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d20

Darksight Goggles

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A set of heavy goggles with dark lenses.

Effect: While wearing the goggles, you can see into areas of shadows or darkness as if those areas were lit. However, the difficulty for initiative tasks worsens by one step for you as long as you wear them.

Exhaustion: —

Death Ward Amulet

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: A medallion fashioned to look like a leering skull with two small rubies in its eye sockets.

Effect: When damage would move you one or more steps down the damage track, you can activate the amulet to restore a number of points equal to the artifact's level to one of your Stat Pools.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d6

Devoted Servant

Level: 1d6

Form: A tiny statuette of an animal.

Effect: Activating the artifact transforms the statuette into a creature of the artifact's level. The creature obeys your spoken commands. If it moves more than a long distance from you, it immediately returns to its statue form. If the creature is slain, the artifact is destroyed. Finally, the effect lasts until you use an action to return it to its statue form.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10





Dimensional Gloves

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A pair of thick, leather gloves covered in copper wiring.

Effect: When you activate the gloves, a hole appears in the air in front of you and another hole appears in an open space you can see within short range. The holes remain in place for a number of minutes equal to the artifact's level and are each large enough to accommodate your hand. You, and only you, can reach your gloved hand through one hole so that it comes out the other. If the effect ends while you are reaching through the hole, it snaps shut and severs your arm.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d6

Doorknocker

Level: 1d6

Form: A small triangular frame from which hangs a tiny silver rod.

Effect: If you activate the artifact when its placed next to a closed door, gate, portcullis, or similar portal, the silver rod pulls back and swings toward the portal, making a ringing noise on impact. Portals of a level equal to or less than the artifact are instantly destroyed.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10

Dragon Helm

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A great helmet, closed-faced and with dark horns curling out from the sides.

Effect: You must wear the helm to activate it. When activated, each creature within short range that can see you panics and must spend the next round fleeing from you.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10

Dragon Tiles

Level: 1d6

Form: A cloth bag filled with a dozen ivory tiles inscribed with mystic runes.

Effect: To activate the artifact, you must ask aloud one question that can be answered with a yes or a no, and then empty the bag onto a flat surface you can reach. The GM must answer your question truthfully. If the answer is neither yes nor no, the activation has no effect.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10

Dragonscale Amulet

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A scale from a dragon hanging from a silver chain.

Effect: While you wear the artifact, you are immune to damage from heat and fire.

Exhaustion: —

Dutiful Porter

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A man-shaped, clockwork automaton made from brass with a key in its back.

Effect: You activate the artifact by turning the key in its back, which transforms it into a creature of its level for eight hours. The dutiful porter obeys your spoken commands to the best of its ability, but it only understands to pick up and carry objects and to move where it's directed.

Exhaustion: —

Elemental Mail

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: A suit of mail.

Effect: This artifact functions as medium armor that grants +1 Armor in addition to its normal 2 points of Armor.

In addition, while you wear the armor, you are immune to the effects of extreme cold or heat, being fully comfortable in those temperatures. You still take damage from ice and fire.

Exhaustion: —

Elven Mail

Level: 1d6

Form: A shirt of fine, silvery mail weighing no more than cloth.

Effect: The mail shirt counts as medium armor, granting 2 points of Armor, but it can be worn under normal clothing and imposes none of the effects of wearing armor. You derive no additional benefit from wearing this armor with other forms of armor.

Exhaustion: —

Enchanted Weapon

Level: 1d6

Form: A weapon of exquisite make adorned with glyphs of power.

Effect: The artifact functions as the weapon it resembles, but it grants an asset to attacks made using it, and it inflicts 1 additional point of damage.

Exhaustion: —

Entropy Orb

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: An ornate metal ball etched with magical runes.

Effect: You can use the entropy orb to destroy magical effects and neutralize magical objects of its level or less. When you activate the orb, its magic-cancelling power lasts for a round. The orb affects magic in the following ways:

A creature touched is freed of any magical effects affecting it of a suitable level.

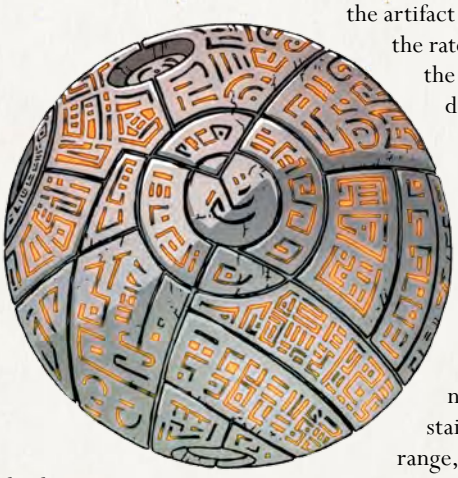
A creature made from magic, such as an undead or an elemental, takes damage equal to the orb's level.

Moving the orb into an area of space affected by magic of a suitable level causes the magical effect to immediately end.

Touching the orb to a cypher of a suitable level instantly destroys the cypher.

If you touch the orb to an artifact of a suitable level and succeed on an Intellect roll, the orb drains the target of its power, making it a mundane object.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10



Eternal Lock

Level: 1d6

Form: A heavy padlock covered in silvery runes.

Effect: When you activate the artifact and touch it to an object that can be opened and closed, the padlock bonds to the object and locks it shut. The object cannot be opened by anyone other than you, though it can be destroyed. You can use an action to detach the lock and end the effect.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d6

Eternal Rations

Level: 1d6

Form: A small wooden box with a lid that smells of onions.

Effect: Each time you activate the artifact, the box produces a bland mash of oatmeal and onions, enough to feed one person for a day.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d100

Far Sight Spectacles

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A pair of spectacles with zooming lenses.

Effect: While wearing the spectacles, your visual acuity improves by five times. For example, you can see an object twenty feet away from you as if you were four feet from the object. The spectacles also grant you an asset for perceiving tasks that rely on sight.

Exhaustion: —

Feather Cloak

Level: 1d6

Form: A lightweight cloak made from feathers.

Effect: If you fall while wearing this cloak, roll for exhaustion. If the artifact isn't exhausted of its power, the cloak slows the rate at which you fall so that when you land on the ground, you do so safely regardless of the distance you fell.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d20

Finder Stone

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A piece of jet wrapped in silver filigree hanging from a matching silver chain.

Effect: When you activate the artifact, name one object such as a door, a sword, or staircase. If the object named is within long range, you know it, the direction in which it can be found, and the shortest path to reach it.

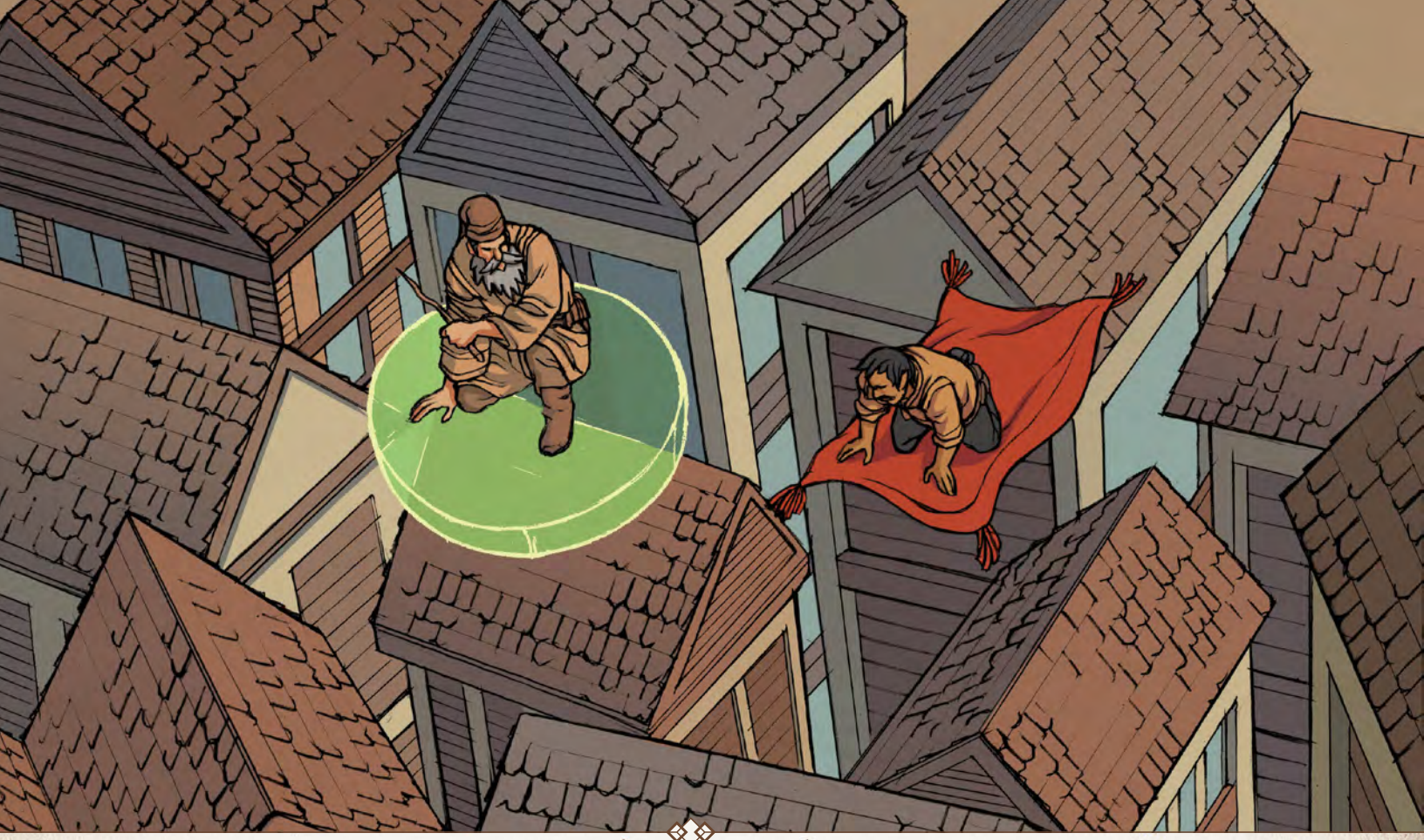
Exhaustion: 1 in 1d6

Flaming Sword

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A fine sword with a wavy blade and a bright ruby set as its pommel.

Effect: The artifact counts as a sword that inflicts 1 additional point of damage. If exhausted, the item still functions in this way.



Activating the artifact causes the blade to burst into flames, and attacks with it inflict fire (ambient) damage to targets. The sword burns in this way for one minute before returning to its normal form.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d100

Floating Disk

Level: 1d6

Form: A semi-transparent, 2-foot diameter disk of magical energy that hovers one foot above the ground.

Effect: The disk follows you wherever you go so that it remains a short distance from you. You can command the disk to stay put, which it does until you command it to follow once more. The disk moves across the ground, remaining one foot above it. The disk cannot move across changes of elevation greater than one foot. For example, the disk can follow you up a hill, but it could not pass over a pit or follow you up the side of a wall. When the disk encounters terrain it cannot move across, it stops moving as if you had commanded it to stay put.

The disk can carry up to 300 pounds of weight placed on it.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d100 (check each day)

Flying Broomstick

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A broom with a wooden handle and twig or straw bristles.

Effect: Sitting on the broom and speaking the command causes it to rise into the air and allow you to move by flying up to a long distance each round. Controlling the broom requires a Speed roll each round, with a difficulty determined by the GM based on wind and weather.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d100

Flying Carpet

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: An exquisite rug, 6 feet wide and 12 feet long, woven to depict birds in flight.

Effect: One person seated on the rug that speaks aloud the command causes it to rise up into the air and fly for a number of hours equal to the artifact's level. The rug can hold up to four human-sized people at a time. Controlling the flying carpet requires a Speed roll each round against a difficulty set by the GM based on wind and weather conditions.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d100

Dragon City boasts many flying vehicles, such as palanquins used by the nobles and chariots by the Imperial Dragon's Guard. While they differ in size, thus able to carry additional passengers and cargo, and appearance, they all function as flying carpets.

Flying Knife

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: A slim-blade knife with a stylized guard resembling the wings of a bird.

Effect: This artifact functions as a knife that inflicts 1 additional point of damage. In addition, when you attack with the knife by throwing it and miss, the artifact activates and flies back to your hand.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d100

Force Wand

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A tapering length of steel and wood festooned with arcane glyphs.

Effect: Activating the wand looses a pea-sized ball of magical force that streaks toward one target within long range and inflicts damage equal to the artifact's level.

The wand counts as a rapid-fire weapon and thus can be used with Spray or Arc Spray abilities. Each "round of ammo" used or each additional target selected requires an additional exhaustion roll.

The wand also functions as an ordinary wand, even if exhausted.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d20

Frost Wand

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A shard of ice that never melts that, when activated, causes the temperature of the air around it to plunge to freezing for a few seconds.

Effect: Activating the wand causes a beam of blue-white energy to streak from the tip toward a target within long range. The beam inflicts damage equal to the artifact's level (round down) and prevents the target from moving for a round.

The wand counts as a rapid-fire weapon and thus can be used with Spray or Arc Spray abilities. Each "round of ammo" used or each additional target selected requires an additional exhaustion roll.

The wand also functions as an ordinary wand, even if exhausted.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d20

Ghost Hand

Level: 1d6

Form: A withered humanoid hand hanging from a leather thong.

Effect: Activating the artifact causes a ghostly, semi-solid hand to appear in an open space within a short distance of you. The hand moves when you move to stay within the same distance from you, or when you use an action to move it up to a short distance. You control the hand as if it was your own. The effect lasts one hour or until you use an action to dismiss it.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d20

Groundbreaker Rod

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: An iron rod, six-feet long, with a sharp point on one end and a flat metal disk and coil of spring on the other.

Effect: You activate this artifact by planting the sharp end in the ground, which sends a shockwave to take a zigzag path through the earth for a number of feet equal to 10 × the artifact's level. The shockwave inflicts damage equal to the artifact's level to objects in contact with the ground in the shockwave's path. Furthermore, any creature standing on the ground in the path falls prone and takes damage equal to the artifact's level (round down).

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d6

Hat of Alertness

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: A wide-brimmed, floppy hat made from leather.

Effect: While wearing the hat, you have an asset for perceiving tasks.

In addition, you can activate the hat to instantly learn the exact positions of each creature within short range of you. This knowledge reveals hidden creatures, as well as creatures that are invisible. The knowledge is instantaneous and grants knowledge of the locations of each creature at the time you used the hat.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d20

Headsman's Axe

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A battle-axe with a crescent-shaped blade.

Effect: The artifact functions as a medium weapon that inflicts 1 additional point of damage. As well, you have an asset for attack rolls made using it.

When you get a major effect on an attack roll using the axe, the attack inflicts double the normal damage on top of any other effects from rolling a natural 20. If this extra damage kills the target, you lop off its head.

Exhaustion: —

Healing Periapt

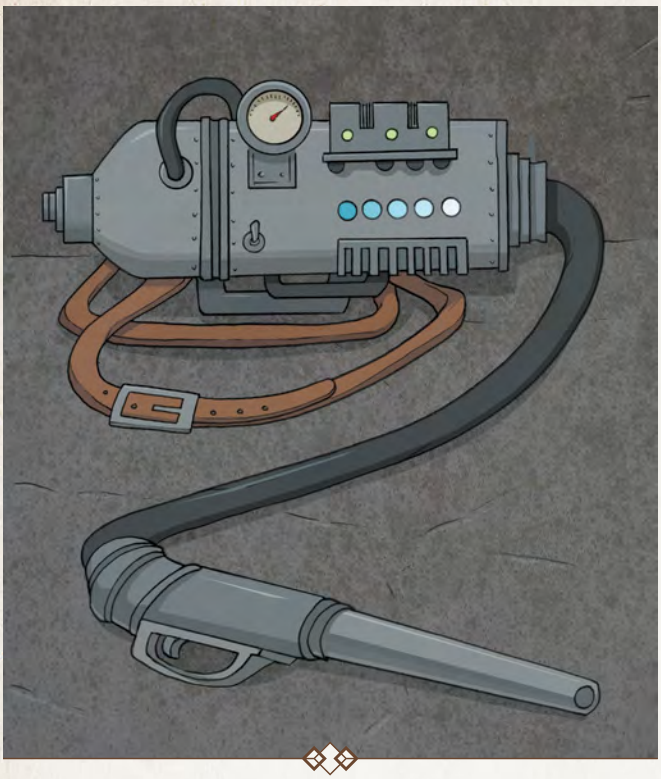
Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: A simple knot-shaped charm, it's typically worn on a necklace or bracelet.

Effect: Activating the artifact restores 1 point to your Might Pool at the end of each minute for a total number of minutes equal to the artifact's level.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d6





Hell Cannon

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A complex mechanical device consisting of a long, thin barrel attached to a flexible hose that connects it to a canister with straps. A trigger on the barrel causes a stream of flammable liquid to jet from the nozzle, which ignites when it hits the air.

Effect: The device lets loose a 20-foot-long stream of fire that inflicts fire damage (ambient) equal to the artifact's level to everything in its path and within an immediate distance of it. On a major effect, a creature or flammable object catches fire, which inflicts 3 points per round of ambient damage until the fire is extinguished.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10

GM Intrusion

A crack in the hell cannon's canister causes the volatile fluid to leak out and catch fire.

Helm of the Deep

Level: 1d6

Form: An archaic helmet that covers the head completely.

Effect: While wearing the helmet, you can see out to a short distance, regardless of lighting conditions. You can breathe water as easily as you breathe air. Finally, you have an asset for swimming tasks.

Exhaustion: —

Inferno Wand

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A blackened length of tapering wood that feels warm to the touch.

Effect: When activated, the wand looses a fiery bolt from its tip at a target within long range and that inflicts damage equal to the artifact's level (round down).

The wand counts as a rapid-fire weapon and thus can be used with Spray or Arc Spray abilities. Each "round of ammo" used or each additional target selected requires an additional exhaustion roll.

The wand also functions as an ordinary wand, even if exhausted.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d20

Instant Bridge

Level: 1d6

Form: A metal tile, one-foot-square.

Effect: You can only activate the artifact when it rests on a flat horizontal surface. Upon activation, the tile appears to unfold itself rapidly until it forms a path, five feet wide and up to one hundred feet long. The path extends over open space to form a bridge, or it can ascend or descend up to forty-five degrees to form a ramp. It holds this form until you use an action to collapse the path back to its tile form.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d6

Lethal Weapon

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: A melee weapon of masterwork craftsmanship.

Effect: This artifact can be any melee weapon. It inflicts 2 additional points of damage when you attack with it. However, whenever you roll a natural 1 on the attack roll, the weapon turns back against you and you take the damage instead, in addition to the GM intrusion.

Exhaustion: —

Lightning Rod

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A six-foot-long staff wrought from steel and capped with copper ferrules at either end.

Effect: The staff can be used as a weapon that inflicts 2 additional points of lightning (ambient) damage.

You activate the staff by spinning it around you, causing lightning to spark from the ferrules and form a deadly ring that leaps from you toward a creature within short range. The lightning ring inflicts points of damage equal to the artifact's level.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10

Lover's Paint

Level: 1d6

Form: A tube of bright red lipstick.

Effect: You activate the artifact by applying the lipstick to your lips. The cosmetic retains magical power for a number of hours equal to its level or until you kiss a creature. The creature kissed becomes enamored with you, seeing you as a trusted ally and object of its affection. The creature obeys your instructions, but will not do anything to risk its friends, loved ones, or personal property. The creature remains affected in this way for a number of hours equal to time remaining since you activated the artifact.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d20

Magineer's Bag

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A heavy, oil-stained burlap bag filled with random magical objects. The bag's contents change each time they're interacted with. Upending the bag to release its contents produces a heap of useless rubbish and destroys the artifact.

Effect: When you activate the bag, you reach into it and pull free a randomly determined cypher. You automatically identify cyphers drawn from the bag. The cypher remains until it is used it or until you use this artifact again, which destroys the previous cypher drawn from the bag.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d6

Marksman's Gloves

Level: 1d6

Form: A pair of soft leather gloves.

Effect: While wearing the gloves, you have an asset for attacks made using ranged weapons.

Exhaustion: —

Mechanized Panoply

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A suit of armor of dwarven design, it fits over the wearer's body completely. Pistons on the arms and legs amplify the wearer's strength.

Effect: This suit counts as heavy armor but grants a +2 bonus to Armor above the normal 3 points heavy armor provides. The mechanisms in the arms and legs grant an asset to carrying and smashing tasks.

Exhaustion: —

Memory Crystal

Level: 1d6

Form: These crystal shards come in a variety of colors and sizes, though most are small enough to fit in the palm. Each crystal bears a word in elven script somewhere on its surface.



Effect: You activate the crystal by tossing it into the air where it remains, floating by your head until you snatch it out of the air again. The crystal follows you wherever you go. It can be attacked and has health equal to its level.

Each crystal is attuned to a particular skill, such as magical knowledge, hiding, or climbing. The creator chooses the skill, or the skill can be determined randomly by rolling on the following table:

01–04	Astronomy or Geography
05–08	Balancing or Jumping
09–12	Carrying or Smashing
13–16	Climbing or Swimming
17–20	Deceiving
21–24	Disguise
25–28	Escaping
29–32	Healing
33–36	Hiding or Sneaking
37–40	History or Philosophy
41–44	Identifying
45–48	Initiative
49–52	Intimidation
53–56	Leatherworking or Metalworking or Woodworking
57–60	Lockpicking or Machinery or Repairing
61–64	Melee or Ranged Attacks
65–68	Perceiving
69–72	Persuading
73–76	Pickpocketing
77–80	Piloting or Vehicle Driving
81–84	Riding
85–88	Science
89–92	Might defense
93–96	Intellect defense
97–00	Speed Defense

While activated, the crystal grants you an asset for rolls associated with tasks to which the crystal is attuned.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d6

Mighty Guardian

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A man-shaped metal automaton that stands twelve feet tall and weighs two thousand pounds.

Effect: You activate the artifact by placing your hand on it and holding it there for one minute. If the artifact is not bonded to another creature, it bonds to you. While bonded, the artifact is a creature of its level that is under your control. While you are within a short distance of it, you have an asset for Speed defense rolls. The artifact remains bonded until you die or it is destroyed.

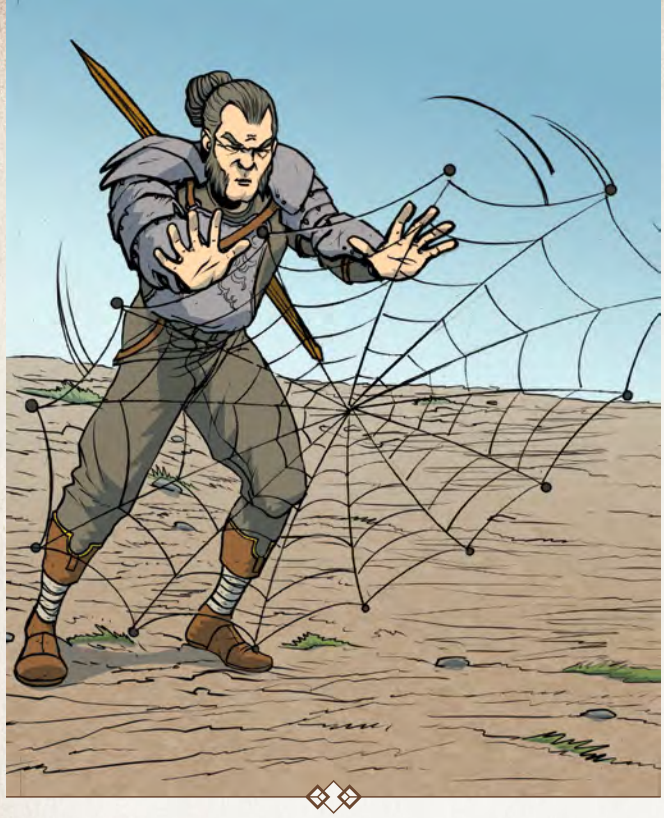
Exhaustion: —

Moment Thief

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: A tiny hourglass suspended from a golden chain.

Effect: When you activate the item, you take a movement from one creature you can see within short range, which causes that



creature to lose its next action. At any point within the next twenty-four hours, you can use an extra action on your turn. You only make the exhaustion roll when you cause a creature to lose an action.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d6

Quicksilver Gloves

Level: 1d6

Form: A pair of gray gloves that adjust size to fit any human-sized or smaller wearer.

Effect: While wearing these gloves, you have an asset for tasks that involve manual dexterity such as picking pockets, lockpicking, disarming traps, and feats of legerdemain.

Exhaustion: —

Quiver of Unerring Missiles

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A quiver made from wood and leather with straps to tie it to the body.

Effect: You activate the quiver by drawing an arrow or bolt from it, which imparts the magic onto the piece of ammunition that lasts for one minute or until you attack with it. The magic imbued in the ammunition shifts the difficulty of the attack two steps in your favor.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10

Radiance Wand

Level: 1d6

Form: Flecks of glowing material float around inside this tapering length of glass.

Effect: When you activate and touch the wand to an object neither worn nor carried by someone other than you, you cause the object to shed light as if it were a torch. The object glows in this way for a number of hours equal to the artifact's level.

The wand also functions as an ordinary wand, even if exhausted.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d100

Radiant Net

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A lightweight net made from fine golden wire.

Effect: You activate the artifact by throwing it to a spot within short range. The net unfurls as it flies, spreading out in a 10-foot radius when it reaches the spot you chose, or when it encounters a solid creature or object. The net can have any orientation you choose, and remains suspended on the spot for one minute or until you use an action to deactivate the net. Until the effect ends, nothing can move or damage the net, and the net prevents creatures the size of a human child and larger from passing through it.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d20

Reflection Shield

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: A round shield made from polished steel.

Effect: The artifact functions as a shield, even if exhausted.

In addition, when a ranged attack misses you, you can activate the shield to reflect the attack back at the attacker. You resolve the attack as if you had made it.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d6

Refuge Key

Level: 1d6

Form: A bronze key with a gleaming emerald set in the handle.

Effect: The key is linked to a specific location chosen by its creator. When you activate the key, you and each creature within a short distance teleport to the linked location.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10



Ring of Defense

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: An iron band that never rusts. It changes size to accommodate its wearer's finger.

Effect: Wearing the ring grants a bonus to Armor. The ring's level determines the bonus, as shown on the following table:

3–5	+1 to Armor
6–7	+2 to Armor
8	+3 to Armor

Exhaustion: —

Ring of Jumping and Leaping

Level: 1d6

Form: A silver ring set with a piece of amber in which is a grasshopper.

Effect: When you activate the ring, you can jump or leap a great distance and land safely. You can jump straight up or jump down a number of feet equal to the ring's level × 10. You can leap vertically a number of feet equal to the ring's level × 20, achieving a maximum height during the leap equal to half the total distance leapt. If you cannot land at the end of this movement, you fall, calculating damage from the point of the fall.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10

Ring of Shielding

Level: 1d6

Form: A steel band stamped with a shield-shaped device. It changes size to accommodate its wearer's finger.

Effect: When you activate the ring, a circular plane of glowing energy springs into existence in the air before you, and remains for one minute. The shield moves to block incoming attacks and moves with you. Until the effect ends, you benefit as if you were wielding a shield.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10

Ring of Truth

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: An earring set with a sparkling diamond.

Effect: The ring, while worn, grants you an asset to tasks made to ascertain whether a person you hear speaks the truth.

Exhaustion: —

Scepter of the Dead

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A bone scepter capped with a human skull.

Effect: When you activate the artifact, you take control of one undead creature of the artifact's level or less within short range. The creature remains under your control for one minute, until its destroyed, or you activate the artifact again. You decide what the affect target does on each of its turns.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d20

Serpent Rope

Level: 1d6

Form: A length of rope, 50 feet long.

Effect: When you activate the rope, you can give it one of three commands, as described below.

- **Climb:** The rope uncoils and one end snakes up a vertical surface, trailing the rest of the rope behind it. The rope climbs until it reaches a horizontal surface. If there is something it can tie itself onto, it does. Otherwise, the rope falls to the ground in a pile.
- **Coil:** The rope gathers itself up into a neat and tidy coil.
- **Tie/Untie:** One of the rope coils around a creature or object it can reach and ties itself into a knot or it unties itself. A creature bound in this way cannot move until freed. A creature tied up might cut itself free, wriggle free from the bindings, or get help from another creature to undo the knots. It's up to the GM to decide whether the rope survives if a creature is cut loose from its coils.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d100

Serpentine Blade

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A dagger with a serpentine blade.

Effect: This artifact functions as a dagger. You have an asset for attacks made using it.

In addition, when you get a success on an attack and you rolled a natural 17 or higher, the artifact activates and injects your target with poison. This effect is in addition to the other benefits from a special roll result.

A poisoned target adjusts the difficulty for all tasks it attempts by one step to its detriment and takes 1 point of poison (ambient) damage whenever it takes an action for one minute.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d20

Shadow Cape

Level: 1d6

Form: A cape of inky black cloth that seems to drink the light.

Effect: While wearing the cape, you have an asset for hiding and sneaking tasks when obscured by shadows or darkness.

Exhaustion: —

Shadowsuit

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A skin-tight black body suit that adjusts to fit any human-sized wearer.

Effect: You can activate the suit only while wearing it. When you do, you become insubstantial, like a shadow, for a number of minutes equal to the artifact's level. While in this form, you make no sound at all and cannot speak. You disappear in areas obscured by shadows or darkness and remain invisible for as long as you are in them. You are immune to all forms of damage and your attacks do not inflict any damage. Finally, you can pass through openings large enough to permit the passage of air, but you treat liquids as if they were solid.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10

Shielding Talisman

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: A simple shield-shaped device made from iron, it typically hangs from a thick metal chain.

Effect: Wearing the talisman grants you +1 Armor against damage inflicted by projectiles such as those loosed from pistols or bows.

Exhaustion: —

Shimmer Cloak

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A cloak of shimmering cloth, it fastens by way of an ornate clasp that looks like a lizard.

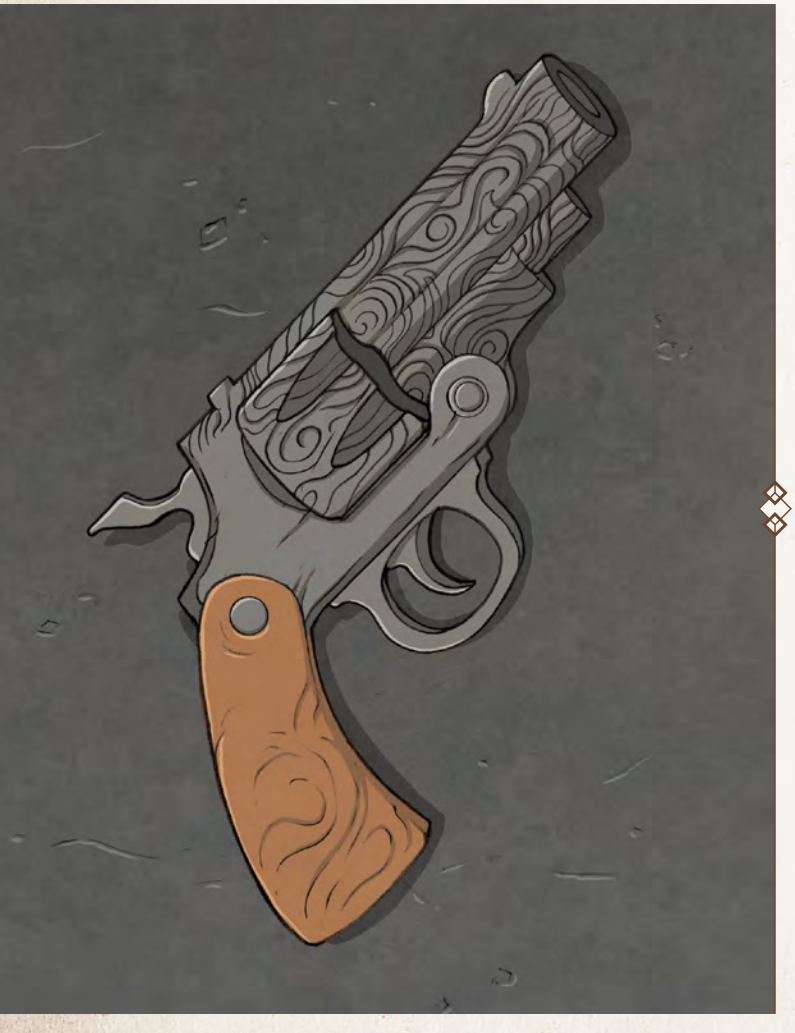
Effect: When activated, the cloak changes colors to match those of your surroundings, granting you an asset on rolls to become hidden. As well, while under the cloak's effect, you can attempt to hide, even when you are not obscured or covered by something. The cloak's power lasts for a number of minutes equal to its level.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d20

Shock Wand

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A one-foot-long rod of glass.



Effect: When activated, the wand looses a bolt of lightning from its tip at a target within long range that inflicts damage equal to the artifact's level (round down).

The wand counts as a rapid-fire weapon and thus can be used with Spray or Arc Spray abilities. Each "round of ammo" used or each additional target selected requires an additional exhaustion roll.

The wand also functions as an ordinary wand, even if exhausted.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d20

Skullcap of Concentration

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: A smooth, silver cap that fits snugly on the head of any humanoid-shaped creature that wears it.

Effect: While wearing the artifact, you increase your Intellect Edge by 1.

Exhaustion: —

Sniper's Rifle

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A rifle of exquisite craftsmanship fitted with all types of strange clockwork.

Effect: The artifact functions as a rifle that inflicts 1 additional point of damage, can be used to attack targets at extreme range, and gives you an asset when you attack with it.

Exhaustion: —

Spellbound Pistol

Level: 1d6

Form: A pistol of masterwork craftsmanship.

Effect: This artifact functions as a pistol.

When you activate this weapon for the first time, the grip grows painfully hot, inflicting 1 points of heat (ambient) damage. Henceforth, the pistol only fires for you. Nothing happens when anyone other than you attempts to fire the weapon.

Exhaustion: —

Stop Time

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: A pocket watch with a winder but no hands.

Effect: When you activate the artifact, time slows down around you, seeming to stop completely. In truth, you speed up and immediately use a number of actions equal to half the artifact's level (round down). When you use the final action, time returns to normal and you take damage equal to the artifact's level.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d6

Storm Chalice

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Carved with storm clouds and jagged bolts of lighting, this exquisite soapstone chalice appears quite valuable. Condensation always beads the exterior, even when its bowl is dry.

Effect: You can activate the chalice only when you are under an open sky. One minute after activating it, dark clouds begin forming in the air overhead, spreading out in a radius of a number of miles equal to half the artifact's level (round down).

One minute after that, the clouds release a torrential downpour that lasts for one hour.

Each minute until the rain stops, you can call down a bolt of lightning to strike a spot you can see within long range. The lightning inflicts a number of points of lightning damage (ambient) equal to the artifact's level to everything within an immediate distance of the spot where the lightning struck. Creatures that take this damage become stunned for one round, losing their next action.

Winds can push the clouds away and the rains with it.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d20

Stunner

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A rifle-like device with a barrel that flares out at the end.

Effect: Activating the artifact causes a blast of sound to spread out from the end in a 30-foot-long cone-shaped area. Each creature in the area becomes stunned, losing its next action.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10

Sunstone

Level: 1d6

Form: A fist-sized, yellow jewel.

Effect: Activating the artifact causes it to shed light. When you activate the devise, you choose the amount of light it gives off from one of three settings. The low setting emits light out to immediate range. The medium setting emits light out to short range. Finally, the high setting emits light out to long range. The artifact sheds light for a number of hours equal to its level or until you touch it and use an action to extinguish it.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d100 (low setting); 1 in d20 (medium setting); 1 in d10 (high setting)

Talisman of the Dragon

Level: 1d6

Form: Wrought to look like a soaring dragon, this red-steel amulet is warm to the touch.

Effect: While wearing the talisman, you reduce the points of damage you would take from heat or fire by the artifact's level (minimum 0).

Exhaustion: —

Talisman of the Mind

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: A silver medallion that displays an open hand on its face.

Effect: If you take Intellect damage while you wear the talisman, you reduce the damage by the talisman's level to a minimum of 0.

Exhaustion: —

Talisman of Virtue

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: A small disk-shaped talisman hanging from a leather cord.

Effect: While wearing the talisman, you have an asset for defense rolls against attacks from undead.

Exhaustion: —

Tracer Pistol

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: A fine pistol with an ivory handle and rune-scribed barrel.

Effect: This artifact functions as a light pistol. Each time you fire the weapon and miss, the magic takes effect and improves your aim against the same target for the next attack you make. Each time you miss on an attack with this weapon, you can activate it without using an action. The next time you attack with the weapon before the next round ends, the difficulty for the attack improves by one step in your favor.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d100

Twain Cloak

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A long cloak of soft, gray material.

Effect: When you activate the cloak, you become invisible and an illusory copy of yourself appears in an open space within an immediate distance. The copy mimics your movements and looks just like you. The copy lacks substance, so attacks pass through it and it moves through solid objects. The copy moves as you do, always remaining an immediate distance from you.

The effect lasts one hour or until you use an action to attack.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10



Twin Tomes

Level: 1d6

Form: A pair of leather-bound blank books, each with exactly one hundred pages.

Effect: When you write on a page in one tome, the words disappear from the page and appear in the other tome on the same page.

Exhaustion: —

Ultimate Boots

Level: 1d6

Form: A pair of sturdy leather boots.

Effect: While you wear the boots, you move at full speed across difficult terrain caused by rubble, ice, overgrowth, and the like. You also move at half speed across liquid surfaces as well as horizontal surfaces and overhangs.

Exhaustion: —

Undead Bane

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A black armband.

Effect: While wearing the artifact, the difficulty for attacks made by undead creatures against you shifts one step in your favor.

Exhaustion: —

Useful Staff

Level: 1d6

Form: A two-inch-diameter length of wood that is 1d6 feet long when discovered.

Effect: When you activate the staff, you can cause it to shorten down to one foot in length or lengthen until it is thirty feet long.

In addition, you can speak aloud a command that affixes one end of the staff to a solid, nonliving surface you can reach. The staff remains there until you use an action to remove it.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d100

Venomous Staff

Level: 1d6

Form: A crooked length of wood, about 3 inches in diameter and six feet long, it has a smooth, almost scaly finish.

Effect: The staff can be used as a weapon that inflicts 1 additional point of damage.

Activating the staff transforms it into a venomous serpent of the staff's level. The serpent remains in this form until slain, which destroys the artifact, or until you use an action while you are within short range of it to restore it to a staff. A living creature bitten by the serpent becomes poisoned, which worsens the difficulty of all the creature's tasks by one step for 1 minute. Multiple bites have a cumulative effect.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d10



Warding Staff

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A six-foot length of wood reinforced with eight steel bands.

Effect: The staff can be used as a weapon and grants an asset to attack rolls made using it.

You activate the staff by speaking aloud a word of command as you plant the butt into the ground. An invisible, immobile barrier springs into existence around you and remains until you remove the staff from the ground or for a number of minutes equal to the staff's level. The barrier extends in an immediate radius around the staff. Nothing can pass through the barrier and the barrier is impervious to all damage.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d20

Watchful Spiders

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A leather case containing one hundred tiny, mechanical, one-eyed spiders.

Effect: When you activate the item, the spiders come to life, spreading out across flat surfaces within short range of you. They move to avoid being crushed by footfalls, but otherwise remain in place for eight hours or until you use an action to recall them to the case. Until the effect ends, the spiders alert you by making a chirping noise whenever a creature enters the area. The noise is loud enough to wake you if you are sleeping. When the effect ends, the spiders scuttle back to the case.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d20

Wizard's Ring

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A twisted band of star metal etched with arcane runes and glyphs.

Effect: While wearing the ring, you count as if you were wielding a wand for the purposes of casting spells.

As well, the ring has an Intellect Pool equal to its level. When you cast a spell, you can spend points from this pool rather than your Intellect Pool. The ring replenishes spent points once per day at dawn.

Exhaustion: —

Zephyr Boots

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Wings have been worked into the leather of these soft-soled boots. They adjust in size to fit their wearer's feet.

Effect: Activating these boots causes you to move with incredible swiftness for a number of minutes equal to the artifact's level. You can move up to a long distance when you use an action to move. In addition, you can reduce the effect's duration by two minutes on your turn to take another action, though you can use this benefit no more than once per round.

Exhaustion: 1 in 1d6

Trinkets

Magic is everywhere in Dragon City, from the spells that wizards cast, to the artifacts its most notable heroes and villains wield, to the conveniences created by magineers to make life a bit easier under the tyrannical rule of the Dragon Emperor. Trinkets, like cyphers and artifacts, are objects imbued with magic, but aren't as powerful. Where a cypher or artifact might enable a potent blast of lightning or shield the bearer from harm, a trinket might be a cup that keeps a beverage chilled or a lighter that never runs out of fuel. In other words, they are minor magical items.

Trinkets are quite common, and people in Dragon City often take them for granted. In the city, characters can typically buy and sell trinkets for 1d6 gold, though others might be worth more or less depending on the trinket's utility. Outside the city, trinkets can be unearthed from civilization's ruins alongside other treasures.

Where most magic items require examination and experimentation to divine their function, trinkets reveal their secrets readily. Simply handling the trinket reveals its purpose. Using a trinket typically requires an action, though some just function without needing to be activated.

Trinket Table

When you award a trinket, you can choose one from the list below, or grant one randomly.

Roll	Trinket
01	Mug that chills any liquid placed in it.
02	Garment that changes colors based on your mood.
03	Pocket-watch that keeps perfect time.
04	Tiny music box that plays a song only the bearer can hear.
05	Disk that can record and play back up to ten seconds of sound.
06	Pair of spectacles that darken while in bright light.
07	Small purse that deadens the sound of anything placed inside.
08	Plate that keeps warm anything placed on it.
09	Cutlery set that never tarnishes.
10	Three dice that always roll sixes.
11	Self-cleaning clothes.
12	Shoes that never leave prints.
13	Metal rod that shines light from the end as a candle.
14	Pen that never runs out of ink.
15	A flower that never withers.
16	Small lens that magnifies vision by two times.
17	Bottle of perfume that completely masks the wearer's scent.
18	Mirror that reflects a strange place on its surface.
19	Bowl that fills with water once each day.
20	Tiny mechanical bird that sings a sweet song at dawn and dusk.
21	Clay pipe that ignites whatever is placed in its bowl.
22	Set of self-mending clothes.
23	Metal lighter that never runs out of fuel.
24	Horn that produces bubbles from the end when it's blown.
25	Shovel that always retains a keen edge.
26	Whetstone able to sharpen the edge of a metal object drawn across its surface.
27	Coin purse that helpfully announces its contents in a loud ringing voice whenever it's opened.
28	A severed, twitching finger.
29	Steel pail that when filled with water automatically cleans anything submerged in it.
30	Heavy brick that floats on water.
31	Fanciful hat with a secret compartment large enough to contain a 1 foot cube of material.
32	Tube of blue paint that never runs out.
33	Banner that, when planted in the ground, emits stirring music.
34	Stick of incense that when lit never burns down.
35	Headband that randomly changes the color of your hair while you wear it.
36	Pair of boots that increase the wearer's height by six inches.
37	Lit candle whose flame gives off no heat and cannot be extinguished.
38	Clear lipstick that changes colors when applied.
39	Whistle that produces a sound audible only to dragons.
40	Wooden eye that when placed on a flat surface swivels to look at the youngest person within short range.
41	Bell that rings whenever a door within short range opens.
42	Bottle of twenty-four pills that when consumed give you vivid dreams.
43	Metal ball that freezes up to a gallon of liquid in which it is placed.
44	Cauldron that seasons and cooks any foodstuffs placed inside it.
45	Earring that when worn makes you hear speech as gibberish.
46	Set of clothing that changes size to accommodate the wearer.
47	One foot square of cloth that can absorb up to five gallons of liquid.
48	Cigar that never burns down.
49	Bottle of fluid that renders any substance to which one drop is added tasteless.

Trinket Table
(continued)

Roll	Trinket
50	Fluffy pillow that always stays cool.
51	Necklace that when worn keeps away flies and other annoying insects.
52	Bottle of perfume that when sprayed clears the air within an immediate distance of all odors.
53	Chest, one foot by two feet by three feet, that keeps everything inside it at one degree below freezing.
54	Set of six chalks that change colors every day.
55	Bedroll that rolls and unrolls itself on command.
56	Cloak that trails sparkles when moved.
57	Jar of foul-smelling grease that never runs out.
58	Bracelet or necklace set with a stone that looks like an eye that moves to look at whomever the wearer addresses.
59	A bottle of ointment that causes hair to grow at a rapid rate (3 uses).
60	Cameo whose faces changes expression.
61	Bracelet with a glowing trinket.
62	Crown made from living wood.
63	Small red stone that causes up to a gallon of liquid in which it is placed to boil.
64	Shoes that when worn jingle with each step taken.
65	Severed human head in a glass jar filled with amber liquid whose eyes roll in its head and mouth opens and closes as if speaking.
66	A lantern that sheds green light and burns no oil.
67	Blank book with an infinite number of pages.
68	Book filled with nonsensical words and images that change each time its opened.
69	Lute that when played sounds like a man or woman singing.
70	Pomander that remains at full strength and when sniffed blocks out all other odors.
71	Clay jug that instantly turns to alcohol any liquid placed inside it.
72	Mask that emits soft colorful light while worn.
73	A small metal needle that always points north when placed on a flat surface.
74	Mirror on whose surface reflects a person other than the person looking at it.
75	Animated serpent, about six inches long.
76	Small clock that chimes an alarm once every 1d6 hours.
77	Nail that can be hammered into any substance.
78	Glass jar containing 1d20 fireflies made immortal for as long as they remain inside it.
79	Sheet of parchment that can be cleaned by brushing off the writing.
80	Wooden chair that never tips when occupied by a seated creature.
81	Bowl that produces a nasty-tasting gruel once every 1d20 hours.
82	Lighter that extinguishes one small flame within short range each time it's used.
83	Pack that when placed on the back becomes invisible.
84	Self-cleaning handkerchief.
85	Quill that transcribes whatever you say when you command it.
86	Soap that can clean any stain from any material to which it is applied.
87	Self-assembling tent for two people.
88	Socks that always stay dry, even if submerged in liquid.
89	Small metal disk that issues an intermittent chime.
90	Egg that when broken releases a foul-smelling cloud.
91	Bag of 1d6 pellets that when thrown to the ground flash and bang.
92	Bottle that preserves any liquid placed inside it from spoiling.
93	Ball of twine that when unraveled wraps itself up on command.
94	Horn that amplifies your voice so it can be heard from a mile away when you speak into it.
95	Glass cage holding a tiny living faerie that tends to make offensive gestures to anyone that stares at it.
96	Metal canister that releases a blast of wind when opened, clearing the air within short range of vapors, smoke, and odors.
97	Wand whose tip flashes red when within a short distance of water.
98	Bottle of purple ink that refills itself each day at dawn.
99	Bell with a glass clapper that makes no sound when rung to creatures within short range of it, but sounds like screaming beyond short range out to a mile away.
00	Tiny crystal that when tossed in the air orbits your head.



Part 7: The Game Master



Chapter 19: Running the Game

This chapter tells you everything you need to know to run great games of *Shotguns & Sorcery*. If you're reading this, you might have already decided you want to be the Game Master, or you might just be interested in seeing what's involved. The thing to remember is that the GM is the most important participant in the game, the one able to bring the setting to life, engage the players, and help tell a thrilling and memorable story that keeps everyone at the table entertained.

People describe the game master (GM) as referee, judge, narrator, and director, and while those terms come close to nailing down the GM's role in the game, they describe only part of what the GM does. As a GM, you make things possible in the story, but you also set the parameters in which the player characters act. You come up the story's blueprint, but you change the plans as you and your friends tell the story through action and description.

Monte Cook designed the Cypher System to make the challenging tasks of game mastering as simple as possible and allow you as the GM to focus on what's important. Rather than dealing with a lot of die rolls, modifiers, and rules minutiae, you can focus mainly on the flow of the story. This is not to say that you are the sole storyteller. The group is the storyteller. But it's your job to pull together the actions, reactions, and desires of all the people sitting around the table, mesh them with the setting and background created before the session began, and turn it all into a cohesive story on the fly. Sometimes this means using a heavy hand. Sometimes it means stepping back. Sometimes it means being open-minded. It always means giving the other players as much of the spotlight as you have as the GM, and attempting to give it to each of them in turn so that no one person dominates the narrative or the gameplay—not even you.

The rules are storytelling tools, they help you and the players portray characters, and help to simulate your world. The rules are not the final word—you are. You are not subservient to the rules. You can do whatever you like in the game provided your decisions serve fun gameplay and build toward an exciting story.

The Cypher System has also been designed to make game mastering work the way that many experienced GMs run other games already. The GMs who recognize that they are not subservient to the rules are often forced to work against the rules, to work in spite of the rules, or to use the rules as smoke and mirrors to cover up what they're really doing (which is providing everyone with an exciting, compelling, and interesting narrative in which to participate). Hopefully, as a Cypher System GM, you will not find that to be the case. On the contrary, most of the rules were designed specifically to make it easier to run the game—or rather, to allow you to focus your efforts on creating a great story.

This chapter goes into deeper detail about the rules and shows you how to use them as tools. As well, you'll find guidance for interacting with players, running games, and crafting awesome stories.

The Rules Versus the Story

Upon first glance, it might seem that for a story-based game, there isn't a lot of "story" in the rules. A wall, a bear, a pit to leap, and a gun can be more or less summed up as a single number—the level. The thing is, the Cypher System is a story-based game because the rules at their core are devoid of story. A wall, a bear, a pit to leap, and a gun can be summed up as levels because they're all just parts of the story. They're all just obstacles or tools.

There aren't many specifics in the rules—no guidelines for specific judo moves or the differences between repairing a malfunctioning wall of magical force or a damaged airship. That's not because those kinds of things are to be ignored, but because those kinds of things are flavor—they are story, description, and elaboration for the GM and the players to provide. A player running a character in a fistfight can and should describe one attack as an uppercut and another as a roundhouse punch, even though there's no mechanical difference. In fact, it's because there's no mechanical difference. That's what a narrative game is all about. It's interesting and entertaining, and that's why you're all sitting at the table in the first place.

If different aspects of the game—walls, bears, pits, and so on—have distinctions, they come through as story elements, which are special exceptions to the rules. Having so few general rules makes adding special conditions and situations easier, because there is less need to tinker with the rules to make them fit, fewer special circumstances to worry about, and less chance of introducing contradictions and rules incompatibilities. For example, you can easily have a wall that can be destroyed only by lightning. A colony rat swarm has its mental assault. A pit could have frictionless walls. A wand could freeze foes solid. All of these story elements mechanically build on top of the very simple base mechanics to make things more interesting.

Setting Difficulty Ratings

The most important tasks as GM are to set the stage and guide the story created by the group (not one you create ahead of time). However, the most important mechanical task you have in the game is to set the difficulty. This chapter, and elsewhere in the book, present numerous suggested difficulties, but ultimately you decide the difficulty of everything. There is no master list of the difficulty of every action a PC can take. Rather than load you up with a bunch of rules to memorize or reference in play, the game teaches you how to make your judgment calls in a logical and consistent manner.

For the most part, setting the difficulty rating is as simple as choosing a number between 1 and 10, with 1 being incredibly easy and 10 being basically impossible. The guidelines in the difficulty table, presented again here for reference, should help put you in the right frame of mind for assigning difficulty to a task.

For example, we make the distinction between something most people can do and something trained people can do. In this case, "normal" means someone with absolutely no training, talent, or experience. Imagine your ne'er-do-well, slightly overweight uncle trying a task he's never tried before. "Trained" means the person has some level of instruction or experience but is not necessarily a professional.

Keeping in mind the above distinctions, think about the act of balancing. With enough focus and time, most people can walk across a narrow bridge (like a fallen tree trunk). That suggests that it is difficulty 2. However, walking across a narrow plank that's only 3 inches (8 cm) wide? It's harder, so you could set the difficulty at 3. Now consider walking across a tightrope. That's probably difficulty 5—a normal person can manage the task only with a great deal of luck. Someone with some training can give it a go, but it's still hard. Of course, a professional acrobat can do it easily. Consider, however, that the professional acrobat is specialized in the task, making it difficulty 3 for her. She probably is using Effort as well during her performance to make the difficulty even lower.

Let's try another task. This time, think about how hard it would be to recall the name of the previous leader of the community a character calls home. The difficulty might be 0 or 1, depending on how long ago she was the leader and how well known she was. Let's say it was thirty years ago and she was only mildly memorable, so it's difficulty 1. Most people remember her, and with a little bit of effort, anyone can come up with her name. Now let's consider the name of that leader's daughter. That's much harder. Assuming the daughter wasn't famous in her own right, it's probably difficulty 4. Even people who know a little about local history (that is to say, people who are trained in the subject) might not be able to remember it. But what about the name of the pet dog owned by the daughter's husband? That's probably impossible. Who's going to remember the name of an obscure person's pet from thirty years ago? Basically no one. However, it's not forbidden knowledge or a well-guarded secret, so it sounds like difficulty 7. Difficulty 7 is the rating that means "No one can do this, yet some people still do." It's not the stuff of legend, but it's something you assume people couldn't do. When you think there's no way you can get tickets for a sold-out concert, but somehow your friend manages to score a couple anyway, that's difficulty 7. (See the next section for more on difficulties 7, 8, 9, and 10.)

For tasks, don't base the difficulty on the character attempting it. Things don't get inherently easier or harder depending on who is doing them. It's true that some characters should have an easier time than do others—for example, a typical human should have a harder time kicking in a door than would a dwarf under the effects of a strength potion. However, regardless of the person attempting the action, the difficulty should be the same for both. Let's say that the dwarf has one level of training in smashing things and has an asset from the potion. So if the door has a difficulty rating of 4, the dwarf reduces the difficulty to 2 with a target number of 6. The human has no such training and didn't drink the potion so the difficulty remains 4, and he has to reach a target number of 12. You don't need to take the differences between characters attempting the action into account when setting the difficulty; only consider the human because the Task Difficulty table is based on the ideal of a "normal" person, a "trained" person, and so on.

Most characters probably are willing to expend one or two levels of Effort on a task, and they might have an appropriate skill or asset to decrease the difficulty by a step. That means that a difficulty 4 task will often be treated as difficulty 2 or even 1,

and those are easy rolls to make. Don't hesitate, then, to pull out higher-level difficulties. The PCs can rise to the challenge, especially if they are experienced.

> *Unless for some reason you're telling the players directly, they'll never know if you change an NPC's stats or a task's difficulty on the fly. If you're doing it to make a better story, that's your purview.*

The Impossible Difficulties

Difficulties 7, 8, 9, and 10 are all technically impossible. Their target numbers are 21, 24, 27, and 30, and you can't roll those numbers on a d20 no matter how many times you try. Consider, however, all the ways that a character can reduce difficulty. If someone spends a little Effort or has some skill or help, it brings difficulty 7 (target number 21) into the range of possibility—difficulty 6 (target number 18). Now consider that he has specialization, uses a lot of Effort, and has help. That might bring the difficulty down to 1 or even 0 (reducing it by two steps from training and specialization, three or four steps from Effort, and one step from the asset of assistance). That practically impossible task just became routine. A fourth-tier character can and will do this—not every time, due to the cost, but perhaps once per game session. You have to be ready for that. A well-prepared, motivated sixth-tier character can do that even with a difficulty 10 task. Again, she won't do it often (even with an Edge of 6, she'd have to spend 7 points from her Pool, and that's assuming she's specialized and has two levels of assets), but it can happen if she's really prepared for the task (being specialized and maxed out in asset opportunities reduces the difficulty by four more steps). That's why sixth-tier characters are at the top of their field, so to speak.

False Precision

One way to look at difficulty is that each step of difficulty is worth 3 on the die. That is to say, increase the difficulty by one step, and the target number rises by 3. Decrease the difficulty by one step, and the target number drops by 3. Those kinds of changes are big, meaty chunks. Difficulty, as a game mechanic, is not terribly precise. It's measured in large portions. You typically don't have target numbers of 13 or 14 (it's possible if a character can add a number to the roll). Instead, it's usually 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, and so on.

Imprecision is good in this case. It would be false precision to say that one lock has a target number of 14 and another has a target number of 15. What false precision means in this context is that it would be a delusion to think we can be that exact. Can you really say that one lock is 5% easier to pick than another? And more important, even if you could, is the difference worth noting? It's better to interact with the world in larger, more meaningful chunks than to try to parse things so carefully. If we tried to rate everything on a scale of 1 to 30 (using target numbers and not difficulty), we'd start to get lost in the proverbial weeds coming up with a meaningful distinction between something rated an 8 and something rated a 9 on that scale.

Consistency

Far more important than that level of precision is consistency. If the PCs need to activate a device that opens a portal to some far-flung location, and the GM rules it is a difficulty 6 task to align the mystic runes painted on the tiles in the proper sequence to awaken the currents of magical energy, then it needs to be a difficulty 6 task when they come back the next day to do it again (or there needs to be an understandable reason why it's not). The same is true for simpler tasks like walking across a narrow ledge or jumping up onto a platform. Consistency is key, because players need to be able to make informed decisions. If they remember how hard it was to open that portal yesterday, but it's inexplicably harder to open it today, they'll get frustrated because they tried to apply their experience to their decision-making process and it failed them. If there's no way to make an informed decision, then all decisions are arbitrary.

Think about it in terms of real life. You need to cross the street, but a car is approaching. You've crossed the street thousands of times before, so you can look at the car and judge whether you can cross safely or whether you have to wait for it to pass first. If the real world had no consistency, you couldn't make that decision. Every time you stepped into the street, you might get hit by a car. You'd never cross the street.

Players need that kind of consistency, too. So when you assign a difficulty to a task, note that number and try to keep it consistent

Task Difficulty

Task Difficulty	Description	Target Number	Guidance
0	Routine	0	Anyone can do this basically every time.
1	Simple	3	Most people can do this task most of the time.
2	Standard	6	A typical task requiring focus, but one that most people can do.
3	Demanding	9	A task that requires full attention; most people have a 50/50 chance of succeeding.
4	Difficult	12	Trained people have a 50/50 chance to succeed.
5	Challenging	15	Even trained people often fail, though specialized people have a 50/50 chance to succeed.
6	Intimidating	18	A task beyond the abilities of most normal people.
7	Formidable	21	Impossible for those without skills or great effort.
8	Heroic	24	A task worthy of tales told for years afterward.
9	Immortal	27	A task worthy of legends that last lifetimes.
10	Impossible	30	A task that normal humans couldn't consider (but one that doesn't break the laws of physics).

the next time the PCs try the same task. "Same" is the key word. Deciphering one manuscript isn't necessarily like deciphering another. Climbing one wall isn't the same as climbing another.

You'll make mistakes while doing this, so just accept that fact now. Excuse any mistakes with quick explanations about "a quirk of fate" or something along the lines of a surprisingly strong wind that wasn't blowing the last time.

> *As much as the Cypher System is about story, it is still a game, which means that the PCs (and the players) can fail. That's why it's not accurate to think of the game as being identical to novels or movies. The system invites its own kind of storytelling. The players have to feel that there are real stakes. That if they screw up, there will be consequences— sometimes very harsh consequences. And they have to be right in that assumption.*

Mistakes

It might happen that the PCs break down a door and you realize you rated it too low. Or, the PCs try to paddle a raft down a fast-moving river, and you (and probably they) discover that the difficulty you gave the task was ridiculously high.

Don't fret.

That door was already weakened by an earthquake, a structural flaw, or the fact that other explorers pounded on it all day awhile back. The river was actually moving far faster than the PCs thought at first, or their raft was faulty.

It's easy to cover up mistakes. Sometimes, you can even tell your players it was just a mistake. They might even help provide an explanation if you do. So it's not the end of the world if you get the number wrong.

More important, most of the time, no one will even know. Should have rated a task as difficulty 3 and instead you said it was 4? Oh well. Unless the player rolls a 9, 10, or 11—which would have succeeded for difficulty 3 but not difficulty 4—it won't matter. Even if he does roll one of those numbers, who cares? Maybe the rain was really coming down that day and increased the difficulty by a step.

The thing to take away is this: don't let the fear of making a mistake keep you from freely and quickly assessing the difficulty of a task and moving on with the game. Don't agonize over it. Give it a difficulty, call for a roll, and keep the game moving. Hesitating over a rating will be far more detrimental to the game than giving something the wrong rating.

Routine Actions

Don't hesitate to make actions routine. Don't call for die rolls when they're not really needed. Sometimes GMs fall into the trap illustrated by this dialog:

GM: What do you do?

Player: I _____.

GM: Okay, give me a roll.

That's not a good instinct. Players should roll when it's interesting or exciting. Otherwise, they should just do what they do. If the PCs tie a rope around something and use it to climb down into a pit, you could ask for tying rolls, climbing rolls, and so on, but why? Just to see if they roll terribly? Sure, the rope



could come undone at the wrong time or a character's hand might slip. Rolling introduces a chance for failure and failure on routine actions can make players feel inadequate, which isn't a lot of fun. However, a rope coming undone in the middle of an exciting chase scene or a battle can be a great complication (and that's what GM intrusions are for). A rope coming undone in the middle of a simple "getting from point A to point B" scene only slows down gameplay. The real fun—the real story—is down in the pit. So get the PCs down there.

There are a million exceptions to this guideline, of course. If creatures throw poisoned darts at the PCs while they climb, that might make things more interesting and require a roll. If the pit is filled with acid and the PCs must climb halfway down, pull a lever, and come back up, that's a situation where you should set difficulty and perhaps have a roll. If a PC is near death, carrying a fragile item of great importance, or something similar, climbing down the rope is tense, and a roll might add to the excitement. The important difference is that these kinds of complications have real consequences.

Don't be afraid to use GM intrusion on routine actions if it makes things more interesting. Walking up to the king in his audience chamber in the middle of a ceremony only to trip on a rug? That could have huge ramifications for the character and the story.

Other Ways to Judge Difficulty

Rating things on a scale of 1 to 10 is something most people are familiar with. You can also look at it as rating an object or creature on a similar scale, if that's easier. In other words, if you don't know how hard it would be to climb a particular cliff face, think of it as a creature the PCs have to fight. What level would

the creature be? You could look in the Creatures chapter and say, "I think this wall should be about as difficult to deal with as an ogre. A demon is level 4, so the task of climbing the wall will be difficulty 4." That's a weird way to do it, perhaps, but it's fairly straightforward. And if you're the kind of GM who deals in terms of "How tough will this fight be?" then maybe rating tasks as NPCs to fight isn't so strange after all. It's just another way to relate to them. The important thing is that they're on the same scale. Similarly, if the PCs have to tackle a knowledge task—say, trying to determine if they know where a caravan is headed based on its tracks—you could rate the task in terms of an object. If you're used to rating doors or other objects that the PCs have broken through recently, the knowledge task is just a different kind of barrier to bust through.

Everything in the Cypher System—characters, creatures, objects, tasks, and so on—has a level. It might be called a tier or a difficulty instead of a level, but ultimately it's a numerical rating system used to compare things. Although you have to be careful about drawing too many correlations—a first-tier character isn't easily compared to a difficulty 1 wall or a level 1 animal—the principle is the same. Everything can be rated and roughly compared to everything else in the world. (It works best to take PCs out of this equation. For example, you shouldn't try to compare a PC's tier to a wall's level. Character tiers are mentioned here only for completeness).

Last, if your mind leans toward statistics, you can look at difficulty as a percentage chance. Every number on the d20 is a 5% increment. For example, you have a 5% chance of rolling a 1. You have a 10% chance of rolling a 1 or a 2. Thus, if you need to roll a 12 or higher, you have a 45% chance of success (a d20 has nine numbers that are 12 or higher: 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20. And 9×5 equals 45).

For some people, it's easier to think in terms of a percentage chance. A GM might think, "She has about a 30% chance to know that fact about geography." Each number on a d20 is a 5% increment, and it takes six increments to equal 30%, so there are six numbers that mean the PC succeeds: 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20. Thus, since she has to roll 15 or higher, that means the target number is 15 (and that means the task is level 5, but if you've already determined the target number, you likely don't care about the level).

1. The GM makes measured adjustments in large, uniform steps. That makes things faster than if players had to do arithmetic using a range of all numbers from 1 to 20.
2. You calculate a target number only once no matter how many times the PCs attempt the action. If you establish that the target number is 12, it's 12 every time a PC tries that action. On the other hand, if you had to add numbers to your die roll, you'd have to do it for every attempt. Consider this fact in light of combat. Once a player knows that she needs to roll a 12 or higher to hit her foe, combat moves very quickly.
3. If a PC can reduce the difficulty of an action to 0, no roll is needed. This means that an Olympic gymnast doesn't roll a die to walk across a balance beam, but the average person does. The task is initially rated the same for both, but the difficulty is reduced for the gymnast. There's no chance of failure.
4. This is how everything in the game works, whether it's climbing a wall, sweet-talking a guard, or fighting a supernatural horror.
5. Perhaps most important, the system gives GMs the freedom to focus entirely on the flow of the game. The GM doesn't use dice to determine what happens (unless he wants to)—the players do. There aren't a lot of different rules for different actions, so there is little to remember and very little to reference. The difficulty can be used as a narrative tool, with the challenges always meeting the expected logic of the game. All the GM's mental space can be devoted to guiding the story.

Ultimately what you want is for the players to interact with the situations in the game, not with the rules and numbers that represent the situation. Don't let the players get too worked up over mechanics, dice percentages, and whatnot. That doesn't drive the story.

GM Intrusion

Sudden, unexpected problems inject drama and create excitement in the game. GM intrusions provide you with a way to create setbacks, heighten challenges, and to complicate the situations in which the player characters find themselves. A GM intrusion might cause the rope the characters climb to fray or have assassins find the characters at their hideout where they are trying to recover from their injuries.

Generally, you use a GM intrusion to deal with the world around the characters, such as the objects with which they interact and the people they meet, befriend, or fight. Since the players roll all the dice, you use GM intrusion to determine if and when something happens. For example, if the PCs fight members of the Imperial Dragon's Guard and the GM knows there are more nearby, the GM doesn't need to roll dice to determine if the other guards hear the scuffle and intervene (unless he wants to). He just decides when it would be best for the story—which is probably when it would be worst for the characters.

How It Works

You can use a GM intrusion whenever you feel it's appropriate to introduce a complication into the game. When you do, you give 1 XP to the player affected by the intrusion and 1 XP for that player to give away (see Player-Awarded Experience Points, below). The player can refuse the intrusion by spending 1 XP. So, by refusing an intrusion, the player does not get the experience points you offer, and she loses one that she already has (this kind of refusal is likely to happen very rarely in your game, if ever. And, obviously, a player can't refuse an intrusion if she has no XP to spend).

In addition, when player modifications (such as skill, Effort, and so on) determine that success is automatic, you can use GM intrusion to negate the automatic success. The player must roll for the action at its original difficulty level or target number 20, whichever is lower.

Example: Say the PCs find a panel concealing a space containing some levers. They learn the right order in which to pull the levers, and a section of the floor drops away. As the GM, you don't ask the players specifically where their characters stand; instead,



you give a player 1 XP and say, "Unfortunately, you're standing directly over this new hole in the floor." If he wanted, the player could refuse the XP, spend one of his own, and say, "I leap aside to safety." Most likely, though, he'll make the defense roll that you call for and let it play out.

There are two ways for the GM to handle this kind of intrusion. You could say, "You're standing in the wrong place, so make a roll." It's a Speed defense roll, of course. Alternatively, you could say, "You're standing in the wrong place. The floor opens under your feet, and you fall down into the darkness." In the first example, the PC has a chance to save himself. In the second example, he doesn't. Both are viable options. The distinction is based on any number of factors, including the situation, the characters involved, and the needs of the story. This might seem arbitrary or even capricious, but you're the master of what the intrusion can and can't do. RPG mechanics need consistency so players can make intelligent decisions based on how they understand the world to work, but they'll never base their decisions on GM intrusions. They don't know when intrusions will happen or what form they will take. GM intrusions are the unpredictable and strange twists of fate that affect a person's life every day.

Using (and Not Abusing) GM Intrusion

Too much of a good thing will make the game seem utterly unpredictable—even capricious. The ideal is to use about four GM intrusions per game session, depending on the length of the session, or about one intrusion per hour of game play. This is in addition to any intrusions that are triggered by players rolling 1s.

Player-Awarded Experience Points

Players who gain 1 XP as the result of GM intrusion also get 1 XP to award to another player for whatever reason they wish—maybe the other player had a good idea, told a funny joke, lent a helping hand, or whatever seems appropriate. This means that whenever the GM uses GM intrusion, he's actually giving out 2 XP. The ability to award XP to your friends is empowering and interactive. It helps the players regulate the flow of XP so that no one is left out. It rewards good play that pleases the group as a whole, ensuring that everyone contributes to everyone else's enjoyment. It shouldn't just be the GM who decides which players have done well. Some groups will want to decide the criteria for player-awarded points ahead of time. Some will just want to play it by ear.

Variant: Alternatively, the group could combine the player-awarded points and vote at the end of a session to decide who gets how many XP. This might be the most egalitarian way to do it, but it's probably not as fun or empowering to the individual players.

Using GM Intrusion as a Narrative Tool

A GM can use GM intrusions to steer the story in a particular direction. That doesn't mean railroad the players or direct the action of the game with a heavy hand. GM intrusion doesn't enable you to say, "You're all captured, so here's your 1 XP." Instead, the rule lets you direct things more subtly—gently, almost imperceptibly influencing events rather than forcing them. GM intrusion represents things going wrong, the bad guys planning well, fortune not favoring the characters.



Consider this scenario: the GM plants an interesting adventure seed in a small village, but the PCs don't stay there long enough to find it. Just outside the village, the PCs run afoul of a vicious viper that bites one of them. The GM uses intrusion to say that the poison from the snake makes the character debilitated unless he gets a large dose of a very specific antitoxin, which the group doesn't have. Of course, they aren't required to go back to the village where the GM's interesting adventure can start, but it's likely that they will, looking for the antitoxin.

Some players might find intrusion heavy handed, but the XP softens the blow. And remember, they can refuse these narrative nudges. Intrusion is not meant to be a railroading tool—just a bit of a rudder, not an inescapable track, but a nudge here and there.

What's more, you don't need to have a deliberate goal in mind. The complication you introduce could simply make things more interesting. You might not know where it will take the story, just that it will make the story better.

This is wonderfully empowering to the GM—not in a "Ha ha, now I'll trounce the PCs" way, but in an "I can control the narrative a little bit, steering it more toward the story I want to create rather than relying on the dice" sort of way. Consider that old classic plot development in which the PCs get captured and must escape from the bad guys. In heroic fiction, this is such a staple that it would almost seem strange if it didn't happen. But in many roleplaying games, it's a nearly impossible turn of events—the PCs usually have too many ways to get out of the bad guy's clutches even before they're captured. The dice have to be wildly against them. It virtually never happens. With GM intrusion, it could happen.

Example: A gang of orcs has the PCs surrounded. One character is badly injured—debilitated—and the rest are hurt. Some of the orcs produce a large weighted net. Rather than asking for rolls and figuring the mechanics for escape, the GM uses intrusion and says the net goes over the PCs who are still on their feet. The rest of the orcs point spears menacingly. This is a strong cue to the players that surrender is a good (and possibly the only) option. Some players won't take the hint, however, so another use of intrusion might allow the orcs to hit one of the trapped PCs on the head and render him unconscious while his friends struggle in the net. If the players still don't surrender, it's probably best to play out the rest of the encounter without more GM intrusions—using more would be heavy-handed by anyone's measure—although it's perfectly reasonable to rule that a character rendered debilitated is knocked unconscious, since the orcs are trying to take the PCs alive.

Using GM Intrusion as a Resolution Mechanic

This mechanic offers a way for the GM to determine how things happen in the game without leaving it all to random chance. Bad guys trying to smash down the door to the room where the PCs are holed up? The GM could roll a bunch of dice, compare the NPCs' stats to the door's stats, and so on, or he could wait until the most interesting time, have the bad guys break in, and award an experience point to the PC who tried his best to bar the door. The latter way is the Cypher System way. Intrusion is your task resolution tool. In other words, you don't base things on stats but on narrative choice. This method frees you from worrying about mechanics and looking up stats, letting you focus on the story.

This isn't cheating—it's the rules of the game. This rule simply replaces traditional dice rolling with good game mastering, logic, and intelligent storytelling. When a PC is climbing a burning rope, and everyone knows that it will break at some point, the game has a mechanism to ensure that it breaks at just the right time.

Remember that GM intrusions can occur at any time, not just during combat. Disrupting or changing a tense interaction with NPCs can have big repercussions.

Intrusion Through Player Rolls

When a PC rolls a 1, handle the GM intrusion the same way that you'd handle an intrusion you initiated. The intrusion could mean the PC fumbles or botches whatever she was trying to do, but it could mean something else. Consider these alternatives:

- In combat, the PC's foe is not as hurt as she thought. Give the foe 5 extra points of health.
- In combat, the PC drops her guard, and the foe gets a free attack.
- In combat, reinforcements for the PC's foes show up.
- In combat (or any stressful situation), an ally decides to flee.
- In combat (or any stressful situation), an ally doesn't like the PCs as much as they thought. He steals from them or betrays them.
- Out of combat, the PC's pack falls open, or the sole of her shoe tears open.
- Out of combat, it begins to rain heavily.
- Out of combat, a surprise foe appears, and the scene turns into a combat.
- In an interaction, the GM introduces a surprising motive for the NPC. For example, the PCs are trying to bribe an official for information, and he reveals that what he really wants isn't money but for someone to rescue his kidnapped son.

GM Intrusion That Affects the Group

The core of the idea behind GM intrusion is that the player being adversely affected gains an experience point, but what if the intrusion affects the whole group equally? What if the GM uses it to have an unstable magical device explode, harming all the characters? In this case, if no PC is involved more than the others (for example, no single PC was frantically attempting to repair the device), give 1 XP to each character but do not give any of them an extra XP to hand out to other players.

This kind of intrusion should be an exception, not the rule. GM intrusions are much more effective if they affect just one character.

Example GM Intrusions

It's not a good idea to use the same events as GM intrusions over and over ("Dolmar dropped his sword again?"). Below are a number of different intrusions you can use.

Bad Luck

Through no fault of the characters, something happens that is bad or at least complicating. For example:

- The floorboard beneath the PC gives way.
- The boat lists to starboard at just the wrong moment.
- A gust of wind blows the papers out of the character's hand.
- The buckle of the PC's pack snaps at an inopportune time.
- The NPC that the characters need to speak with is home sick today.
- A device (cypher or artifact) malfunctions or gives the user a jolt.

An Unknown Complication Emerges

The situation was more complex (and therefore more interesting) than the PCs knew—perhaps even more than the GM knew, at least at the start. For example:

- A poisonous snake darts out from the tall grass and attacks.
- The box that holds the plans is trapped with a poison needle.
- The NPC that the PCs need to befriend doesn't speak their language.
- The NPC that the PCs try to bribe is allergic to the bottle of alcohol they offer.
- The PCs find the book they need, but the pages are so brittle that if they open it, it might crumble.

An Impending Complication Emerges

You can use this type of intrusion as a resolution mechanic to determine NPC success or failure. Rather than rolling dice to see how long it takes an NPC to complete a ritual, it happens at the time you choose—ideally when it would be most interesting. For example:

- The goblin reinforcements finally get through the locked door.
- The ropes of the old rope bridge finally snap.
- The city guards show up.
- The unstable ceiling collapses.
- The NPC who holds a dagger to a character's throat and says "Don't move" cuts the PC when he does, in fact, move, putting him immediately at debilitated on the damage track.

Opponent Luck or Skill

The PCs aren't the only ones with surprising tricks up their sleeves. For example:

- The PC's opponent uses a lightning-fast maneuver to dodge all attacks.
- The PC's opponent sees an opening and makes an additional, immediate attack.
- The NPC commander rallies her troops, and they all deal 2 additional points of damage for one round.
- The PC's opponent uses a magic item that produces just the right effect for the situation.
- A bit of the wall collapses in the middle of the fight, preventing the characters from chasing the fleeing NPC.

Fumbles

Although you might not want every player roll of 1 to be a fumble, sometimes it could be just that. Alternatively, the GM could simply declare that a fumble has occurred. In either case, consider the following examples:

- In combat, the PC drops his weapon.
- In combat, the PC misses and strikes the wall, breaking or damaging his weapon.
- In combat, the NPC hits the PC harder than usual, inflicting 2 additional points of damage.
- In combat, the PC hits an ally by accident and inflicts regular damage.
- Out of combat, the PC drops or mishandles an important object or piece of equipment.
- In an interaction, the PC inadvertently or unknowingly says something offensive.

Partial Success

GM intrusion doesn't have to mean that a PC fails. For example:

- The PC disables the trap before it goes off, but if someone doesn't remain and hold the tripwire, it will go off.
- The PC creates the antidote, but it turns the imbiber's flesh blue for the next few weeks.
- The PC jumps across the pit but accidentally knocks loose some stones from the edge, making the jump harder for her friend right behind her.

Magic

Magic is everywhere in the world of Dragon City. Enemy wizards, strange places touched by dark power, and odd relics unearthed can produce unexpected effects, such as:

- A PC botches the words written on a scroll, producing the opposite of the intended effect.
- A PC drinks a potion, but it interacts oddly with the character's system, causing the character to rise a few feet in the air and remain there for a minute.
- In combat, when a PC uses magic, it ignites the magical energy flowing through the place inflicting a small amount of damage to everyone in the area.
- An enemy wizard casts a spell that causes a PC to freeze in place, losing his next turn.
- An enemy spellcaster causes a weapon a PC carries to transform into an angry venomous snake.

The Rest of the Rules

The rules exist to be used as tools to shape the game, the story, and the experience. When you tell a player that the howling bestial warriors at the top of the cliff throw heavy stones down on her character and she gets hurt, the rules give you a way to explain just how hurt.

One way to look at it is this: as the GM, you are the sensory input for the player. The player can't know anything about what's going on in the fictional reality of the game unless you tell her. The rules, then, are one way to convey information to the players in a manner that is meaningful to everyone sitting at the table. You could say, "You're quite hurt," but the rules clarify how hurt she is. You could say, "You can hurl that spear pretty far," but the rules provide a definition of "pretty far" that helps keep things consistent, moderately realistic, and understandable so the GM doesn't have to repeat things over and over.

The rules do more than that, of course. They determine success or failure for PCs and NPCs. They help define what resources characters have to interact with the world (although the best resource is the players' ingenuity, and that isn't defined by the rules).

> *At any time, it's reasonable to switch one "condition" for another. Thus, if a PC moves one step down on the damage track as the result of someone attempting to knock him out, that happens instead. This could also be the case if someone was trying to blind or deafen a PC, or anything else appropriate. Conversely, an effect that blinds could just move a character one step down.*

Adjudicating

A considerable part of what you do when you accept the mantle of Game Master is to adjudicate what happens in the game using common sense. You're not going to find extensive rules for every possible situation that could come up in play. Why? Because you are smart enough to make good decisions about what happens in the story and you have the tools to make reasonable decisions without much fuss.

Essentially, when you adjudicate, you decide how and when the rules apply to any situation. In some cases, referring to the rules to sort out a situation is a good idea. In others, it's best to bend them or even throw them out.

Let's say that an assassin sent by a noble the PCs have angered sits on a balcony with a blowgun loaded with a poisoned tipped dart. A PC wearing heavy armor might not take any damage from that dart. Since the dart never damages the characters, should the character be subject to the poison? Probably not, as the story implies that the dart delivers the poison by breaking the skin. There's no rule for this in the game. It just makes sense. Of course, you could say the dart strikes the character somewhere that the armor doesn't protect, scratching the character, not enough to inflict damage, but enough to expose the character to the poison—likely using a GM intrusion to develop the story in this way.

Another example is deciding that a character who falls off a high ledge ought to be stunned and lose her next turn. Again, there's no rule for this in the book, but it might make sense in the situation. In other situations you might not want this to happen, and that's okay.

You should also bend or break the rules when it suits the story. By the rules, a character falling from a 100-foot ledge might take 10 points of damage. That's a lot, but a fresh character with a decent amount of Might can take that and keep going. Sometimes that's okay, but sometimes it stretches our suspension of disbelief. If a player reads the rules on how much damage is dealt by falling, he might even have his character jump off a high cliff deliberately, knowing he can take it. So you adjudicate that he doesn't just lose his next turn, but the fall also knocks him down a step on the damage track. That's harsh, and the player will really feel it, but he should, and it will keep him from exploiting what might seem like a hole in the rules in a way that no real person would (and no one in a story would).

Remember, it's your job to use the rules to simulate the world, even a world that is a fictional place filled with zombies, dragons, and magical treasures. You're not a slave to the rules—it's the other way around. If you come across a hole in the rules or something that doesn't make sense, don't shrug your shoulders and say, "Well, that's what the rules say (or don't say)." Fix it.

Finally, you are empowered to change anything in the rules you don't like, you feel doesn't work the way it should, or if it plays in a way you think breaks or distorts the story. If something seems broken, change it. If a PC ability is too powerful, make it less so. Do it either as part of the story, or—perhaps even better—just be upfront with the players. "Hey, guys, this new spell is just too good. It's making every fight a pushover and that's not fun. So, I'm going to tone down its effect. Sound okay?" An honest discussion with the players is often the best way to handle, well, just about any problem that comes up in a game. And if a player can't handle that kind of interaction, maybe you don't want him at your table anyway.

> *While GMs always have notes that they put together before the game session, it's smart to have a lot of blank paper to scribble notes on during the game. You'll invariably have to make stuff up as you go, and later you might want to be able to remember what you did. Sometimes it will be a rules issue (remembering it was a difficulty 4 jump to cross the pit, so that it will be consistent when the PCs come back that way again), and sometimes it will just be an NPC's name or some detail about them.*

Common Sense

Running a game well relies on using common sense rather than a careful reading of the rules. For example, some things give characters a resistance to fire (almost always expressed as Armor). But there is no special rule for "fire damage" as opposed to "slicing damage" or "lightning damage." Instead, you use common sense to determine whether the damage inflicted counts as fire. A blast of superheated air could be fire, but beings splashed with acid most certainly wouldn't.

There are only two times when your answer could be wrong. The first is when the answer breaks the players' suspension of disbelief. For example, something that makes a PC fire resistant

should probably provide some protection against a heat-based weapon. If it doesn't, your answer will spoil the moment for the group.

The second wrong answer is when you're inconsistent. If you allow a PC's fireproof armor to give him some protection against lava one time but not the next, that's a problem—not only because it breaks the suspension of disbelief but also because it gives the players nothing on which to base their decisions. Without predictable consistency, they can't make smart decisions.

You don't need to fall back on rules for everything that happens in the game, either for your own sake or as a defense against the players. "I'm going to run a long distance and jump on my big friend's back. On his action, he will run a long distance. So I can move twice as far in one round. There's no rule against that, right?" It's true that there isn't a rule against that, but it makes no sense. Logic rules the day here.

The rules aren't here as a shield against the players. Rather, you and the players should work together to create a logical, consistent, and believable world and story. Seeking to exploit gaps in the rules to gain unrealistic and illogical advantages for characters is at odds with the spirit of the game.

Further, the rules don't say things like, "The GM decides if the NPC knows the answer to the question, or if he will answer, or how he will answer." Of course that's the kind of thing you decide—that's your role. The rules don't state that you decide if something is logical and appropriate to the story or setting any more than they state that the player decides what actions his character will take. That's just the way the game works.

Does this put more pressure on you as the GM? Yes and no. You need to make more judgment calls—more of the adjudication described above—which can be challenging if you're new at it, but being an arbiter of what seems appropriate and makes sense is something that we all do, all day long. Look at it this way: when you're watching a television show or a movie, at some point you might say, "That seems wrong," or "That seems unrealistic." There's no difference between doing that and using common sense at the table.

In the end, relying on common sense should free you. No longer saddled with hundreds (or thousands) of individual rules, compatibility issues, loopholes, and the like, you are free to move ahead with the story being told by the group. You can put your focus on the story rather than be distracted by the mechanics. When you prepare for a game, you should spend your time devising cool storylines, inventing new devices and foes, and ways to build the tone and atmosphere to suit the story, leaving you to deal with the mechanical elements during the game, using common sense to overcome the challenges and hitches you face as the story unfolds.

Encourage smart players to be ready with their actions, and to know enough about how actions work so you don't have to ask if they're using Effort or tell them to make a roll. In a perfect world, when it's Stacee's turn and you ask what she's doing, she says, "I'm going to try to climb the tree to get out of reach of the golem. I'm using a level of Effort, and I rolled a 14." That way, you can take the info and immediately tell her if she succeeded or not. This keeps play moving at a brisk pace and doesn't let talk of game mechanics bog things down.



Rolling Dice

The rules usually involve rolling dice. If the dice don't mean anything, then everything is predetermined, and it's no longer a game by any definition—just a story being told. For this reason, the dice need to matter. As a consequence, sometimes a PC will fail when she would succeed if the scene took place in a story, and vice versa. That's not a flaw; it's a feature. It's what makes roleplaying games so exciting. When we're watching an action movie, we know that in the third act the hero will defeat the villain at just the right moment, but in an RPG, maybe not. It's not so predictable. That's one of the things that makes games like these so special.

On the other hand, things like GM intrusions sometimes trump the die rolls to help the story move along in a direction that is (hopefully) best for the game. How do you manage it all?

As you describe the action, or as the PCs move about the world, the vast majority of things that happen shouldn't involve dice. Walking around, buying things in a market, chatting with NPCs, crossing the wilderness, looking for an ancient ruin—these are not actions that normally require die rolls. However, it's easy to think of exceptions where rolls might be needed. How do you decide? There are two rules of thumb.

First, don't ask for a roll unless it seems like there should be a chance of failure and a chance of success. If a PC wants to shoot an arrow from his bow and hit the moon, there's no need to roll,



because there's no chance for success. Likewise, if he wants to shoot that same arrow at a large building from 10 feet (3 m) away, there's no chance for failure. You and common sense run the game, not the dice.

Second, if a creature (PC or NPC) or object is affected in a harmful way—or, in the case of a creature, in a way that he doesn't want to be affected, harmful or not—you need to involve a die roll. Whether the action is slashing with a blade, using deception to trick someone, intrusively reading an NPC's mind, breaking down a door, or applying poison, something is being harmed or affected in a way that it doesn't want to be, so a die roll is needed.

Thus, someone using a power to become invisible likely doesn't require a roll. It just works. There's really no chance of failure (unless the power comes from a faulty magic item or some other extraneous force is at work), and it doesn't directly affect anyone or anything other than the character becoming invisible. However, using a device to shape the emotions of another creature would require a die roll.

Of course, sometimes a character can use Effort to reduce the difficulty so there's no need to make a roll, but you, as the GM, can also waive the need for a roll. Consider a wizard who casts the Energy Burst spell (see page 35) on a bunch of level 1 rats. Each has 3 health, and the PC needs to roll only 3 or higher to affect each, but there are twenty-four rodents. You can simply say, "With a discharge of sudden energy, you incinerate the swarm of rodents, leaving little behind but scorch marks and the smell of burnt hair." This keeps things moving and prevents the game from coming to a dead stop while the player makes two dozen rolls. Frankly, most first-tier characters will find level 1 creatures merely a nuisance, so no drama is ruined when the wizard takes them all out. Move on to another, greater challenge.

When you waive the need for a die roll, what you're effectively doing is making the action routine, so no roll is needed. In the case of the wizard, you're reducing the difficulty by one step due to circumstances: the rats just aren't that tough. That's not breaking the rules—that's using the rules. That's the way the game is meant to be played.

As an aside, this doesn't mean that a swarm of rats is a bad encounter. It would be bad in a game where it takes an hour and a half to resolve a fight that posed no real danger to the characters. Even if the wizard doesn't blast every rat, an encounter like that can be resolved in five minutes. Not every encounter needs to be life-or-death to be interesting, as you'll see in designing encounters (and the related issue of pacing) later in this chapter.

Who Rolls?

Remember, most of the time, powers, abilities, devices, and so forth are written from the point of view of the characters. The players make die rolls, not the GM. So, for example, if the circumstances call for an NPC to make a defense roll, that means a PC should make an attack roll instead.

Tying Actions to Stats

Although the decision is open to your discretion, when a PC takes an action, it should be obvious which stat is tied to that action. Physical actions that involve brute force or endurance use Might. Physical actions that involve quickness, coordination, or agility use Speed. Actions that involve intelligence, education, insight, willpower, or charm use Intellect.

In rare instances, you could allow a PC to use a different stat for a task. For example, a character might try to break down a door by examining it closely for flaws and thus use Intellect rather than Might. This kind of change is a good thing because it encourages player creativity. Just don't let it be abused by an exuberant or too-clever player. It's well within your purview to decide that the door has no flaws, or to rule the character's attempt will take half an hour rather than one round. In other words, using a stat that is not the obvious choice should be the exception, not the rule.

The Flow of Information

You are the players' eyes and ears. They can't know anything about the world unless you tell them. Make sure that the information you provide is both precise and concise (we'll discuss good description in a few moments). Be evocative, but not to the point that the players lose details in the language you use. Be open to answering their questions about the world around them.

Sometimes it's easy: a PC looks over the top of the hill, and you tell her what she sees. Other times things are hidden, or there's a chance that she misses something important—secret panels, cloaked assassins, creatures with natural camouflage, details of significance in a crowded marketplace, and so on. In these cases, perhaps a roll is involved. It's odd to ask players to roll when they haven't taken any actions. It's within the bounds of the rules, but it can be jarring. There are different ways to handle the situation: you can call for a roll, compare levels, or use an intrusion.

GM Calls for Rolls

This is the most straightforward approach. It's the best choice if a PC's action is to search, listen, or otherwise keep an eye out. If a PC is on watch while her comrades are sleeping, call for an Intellect roll immediately and use the result if anything happens during the entire time she is guarding.

What if the PC isn't actively looking? Say a pickpocket moves up behind her to lift a few coins. You ask the player to make an Intellect roll with a difficulty equal to the pickpocket's level. Arguably, she could make a Speed-based roll to see if she is quick enough to catch a glimpse—it's up to you. Some PCs are skilled in perceiving, and that would come into play here. Success means that you tell the character what she sees, and failure means that she notices nothing. However, the player knows that she had to make a roll, so she knows that something is up. One way to keep players on their toes is to call for rolls when there is nothing to notice.

GM Compares Levels

You can take the player out of the equation (so as not to alert her suspicions) by comparing the PC's tier to the difficulty of the perceiving task. Ties go to the PC. You can still figure in skills and assets as bonuses to the PC's tier. So a third-tier character trained in perceiving will spot the level 4 predator cat stalking up behind him. This method is particularly good for determining simple results, such as whether the PC hears a river in the distance. That kind of thing isn't worth a roll, but for some reason, you might not want to give out the information automatically. This method also rewards a perceptive character, who hears the noise before anyone else. Don't forget to increase the difficulty for distance in such a situation.

GM Intrudes

Rarely you can keep things to yourself and spring the knowledge of what happened as a GM intrusion. If a PC discovers her pocket is now empty of coins, that's certainly a complication. Sometimes the "discovery" itself is a complication—for example, the character notices a mugging going on in the alley as she walks by.

In addition, the GM is the source of knowledge about the part of the PCs' lives that doesn't take place in a game session. If a character used to be in the military and needs to know the name of her old unit commander, you need to give it to the player (or, better yet, let her come up with the name).

Failure to Notice

Consider PCs missing a sensory detail very carefully. If there's a cool secret chamber in the ancient complex or an important clue under the table in the castle guardroom, maybe a perceptive PC should just find it (no roll required), particularly if she said she was looking. To do otherwise might mean submitting to the tyranny of the dice. Just because the PC rolled a 2, should the adventure come to a dead stop?

Well, in the first place, don't design a scenario that can come to a dead stop if the PCs botch one roll. There should always be multiple paths to success. In the second, consider your other options. Maybe the PCs learn about the secret chamber later and they'll have to backtrack to find it. If the characters don't find the clue under the table, a NPC might—and then lord it over them with a show of superiority. If all else fails, as noted above, sometimes discovery is a complication, and you can simply foist it upon a PC through GM intrusion. In such a case, however, you might want to include a challenge. For example, the PC finds the secret door accidentally by leaning against the hidden pressure gauge, which lets out a swarm of zombies guarding the chamber before the characters are ready for them.

On the other hand, perhaps in such a situation, the PCs didn't "earn" the discovery—if there was no roll, then no Effort was expended and no risks were taken. That's not good. Maybe the PCs just miss out this time. Maybe they should learn to be more observant.

In other words, the answer depends on the situation. Don't hesitate to vary things. It keeps the players guessing.



Graduated Success

Sometimes, you might break away from the normal task resolution rules and allow for a graduated success. With this method, set a difficulty as usual, but if the player succeeds at a difficulty at least one step higher, his success is better than normal. Likewise, if his roll indicates that he would have succeeded at one step (or more) lower, he might have a partial success.

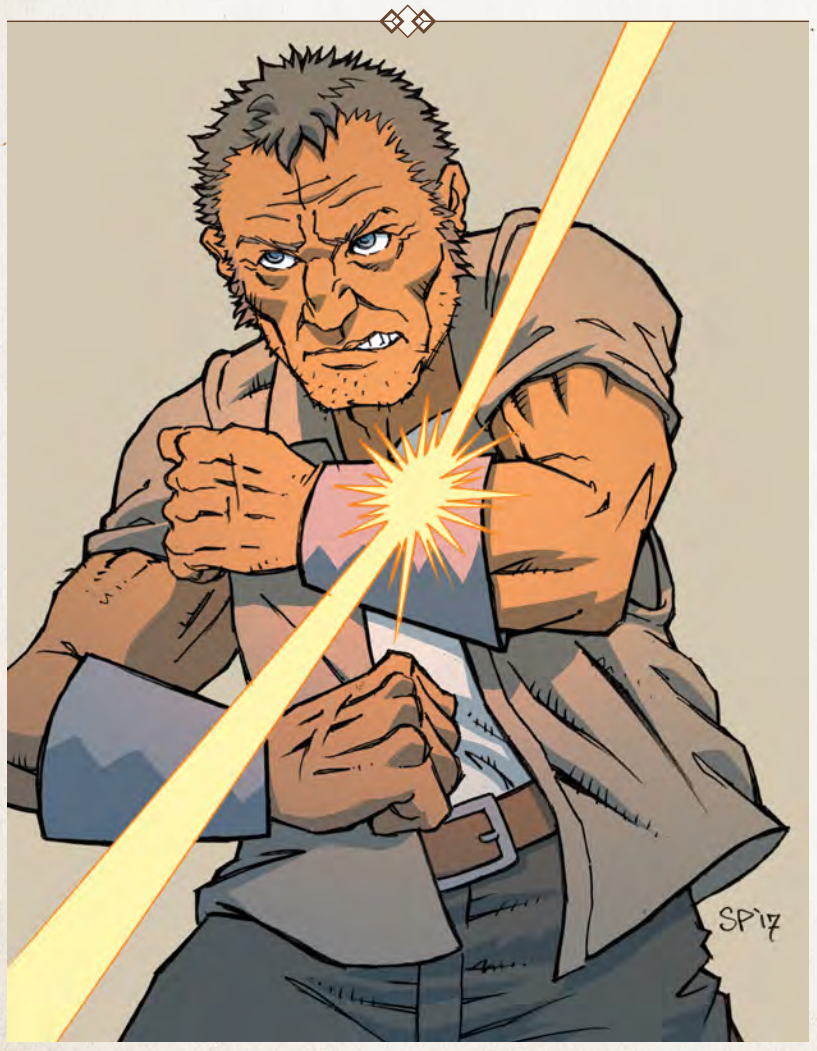
For example, a PC tracking the bandits that robbed the caravan looks for tracks in the woods to see if any of them came down a certain path recently. Given the terrain and the weather, the GM decides that the difficulty is 4, so the target number is 12. The player rolls a 10. This isn't enough to accomplish the task the PC set out to do, but since he would have succeeded if the difficulty had been 3, the GM decides that he still learns that something had come down the path recently—he just isn't certain if it was bandits. The reason is that if the PC had simply been looking for tracks of any kind, the GM would have set a difficulty of 3. Similarly, if the player had rolled a 17—a success at least one step higher—the GM would have said that not only did he find bandit tracks, but there were five of them, and their tracks show that they were burdened. The player receives more information than he asked for.

In a situation where there are more results than simply success or failure, you can convey these results based on multiple difficulties. A player can state an action, and you can come up with not one difficulty but two, three, or more. For example, if the PCs try to persuade a merchant to give them information, the GM can predetermine that he gives them one minor bit of information if they succeed at a task with a difficulty of 2, a fair bit of information if they succeed at a task with a difficulty of 3, and everything he knows on the topic if they succeed at a task with a difficulty of 4. The players don't make three different rolls. They make one roll with a scaled, graduated success.

As a rule of thumb, reverse-engineer the situation. If the player rolls considerably higher or lower than the target number (more than 3 away), consider what a success at the difficulty he did overcome would have gained him. If picking a complex lock on a sealed door has a target number of 18, what happens if the player rolls 16? Perhaps the answer is nothing, but perhaps the character partly dismantles the lock, making it possible to smash it or kick the door in.

This system is rarely (if ever) used in combat or situations where something either works or doesn't. But when crafting an object, interacting with an NPC, or gaining information, it can be very useful. Of course, you're never required to use this model of task resolution—sometimes success or failure is all you need to know. Usually, graduated success involves going only one step higher or lower than the original difficulty, but you can be as flexible about that as you wish.

Finally, you can offer a "consolation prize" for trying. Say a PC fears a door has been rigged with a trap. He searches it but fails the roll. The GM might still reveal something about the door. "You don't find anything special, but you do note that the door appears quite sturdy and is locked." It's the kind of information you might give automatically (think of it as a difficulty of 0), but it softens the blow of failure. Some information is better than none, and it makes sense that the PC will learn at least something if he studies an object for a few minutes.



Character Abilities

Players make their characters by combining elements from four different categories, gaining benefits and special abilities from each. During play, these characters gain additional abilities as they move from one tier to the next. While a great deal of the character's power comes from these elements, what makes characters interesting and unpredictable are the cyphers they bear. Cyphers allow the characters to do amazing, cool, and fun things—just not reliably or consistently. Although the player characters potentially have access to great power from time to time, they must use it wisely.

As the GM, it's important to remember the distinction between a character ability gained through type or focus, an ability or advantage gained through an artifact, and an ability gained through a cypher. The first two kinds of abilities will shape the way you expect the characters to behave, but the cyphers won't. A PC with the Slays Undead focus is going to be quite good at killing zombies. After all, it's



the thing the character focuses on, so you shouldn't be surprised when the character kicks zombie butt. Since you know this, you can prepare for it in a way that both challenges the player but also highlights the player's choice. You can challenge the character by creating obstacles that aren't undead, such as living opponents, investigation, and roleplaying challenges, while spotlighting the player's choice by giving the character the occasional opportunity to destroy undead.

With cyphers, no preparation is necessary. First of all, most of them don't throw a wrench into anything—they just help the character deal with a situation in a faster way, giving her some healing, a temporary boost, or a one-use offensive power. Second, the PCs never end up with a cypher that you didn't give them, so you can have as much say over their cyphers as you want. And third (and perhaps most important), when a PC pulls out an exploding round and fires it at a flying palanquin, blowing it up, the character completely changes the situation and that's part of the fun. You'll have to figure what happens next, and so will the players. That's not ruining things—that's what is supposed to happen. Your players should surprise you all the time and cyphers make surprises more frequent and in ways as interesting as you're willing to allow.

Although encounter design is covered later, remember this point: no single encounter is so important that you ever have to worry about the players "ruining" it. Don't think about the game in terms of encounters. Think about it in terms of the adventure or the campaign. If a PC used a potent cypher to easily kill a powerful and important opponent, remember these three things:

1. She doesn't have that cypher anymore.

2. There will be more bad guys.

3. Combat is not the point of the game—it's an obstacle. If the players discover a way to overcome an obstacle more quickly than you expected, there's nothing wrong with that. They're not cheating, and the game's not broken. Just keep the story going. What happens next? What are the implications of what just happened?

Encouraging Player Creativity

Shotguns & Sorcery places more importance on creativity than on understanding the rules. The players should succeed not because they've chosen all the "right" options when creating their characters, but because they come up with the best ideas when they encounter challenges. For every challenge, there should be a straightforward solution (destroy the hulking golem to get into the wizard's tower) and a not-so-straightforward one (sneak past the golem, locate the hidden entry, bypassing the guardian altogether). It's not your responsibility as the GM to come up with both. The players come up with the not-so-straightforward solutions. You just have to be willing to go with their ideas.

This doesn't mean you have to let them succeed if they try something weird. On the contrary, the not-so-straightforward solution might end up being as hard or harder than the straightforward one, but you have to be ready to adjudicate the idea no matter what. It's tempting to say there's no other way into the tower and so the PCs have to go toe-to-toe with the golem (a combat encounter). In some situations, that might be appropriate—perhaps there really isn't another way into the tower. But you have to be willing to say that sometimes the unexpected is possible and then deal with the details on the fly. If you don't, and you shut down the players' creativity, they will learn that the only thing to do is charge into the fray every time, that the obvious solution is the only possible solution. Eventually, this tends to make for boring play because things will seem repetitive and too tightly structured.

The best solution is not to develop preconceived notions of how the PCs might deal with the encounters in an adventure. If they're going to break into a tower, you can note that a team of guards patrol the tower grounds, a big hulking golem guards the main entrance, and there's a secret entrance accessed by a sewer that has a nasty trap. You don't know if the PCs will fight the guards, bribe them, or sneak past them. You don't know how the PCs will deal with the golem or if they'll seek out the secret entrance. You don't have to worry about any of these things ahead of time, but you have to be ready when it comes up at the table. You should prepare for the most obvious situations—give the golem a read so you know its level and how much damage it does. But when a player states that his action is to look around for spots out of the golem's line of sight, that's when you take a second to consider and (particularly if he rolls well on an Intellect action) maybe say, "Yes, as a matter of fact, there is a spot..." even if no such thing had occurred to you before that moment.

Cyphers

Although it's all right if players think of cyphers as equipment or treasure, you should look at them as character abilities. It is incumbent upon you to make sure the players always have plenty of cyphers to use. In the course of their travels, the PCs should find cyphers are extremely common. Since the PCs are limited in the number of cyphers they can carry, they will use the devices liberally.

Cyphers can be found by scavenging through old ruins. They can be found in the corpses of magical foes. They can be found among the possessions of intelligent fallen opponents or the lairs of unintelligent creatures, either amid the bones of former meals or as shiny decorations in a nest. They can be found in villages, in the back of a merchant's cart that sells junk. They might be offered for sale by a skilled magineer. and they are offered as rewards by people who are grateful for the PCs' help.

As a rule of thumb, in any given adventure, a character should use at least as many cyphers as she can carry. This means she should find that number of cyphers in that same amount of time (give or take). Thus, you can simply add up the number of cyphers the PCs can carry, and on average, they should find at least that many cyphers in a given adventure.

If your players are typical, they will use combat-related cyphers often but hold onto their utility cyphers. Flame oil and potions of ferocity will see use, but piercing goggles or a potion of invisibility will linger longer on their character sheets.

Creating New Cyphers

As with everything else in the game, it's very easy for you to create new cyphers. Just think of the effect and how to express it as a game advantage. Two kinds of cyphers exist: those that allow the user to do something better, and those that allow the user to do something she couldn't do otherwise.

The first group includes everything that reduces the difficulty of a task (including defense tasks). The second group includes things that grant new abilities, such as flight, a new means of attack, the ability to see into the past, or any number of other powers.

A few more important notes about devising new cyphers:

- Cyphers should be single-use items. The PCs use them up and find new ones.
- Cyphers should be potent. A minor ability isn't worth the trouble. If an attack cypher isn't as good as a regular weapon, why bother with it?
- Cyphers shouldn't have drawbacks.
- Cyphers should be temporary. Typically, a power is used once. Abilities or advantages that have a duration last from ten minutes to twenty-four hours (at most).
- Cyphers can take any form.

Artifacts

In terms of the narrative, artifacts are a lot like cyphers, except most are not one-use items. Mechanically, they serve a very different purpose. It's assumed that characters are exploring with some cyphers at their disposal. Artifacts, however, are added abilities that make characters broader, deeper, and often more powerful. They aren't assumed—they're extra.

The powers granted by artifacts are more like the abilities gained from a character's type or focus in that they change the way the PC is played overall. The difference is that some artifacts are temporary. They last longer than cyphers do, but because they have an exhaustion roll, any use could be their last.

Like cyphers, then, artifacts are a way for the GM to play a role in the development of the characters. Although armor, weapons, and the like are fine, special capabilities—such as long-range communication or travel—can really change the way the PCs interact with the world and how they deal with challenges. Some of these abilities enable the actions you want the PCs to take. For example, if you want them to have an underwater adventure, provide them with artifacts (or cyphers) that allow them to breathe underwater.

Like cyphers, artifacts are simple to create. The only difference with artifacts is that you should give them an exhaustion depletion roll, using any numbers on 1d6, 1d10, 1d20, or 1d100. If you want the artifact to be used only a few times, give it a depletion roll of 1 in 1d6, 1 or 2 in 1d10, or even 1 or 2 in 1d6. If you want the PCs to use it over and over, a depletion roll of 1 in 1d100 more or less means that they can use it freely without worrying too much.

Skills and Other Abilities

Sometimes, the rules speak directly to character creativity. For example, players can make up their own skills. It's possible to have a skill called "tightrope walking" that grants a character a better chance to walk across a tightrope, and another skill called "balance" that gives a character a better chance to walk across a tightrope and perform other balance actions as well. This might seem unequal at first, but the point is to let players create precisely the characters they want. Should you let a character create a skill called "doing things" that makes him better at everything? Of course not. You are the final arbiter not only of common sense but also of the spirit of the rules, and having one or two single skills that cover every contingency is clearly not in the spirit.

It's important that players play the character they want. This concept is supported not only with the open-ended skill system but also with the ability to get an experience point advance to tailor a character further. Likewise, you should be open to allowing a player to make small modifications to refine her character. In many cases, particularly ones that don't involve stat Pools, Armor, damage inflicted, or the costs of Effort or special abilities, the

answer from the GM should probably be, "Sure, why not?" If a PC ends up being really good at a particular skill—better than she "should" be—what's the harm? If Dave can swim incredibly well, how does that hurt the game in terms of the play experience or the story that develops? It doesn't. If Helen can pick practically any mundane lock she finds, why is that a bad thing? In fact, it's probably good for the game—there's likely something interesting on the other sides of those doors.

In a way, this is no different than adjudicating a not-so-straightforward solution to a challenge. Sometimes you have to say "No, that's not possible." Sometimes, if it makes sense, open yourself up to the possibility.

Handling NPCs

Nonplayer characters are people and creatures that live in the world alongside the PCs. They are just as much a part of the world as the PCs and should be portrayed just as realistically. NPCs are the main way to breathe life into the world, tell the stories the world has to tell, and portray the kind of game you want to run. Memorable NPCs can make or break a campaign.

NPCs shouldn't be "cannon fodder" because no one thinks of themselves that way. Real people value their lives. They shouldn't be idiots, easily fooled into doing things or acting in ways that no person ever would, simply because a die roll suggests it (unless they're not very bright or something more powerful—like mind control—is at work).

Think about real people that you know or characters from books, television, and movies. Base your NPCs' personalities on them. Make them as widely varying, as interesting, and as deep as those people.

Remember, too, that there are minor characters and major ones, just like in a book. The bandits who waylay the PCs are in the spotlight for only a few minutes at most and don't need a lot of development, but a major adversary or ally might get a lot of attention from the players and therefore deserves a lot from you. As with so many things related to being a good GM, consistency and believability are the keys to developing a good NPC.

> *While a NPC's level and stats are important, just as important are his appearance, the way he talks, and how he acts. If a NPC is going to be more than a simple, short-term foe (like a bandit), when you make your notes about things like his level and Armor, also note something about his appearance or personality. If a NPC is going to interact with the PCs for more than a minute, note at least two different things: he makes stupid jokes, he has a scar on his ear, he laughs too much, he talks very softly, he smells bad, and so on.*

NPC Game Stats

NPCs are easy to create. Most can simply be pegged at a level from 1 to 10 and you're done. Working on how to describe or portray them will take longer than working up their game stats.

Sometimes, though, you'll want to elaborate on the NPC's capabilities and tailor them to the concept. A level 4 NPC who is a skilled artificer might be level 5 or 6 in tasks related to the creation of cyphers and artifacts. But don't simply make the NPC level 5 or 6 overall because then she'd also be better at combat, interactions, climbing, jumping, and everything else, and that doesn't fit your concept.

Use the NPCs in chapter 17 as good starting points or as examples for what you can do. But you're not limited by them. In fact, you're not limited in any way. The most important thing to remember about NPCs in the Cypher System is that they do not follow the same rules as PCs. They don't have descriptors, types, or foci. They don't have tiers or any of the same stats. They don't even roll dice.

NPCs work precisely as you (and the setting and story) need them to. If a NPC is the greatest swordsman in the land, you can give him obvious advantages with a sword in attack and defense, but you can go beyond the expected by allowing him to attack more than once per turn, attempt to disarm foes with a flick of his blade, and so on.

There are no fixed rules for creating an NPC who can be matched perfectly against the PCs in combat—it's not that kind of game, and that's not the purpose of NPCs. Instead, use the game's simple mechanics to portray the NPCs in the world and in your narrative so that they make sense and can do what you want them to do (and cannot do what you don't want them to do).





Like the player characters, NPCs often carry and use cyphers. Thus, any NPC could have virtually any capability at his disposal as a one-shot power. In theory, NPCs can heal themselves, hurl balls of fire, freeze a monster in its tracks, peer into the future, or do anything else. You can define these cyphers and abilities when preparing for the game, or you can just go with the idea that certain NPCs can produce amazing and surprising effects and make them up as you go along—with some caveats.

If all NPCs can do whatever they want, whenever they want, that won't instill much believability in the players or give you much credibility as a GM. Keep the following things in mind.

Keep to the Level: NPCs should generally keep to their level parameters. Sure, you can give a tough NPC more health than his level might indicate, and the aforementioned great swordsman might attack and defend with his blade at higher than his normal level, but these are minor exceptions.

Explain Things However You Want: If you keep to the level parameters generally, you can express them in all sorts of interesting ways. For example, a level 5 NPC usually inflicts 5 points of damage. But that damage might come from bolts of crackling lightning thanks to an ancient elven wand he discovered.

Wild Cards: You might give some NPCs—sorcerers, gadgeteers with many strange devices, and the like—a wild card ability that allows them to do interesting things like levitate, use mind over matter, construct objects out of thin air, and so forth. You don't have to nail down these powers ahead of time. These rare NPCs can just do weird things. As long as you keep them reasonable most of the time, no one will bat an eye (if every important foe has an arcane shield, that will seem repetitious, dull, and unfair to the PCs).

Use GM Intrusions: Since a PC can produce all kinds of interesting, useful, and surprising effects thanks to cyphers, you can occasionally replicate this for an NPC by using GM intrusion to give him precisely the ability needed in the current situation. If the NPC has been poisoned, he pulls out a vial of antivenom. If a villain is cornered by the PCs, she activates a magic item that lets her phase down through the floor. If the foe is at the extreme edge of health, he injects himself with a syringe filled with a healing potion that restores 15 points of health immediately.

Because Shotguns & Sorcery *is more than about combat and gaining power, the NPCs should be motivated by things beyond them too. Love, lust, embarrassment, loyalty, revenge, familial ties, altruism, and curiosity are all great motivators.*

NPCs and Death

As explained in Chapter 9: Playing the Game, NPCs have a health score rather than three stat Pools. When an NPC reaches 0 health, he is down. Whether that means dead, unconscious, or incapacitated depends on the circumstances as dictated by you and the players. Much of this can be based on common sense. If the NPC is cut in half with a giant axe, he's probably dead. If he's mentally assaulted by a mind attack, he might be insane instead. If he's hit over the head with a club, well, that's your call.

It depends on the intentions of those who are fighting the NPC, too. PCs who want to knock out a foe rather than kill him can simply state that as their intention and describe their actions differently—using the flat of the blade, so to speak.

Interactions

Let's say the PCs want to learn more about a missing man, so they talk to his best friend. You and the players roleplay the conversation. The players are friendly and helpful and ask their questions with respect. Do you call for an Intellect roll (using the friend's level to determine the difficulty) to see if he will talk to them, or do you simply decide that he reacts to them well and gives them the information?

As another example, an old woman has watched over the entrance to an ancient ruin for years. She considers it a duty passed down to her by her ancestors and has never told anyone the secrets she knows. The PCs come along with some training in interactions, roll dice, and expect the woman to spill her guts. Does she tell them everything?

The answer to both questions is: it depends. In either situation, you're justified in ignoring the dice and mechanics and simply handling things through table conversation. That's what makes interaction encounters so interesting and so distinctive from, say, combat. You can't put aside the dice and act out the fight between the PCs and a giant, but you can roleplay a conversation. In such cases, you can portray the NPCs precisely as you want, in ways that seem fitting to their personalities, without worrying about die rolls. The best friend probably wants to help the PCs find his missing comrade. The old woman would never give her secrets to a band of smooth talkers that shows up on her doorstep one day. You can also ensure that the players get the information you want them to get—and don't get the information you don't want them to get.

On the other hand, sometimes using game mechanics is a better option. For example, a person who isn't particularly eloquent might want to play a character who's a smooth talker. You wouldn't require a player who's never held a sword in real life to prove that he's an adept combatant to win a fight in the game, so you should not force the player of a charming character to be, well, charming. The game mechanics can simulate those qualities.

Sometimes, you can use both approaches. You can let the conversation with the NPC play out around the table, and then call for rolls—not to determine whether the PCs succeed or fail at the interaction, but to get an idea of the degree of success. For example, if the characters have a good cover story for why the guards at the gate should let them pass, the roll might not determine whether the guards say yes (you can use common sense for that) but whether the guards accompany the PCs beyond the gate. In a way, the die roll shapes an NPC's reaction. It's not an on/off switch but a general degree of the overall trust that the PCs earn.

Language

Careful readers will have noticed that there are no intricate rules for languages in the Cypher System, just a brief mention that you can become fluent in a new language rather than gain a skill. That's because for most people, language is more of a background or roleplaying feature than a mechanical one. You don't want to have to make a roll to speak, for example. Characters should begin the game knowing the language(s) that make the most sense for them.

Language is a special case, however, because some people won't want to deal with it. And that's fine. Some players and GMs will find it an interesting challenge to communicate with people or creatures who don't share a common language. Others will think it's an impediment to interaction with no real upside. You can handle the issue however you want.

NPC Allies

Characters can gain NPC allies who accompany them on their expeditions. Since the players roll all the dice, you should handle NPC actions in the way that makes the most sense in the context of the situation and the NPC. If the characters climb up a steep slope and must make rolls to ascend, the NPC doesn't make a roll. Instead, the GM quickly considers whether he could climb it and goes from there. A fit, able ally should simply climb the slope. A feeble or overweight NPC will need assistance. The NPC doesn't face the challenge (that's what the PCs do)—he remains a part of the unfolding story. The old man the PCs escort through dangerous mountains needs help climbing because that's part of the story of the adventure. His able-bodied son who also travels with the group does not need help because that wouldn't make much sense.

If the entire group is caught in a landslide later in that same adventure, the GM can do one of two things in regard to the NPCs. Either decide what happens to them as seems most logical or fitting (perhaps using GM intrusion, since what befalls the NPCs also affects the PCs), or have the players roll on behalf of the NPCs and treat them just like the player characters in every way possible.

Creatures

Whenever possible, creatures should be handled like NPCs. They don't follow the same rules as the player characters. If anything, they should have greater latitude in doing things that don't fit the normal mold. A many-armed beast should be able to attack multiple foes. A charging rhino-like animal ought to be able to move a considerable distance and attack as part of a single action.

Consider creature size very carefully. For those that are quick and hard to hit, increase the difficulty to attack them by one step. Large, strong creatures should be easier to hit, so decrease the difficulty by one step. However, you should freely give the stagger ability to anything twice as large as a human. This means that if the creature strikes a foe, the target must make an immediate Might defense roll or lose its next turn.

A creature's level is a general indicator of its toughness, combining aspects of power, defense, intelligence, speed, and more into one rating. In theory, a small creature with amazing powers or extremely deadly venom could be high level, and a huge beast that isn't very bright and isn't much of a fighter could be low level. But these examples go against type. Generally, smaller creatures have less health and are less terrifying in combat than larger ones.

Like other Cypher System games, *Shotguns & Sorcery* has no system for building creatures. There is no rule that says a creature with a certain ability should be a given level, and there is no rule dictating how many abilities a creature of a given level should have. When making new creatures, keep the spirit of the system in mind. Lower-level creatures are less dangerous. A level 1 creature could be poisonous, but its venom should inflict a few points of damage at most. The venom of a level 6 creature, however, might knock a PC down a step on the damage track or put him into a coma if he fails a Might defense roll. A low-level creature might be able to fly, phase through objects, or teleport because these abilities make it more interesting but not necessarily more dangerous. The value of such abilities depends on the creature that uses them. A phasing rodent is not overly dangerous, but a phasing battle juggernaut is terrifying. Basic elements such as health, damage, and offensive or defensive powers (such as poison, paralysis, disintegration, immunity to attacks, and so on) need to be tied directly to level—higher-level creatures get better abilities and more of them.

Stagger means that if the creature strikes a foe, the target must make an immediate Might defense roll or lose its next turn.

Teaching the Rules

It's not really your job to teach the players the rules, yet it often falls upon GMs to do just that. Before beginning a game, encourage the players to read Chapter 3: How to Play Shotguns & Sorcery to get an overview of the game. It won't take them long.

You'll probably also want to give them an overview of the setting and the genre expectations that exist. Focus primarily on the kinds of characters a player can create and what they might do in the game. Once players understand who they are and what they'll do, the rest of the setting is just details they can discover as they go along.

The key to teaching someone the game is to start with the idea of die rolls and how they use the same mechanic no matter what a character tries to do. Then explain using Effort, which involves an introduction to the three stats. After that, a player is ready to start making a character. Taking a new player through the character-creation process gets him ready to play. Don't overload him with a lot of details beyond that. All of those can be picked up as needed in the course of play.

The First Few Sessions

With any game, consider running *Shotguns & Sorcery* a little differently the first few times you run it. There are a few things you can expect with a table full of new players.



First of all, the players won't get the terminology and the jargon right—they'll use the terminology and jargon of the last game they played. And that's fine. Try to get it right because the players will follow your lead, and after a session or two, they'll start getting it right themselves. If you always call things by the wrong name, the players will, too. However, don't just spout jargon. Each time you use a new term for the first time, such as "damage track," "GM intrusion," or even "difficulty," explain what it means. Make sure everyone's on the same page, even with the basic stuff.

The players won't know what's easy and what's hard. Part of good play is knowing when to use Effort and when to conserve it, but beginning players will have no frame of reference. In this case, the best way to give them solid ground to stand on is to be transparent. Tell them the target number for each task before they attempt an action. Guide them through the process. Remind them that they can use Effort if need be, although they probably won't forget. On the contrary, beginning players tend to use Effort on every roll. You can almost count on it. This means you can expect beginning characters to do very well in whatever they set out to do, but they'll have to rest more often because they'll deplete their stat Pools quickly.

> *When referring to distance, feel free to use the terms "close" and "immediate" interchangeably. Use whatever sounds best in context. The wizard might be "close" to the veteran, within "close range," or within "immediate distance."*

Running Combats

Combat should happen for a reason. Battles should be about something. There should be something interesting at stake. "Trying not to die" is an interesting stake, but it's not the only one. Combat can be fun and hopefully exciting in its own right, but it's not necessarily the focus. Fighting through a long combat isn't the point, and finding a way to win a combat quickly through creative thought isn't cheating. In fact, it should be encouraged. Defeating the "big boss monster" easily should not be a letdown; it should be the result of smart, creative play. Adventures shouldn't always have a climax involving a "big boss monster," anyway. The exciting end to the story could involve surviving a massive landslide, finding a way to shut down a dangerous magical device, or convincing a crime boss to let the hostages go.

The game is about discovery. Can you have discovery through combat?

Sure. Say the PCs are exploring an ancient complex and encounter a weird, unknown creature. It attacks, but during the fight, it telepathically says "Curious" and "Creature unknown" and "Protect the sanctum." It's telepathically talking to someone else, but the PCs "overhear." Although the combat is fairly standard, the PCs have discovered a new creature, and they know it's something that's never encountered a human before. There are more of them, somewhere, and there's some kind of sanctum. It's not just a fight. The PCs have learned something.

In a more standard setup, the combat is the obstacle that the PCs must overcome to reach the discovery, which again reinforces the idea that there is no right or wrong way to overcome the obstacle. Sneak past the foes or convince them to let the PCs pass—both are entirely valid.

Mechanically, combat doesn't play out as it does in many games where damage whittles down a character's hit points or health

score. This kind of slow attrition is less likely to happen because the PCs will try to avoid getting hit. For example, many players will spend points from their Speed Pool to add Effort to their defense rolls to ensure that they don't get hit (and thus don't lose points from their Might Pool). Characters also have numerous abilities to add to their Speed defense rolls or reduce the difficulty of a Speed defense task. Last, and perhaps most significant, the most frequent use of experience points for rerolls will probably be defensive in nature. Players just don't like their characters to get hit.

There are two important aspects to this. The first is that it's the players' choice. They're in control of which points they lose and how many, so it feels different, even though the effect is largely the same—a slow loss of points over time. The second aspect is that, narratively, you don't have to explain and describe lots of minor wounds and scratches that eventually amount to something. When PCs are struck, it's likely significant. Plus, so many creatures and foes have effects that paralyze, infect, poison, stun, and so on that the damage is not necessarily the interesting or significant part. That's why there are creatures whose attacks can move a PC down the damage track a step or two. It's not so much about the points of damage but the consequences of being hit at all.

Encourage the players to describe their actions, not the mechanics involved. The game is more fun if a player says things like, "I leap up on the table and swing my sword down on the creature," instead of "I use my jump skill to get up on the table and get a one-step advantage on my attack roll."



Crafting Stories

Your biggest job as the GM is to provide the impetus for stories in the game. The stories themselves arise out of gameplay, but they are started and guided by you. You provide the seed of the story and present the events as they unfold because of what the PCs and NPCs do.

Crafting a good story is a topic that could fill a book of this size. I highly recommend that interested GMs read books or articles aimed at fiction writers (many of which are available on the Internet) that provide advice on plot. For that matter, similar sources about characterization can help in the creation of NPCs, as well.

For now, remember these few key concepts:

- Learn what motivates the players at your table. Exploration? Combat? Puzzle-solving? Interacting with NPCs? Cater to these desires.
- Learn what motivates the PCs that the players run. What are the characters' goals? What do they seek? Wealth? Curiosity? Power? Protecting others? Use these things to start your stories.
- Create stories that involve the PCs as directly as possible. If something bad is affecting people, have it affect the PCs or their loved ones, too. Rather than enticing them to strive to save a random farmer, get them to save a character's brother or best friend.
- Remember that the players are your co-storytellers, and that the PCs are the main characters of the story, so their decisions should have direct impact on what happens.
- Weave multiple stories together. Have the PCs learn about the beginning of one story while they're still embroiled in another.
- Vary your stories. Follow a combat-heavy exploration of an ancient ruin with an intrigue-filled adventure in a large city that involves a lot of interaction. Create one story that is a long quest but then follow it up with another that wraps up in a single game session.
- Vary the encounters within a story. Even in the middle of a series of battles, there's always room for exploration or interaction (and it breaks things up).
- Not every story needs to be about saving the world. Sometimes the smaller stories about helping one person can be the most interesting.
- Twists and unexpected events are wonderful and should be used often, but sometimes the biggest twist is to have things go exactly the way the players think it will.
- Don't get bogged down justifying, rationalizing, or explaining every detail. The players aren't supposed to understand everything.
- Stories that involve a lot of events the PCs are unaware of will end up making little sense to the players. Having important events occur "off-screen" should probably be avoided.
- Base your stories on real human emotion. NPC villains can be driven by greed or power, but also by love, longing, curiosity, or even misguided altruism. Don't make your players just interact with the events—make them react to the emotions behind the events. Villains should inspire actual hate and anger. The loss of a valued ally should inspire actual sadness and loss.
- Occasionally, create stories that are sequels to your previous stories. The decisions that the players made in the past affect things in the present. Villains return for another try at reaching their goal, or perhaps just for revenge.

Pacing

The key to running a great game as opposed to an adequate one is often the simple matter of pacing. Pacing is simple to describe, but it's not so simple to understand or implement. It comes with practice and a sort of developed intuition.

Pacing can mean many things. Let's briefly break them down.

Pacing within an Encounter

Keep things moving. Don't let the action get bogged down by indecisive players, arguments about the rules, or irrelevant minutiae. Don't let the middle of an encounter get sidetracked by something that reminds a player (or worse, you) of a gaming story, a movie, or a funny thing on the Internet. There's time for all of that later, probably after the game session is over.

Don't let the end of the encounter drag out. When it's clear how things are going to turn out, and people might start to get bored, wrap it up. If the PCs were fighting two dozen giant rats and only three are left, there's nothing wrong with saying that those last three run away or that the PCs handily dispatch them. Wrap things up and move along.

Pacing within a Game Session

Have many different encounters in a session—some long, some short, some complex, some straightforward. One of the trickiest aspects of game session pacing is deciding what to play out and what to skip. For example, the PCs want to buy new gear with the money they were paid for a job. You could describe the town's market and roleplay each interaction with various merchants. You could even call for occasional rolls to see if the characters get good deals or not. Alternatively, you could say, "Okay, you guys buy whatever you want," and then move on. There are good cases to be made for both approaches, depending on the context. Maybe one of the PCs contracted a disease on the last mission and doesn't realize it until he is interacting with people in the market. Maybe a pickpocket in the mall attempts to steal from the PCs, or they notice a thief stealing from a store. Maybe the players like interacting with NPCs and enjoy your portrayal of minor characters. All of these are good reasons to play out a shopping encounter. But if there's no compelling reason, just advance through it.



Sometimes, you should do this even if one player wants to play out every moment of his character's life and describe everything in excruciating detail. Although you want everyone to be happy, you're in charge of pacing. If you must err, make the players struggle to keep up, rather than letting them be bored and wonder when you're going to get on with it. Thus, if there's no compelling reason against it, don't hesitate to advance time, even in large chunks. If the PCs finish a big scenario and some downtime makes sense, there's nothing wrong with announcing, "So, three weeks later, you hear that..." and starting the next storyline (as long as the players are content with it). Books and movies do this kind of thing all the time. Skip the boring bits.

In addition, feel free to intrude on player discussions for the purpose of moving things along. Sometimes players spin their wheels or plan and plan their next move, never accomplishing anything. You can intrude by throwing an encounter or a surprise their way ("A message arrives from the priests at the clave"), or you can simply say, "Let's move things along."

Keep a clock handy so you can see how much time is left in the session. Never lose track of time. You want to end a session at a good point—a place where everyone can catch their breath, at a good cliffhanger, or as everything in a story wraps up so you can start anew next time. These are all fine stopping points, but you want to control which one you use. Next session, you'll have to start things up again, recap past events, and get everyone back into the swing of things.

Try to ensure that at the end of any session, the players can look back on what they did and feel like they accomplished something.

Pacing within a Story

This aspect of pacing goes back to researching how fiction writers handle story creation, and it's a huge subject, but consider the standard three-act structure as a good starting point. In act one, the problem is introduced. In act two, things get worse (or a new complication is introduced). In act three, things are resolved. There are many other ways to do it, but remember that the action needs to ebb and flow. You need downtime between the moments of action, horror, or high drama.

Pacing within a Campaign

Mix short scenarios in with longer ones. Weave the plotlines together so that as one story ends, the PCs still have things to do. But don't be afraid of downtime. Let the characters have a week, a month, or longer here or there to live their normal lives before

throwing them once again into the heart of danger. If a campaign takes a year of play time in the real world, you don't want it to take place in only three weeks of game time. That never feels right.

Description

As mentioned above, use description that is both precise and concise. Precision comes from avoiding relative terms like "big" or "small" or emotional words like "terrifying" because these words mean different things to different people. This doesn't mean you have to specify the exact height of every structure the PCs find. But rather than describing a building as "a tall tower," consider saying "a tower at least five times the height of the trees around it."

Being concise is important, too. Go on too long with descriptions, and the players' minds will drift. Sometimes, what works best are short, declarative, evocative descriptions with pauses in between for player comments or questions.

Describing the Action

Great roleplaying game sessions often involve immersion. Immersion comes from a sense of being truly caught up in the action and the fictional world. Just as when you read a great book or watch a well-made movie, playing an RPG can get you caught up in your own imagination. And best of all, you're sharing your imaginative escape with everyone else at the table. For immersion to work, you have to give great descriptions.

Combat, for example, is very simple and open-ended rather than precise, giving you lots of room to describe how characters move, how they attack, and how they avoid attacks. A successful Speed defense roll might mean dodging, blocking with a weapon, or ducking behind a pillar. A character who is struck in combat for 3 points of damage might have dodged the weapon attack but fallen backward, perhaps onto something hazardous.

The players should describe their actions, too. Encourage them to be creative in what they do and how they perform a task, whether it involves the way they attack, what they do to give themselves the best chance to make a difficult leap over a pit, or how they slip into a noble's study to steal the map they need.

Don't take any of this as a requirement. Long descriptions can be tedious as easily as they can be interesting. Sometimes the best way to serve the pacing of a combat encounter is to state whether an attack hit and how much damage is dealt and keep things moving. Vivid description is great, but it's not a valid excuse for you or a player to drag things out and destroy the pacing.



Preparing for the Game Session

You don't need to spend hours carefully designing stats for NPCs (unless you want to). There aren't a lot of rules to memorize. It's not worth writing out elaborate descriptions of each encounter because if you let things proceed organically, many planned encounters might not be used. The rules let you to come up with a lot of the details as you go along, since you don't have to reference loads of books and stats during the game session.

To prepare for a session, you need to create only three things: a list of names, a brief outline, and a list of ideas.

1. A list of names appropriate to the setting

No matter how much you prepare, you'll end up creating some NPCs on the fly, so have a list of names to use when this happens. Leave room to write a quick note next to each name you use in case that NPC shows up in the game again.

2. A brief outline

The outline is an idea of where you think the story could go. Of course, the key word is *think*. You can't know—the actions of the PCs take things in unexpected directions. In truth, "outline" is probably not the right word. Think in terms of places the PCs might go, people or creatures they might interact with, and events that might occur. For example, the PCs enter Goblintown. You plan to start the session by having them hear about a local man named Dirk who disappeared mysteriously. Your notes might say:

- Dirk disappeared outside the tavern where he worked. North side of the district.
- Dirk lived in a small, run-down house. Partner: Nillen—distraught and prone to drink.
- Tavern: About a half dozen employees. Boss: Vorriln. Witness: Vadda saw Barlis disappear right in front of her. Doesn't want to talk about it because she's heard about some kind of dark curse that she thinks is involved (level 4 to get her to talk). Knows Barlis recently found a strange item—looked like a large silver coin with a horned skull on it.
- Pickpocket (level 3) attempts to steal from one PC while they're in town.
- Local sage: Rorich. Has seen small coins like the one Vadda describes and says that they are symbols of a weird cult. Sends PCs to a scholar that lives in the Village who knows more about the cult.

And so on.



Obviously, that's just the beginning, but you've covered a lot of the contingencies, assuming the PCs investigate Barlis's disappearance at all. Some of that material might not get used. The PCs might not go to his house—only to the tavern and then to the sage. Maybe they won't go to the sage at all, and you'll need to have someone else direct them to the scholar. Or maybe the PCs will come up with a wholly unexpected path of investigation.

3. A list of ideas

Just like with the list of names, jot down a bunch of random ideas. These are things you can throw into the game at a moment's notice. They might be flavor, cool visuals, or important side plots. For example, your list might include:

- A mirror of elven make that shows a weird, though important, site on its surface foreshadowing a future event.
- A flatulent, deaf ogre that blames others for the tremendous stink it creates.
- Graffiti painted on the side of a building: "Down with the Dragon Emperor!"
- Goblins dressed in gang colors show up every place the characters go.
- An old book with steel plates for covers that don't open.

These are all ideas that you can sprinkle into the game when appropriate. You haven't tied them to a specific encounter, so you can insert them whenever you want. You might not use them all in the same adventure—they're just ideas.

Handling Players

Part of being a GM is "handling" players. This means a lot of things. For example, it's partially your job to make sure that everyone has a good time. You need to ensure that all the players get to do the kinds of things they like to do in games, and that no one is left out. If one player really likes combat and another enjoys NPC interaction, provide some of both. Before you can do that, you need to find out what the players want in the first place, so talk to them and learn their expectations.

Another big part of handling players is coping with disruptive players. Disruptive players can be the death of a game. They can hog all the attention, tell other players what to do, or challenge your rulings at every turn. A lot of GMs are tempted to deal with such players during the game by punishing them or giving them negative feedback. For example, they have the character get attacked more often, lose experience points, or suffer similar consequences. Resist this temptation. Instead, speak with the player person to person (not GM to player) outside of the game and explain that his behavior is causing problems. Be clear, direct, and firm, but also be friendly.

The bottom line, however, is don't play games with jerks. One disruptive, rude, or offensive player can ruin the whole group's fun.

A different problem player is one who just doesn't get the game's focus on story. These kinds of players tend to see all games as competitive enterprises, and they might try to "win" by exploiting what they see as holes in the rules to create and play an unbeatable character. Although part of many people's RPG experience is the fun of playing a powerful character, it shouldn't be the ultimate goal in this game because such a player will get frustrated and bored.

Some players absolutely will get the nature of the game. They'll understand that it's the spirit of the rules, not the letter, that's important. They'll get that the story being told is key. Rather than poring over the description of a power and trying to twist the words to an unintended meaning, they'll use their intelligence and creativity to figure out the best way to use the power to portray a character who fits the setting and is fun to play.

A player that is smart and creative enough to turn the tables on his foes in an unexpected way by using what's around him, allow it (if it makes sense). If the PCs find a pool of caustic fluid and lure their foes into it rather than fighting them in a straightforward manner, that's not cheating—that's awesome.

Be certain you don't accidentally penalize players for not doing the obvious or straightforward thing. Be generous with people who take nonstandard actions or who do something realistic (such as using their action to take stock of the situation rather than attack—grant them a step bonus). Don't make "attack" always the right choice. It's a creative game, so allow the players to be creative.

Designing Encounters

Encounters are to a game session what scenes are to a movie or a book. They're a way to break up the session, and the adventure at large, into smaller, more manageable chunks.

Sometimes it's more difficult to know where one encounter ends and another begins. For that reason, "encounter" is not always a useful or meaningful game term. It's only useful for you when you think about the scenes of your adventure. When the PCs talk to the temple priests, that's one encounter. After they do so, hopefully getting the information they need, they head off into the wilderness, where they have to cross a deep chasm—another encounter. When a dragon appears and attacks, that's another encounter, and so on.

Thus, not everything that happens is an encounter. Heading off into the wilderness, for example, probably involved gathering supplies, deciding on a route, and so on, but it isn't really an encounter. An encounter is when you, the GM, provide a lot of detail. You and the players interact a lot in an encounter. You might decide to subdivide everyone's actions into rounds to help keep track of who's doing what, when.

Sometimes, the term "adventure" gets just as messy as "encounter." Deciding where one adventure begins and another ends can be—and perhaps should be—difficult. "Adventure" is a useful term for published products, but for your own use, you might want to toss the concept out and just let one story or event flow into another naturally.



Complex Encounters

Encounters aren't just about combat. As mentioned above, talking to NPCs is an encounter. Dealing with a physical obstacle is an encounter. Figuring out how to use a complex machine is an encounter. The best encounters—the really memorable ones, in fact—involve multiple things happening at once. A fight on a boat racing down the rapids, for example, is an interesting encounter. An encounter where a couple of PCs must disable a bomb before it blows up the Academy of Arcane Apprentices while the others fend off attacking star troopers is interesting too.

Sometimes an encounter can be intentionally designed with that goal. At least occasionally, you should take an idea you have for an encounter and then add something else that will make it even more interesting, exciting, or challenging. The possibilities are endless. Perhaps gravity functions differently than expected. A weird fungus gives off spores that alter perception. The encounter takes place inside a sentient colossal golem that must be reasoned with and appeased while everything else is going on. A magic effect makes all metal in the encounter temporarily cease to exist. And that's just for starters. Make things crazy and fun. Design encounters that are like nothing the players have ever experienced.

Sometimes encounters with multiple levels of action or weird complications arise out of the game itself. The PCs have to leap onto a moving platform to get down into the giant machine's inner mechanisms, but the dwarves that they ran from earlier suddenly show up. You didn't plan for that ahead of time; it just happened because that's the way things went. And that's great.

Finally, GM intrusions can bring about these kinds of encounters on the fly. The PCs have to repair a huge device at the heart of an ancient complex that is venting poisonous gas before they are all overcome. With a GM intrusion that occurs to you at the last moment, you let them know that the gas also weakens the structural integrity of metal, and the supports under the floor the PCs are standing on are buckling and will collapse at any moment.

Balancing Encounters

There is no system for matching creatures of a particular level or tasks of a particular difficulty to characters of a particular tier. Matching character builds to exacting challenges is not part of this game. It's about story. Whatever you want to happen next in the story is a fine encounter as long as it's fun. You're not denying the characters XP if you make things too easy or too difficult, because that's not how XP are earned. If things are too difficult for the PCs, they'll have to flee, come up with a new strategy, or try something else entirely. The only thing you have to do to maintain "balance" is set difficulty within that encounter accurately and consistently. If everyone's having fun, the game is balanced. Two things will unbalance the game in this context.

1. One or more PCs are far more interesting than the others. Note that I said "more interesting," not "more powerful." If my character can do all kinds of cool things but can't destroy zombies as efficiently as yours does, I still might have a whole lot of fun.
2. The challenges the PCs face are routinely too easy or too difficult.

The first issue should be handled by the character creation rules. If there's a problem, it might be that poor choices were made or a player isn't taking full advantage of her options. If someone really doesn't enjoy playing her character, allow her to alter the PC or—perhaps better—create a new one.

The second issue is trickier. As previously stated, there is no formula that states that N number of level X NPCs are a good match for tier Y characters. However, when the game has four or five beginning characters, the following guidelines are generally true.

- Level 1 opponents will be nothing but a nuisance, even in sizable numbers (twelve to sixteen).
- Level 2 opponents will not be a challenge unless in numbers of twelve or more.
- Level 3 opponents will be an interesting challenge in numbers of four to eight.
- Level 4 opponents will be an interesting challenge in numbers of two or three.
- A single level 5 opponent might be an interesting challenge.
- A single level 6 opponent will be a serious challenge.
- A single level 7 or 8 opponent will likely win in a fight.
- A single level 9 or 10 opponent will win in a fight without breaking a sweat.

The above parameters depend on the situation at hand. If the PCs are already worn down from prior encounters, or if they have the right cyphers, any of the expectations listed above can change. That's why there is no system for balancing encounters. Just keep in mind that beginning characters are pretty hardy and probably have some interesting resources, so you aren't likely to wipe out the group by accident. Character death is unlikely unless the PCs have already been through a number of other encounters and are worn down.

Resolving Encounters

Don't plan for how an encounter ends. Let the game play determine that. This ensures players have the proper level of input. You decide, for example, that if the PCs go into the tower, a gang of orcs inside will attack. However, you can't decide how that encounter will end. Maybe the PCs will be victorious. Maybe they won't. Maybe they'll flee, or maybe they'll bargain for their lives.

If you try to decide such things ahead of time, that's called railroading the game, and it puts the players in the role of observers rather than actors. Even if you try to plan the results of an encounter ahead of time but then let the game play dictate them, you still might end up planning for a lot of outcomes that don't happen. In other words, if you base a whole plotline on the PCs fleeing the tower to get away from the mutants, but instead they manage to drive the mutants out instead, all your plans are wasted.

Plan for various possible outcomes, but don't predetermine them. Think of your story as having many possible plotlines, not just one.

Challenging Characters

If the game has a balance problem, it's more likely due to the players (and their characters) finding things too easy. If a particular encounter is too hard, the characters should learn when to run away and find something else to do (or you should lighten up a bit). If the characters in the group need a greater challenge, try one or more of the following options.

Damage Track: Sometimes a few points of damage aren't enough to scare a player. But a weapon or effect that immediately moves him one step down the damage track will terrify him. No matter how big a character's stat Pools are, no matter how much Armor he has, there are only three such steps to death.

Ongoing Damage: Poisons that inflict even a small amount of damage (1 or 2 points) every round until an antidote is found can be extremely deadly. Or consider this: one of the reasons that napalm is so terrible is that it clings to surfaces, including flesh. Imagine a weapon or effect that inflicts 5 points of fire damage every round and persists for eight rounds unless the characters can figure out a way to douse it.

Effects Other Than Damage: Attacks can blind, stun, grapple, paralyze, infect, hobble, or otherwise hinder a character without dealing any points of damage at all.

Effects That Harm Equipment: A PC's gear is often the source of his abilities. Destroying or nullifying cyphers or artifacts damages him just as surely as breaking his leg would—it limits a player's options, which really hurts.

Enemies Working in Concert: Although a group effectively acting as one is a special ability of some creatures, you could apply it to any creature you like. As a general rule, for every four creatures working together, treat them as one creature with a level equal to the highest of them plus 1, dealing a minimum of 2 additional points of damage. So a level 4 bandit who has three level 3 allies could team up and attack one foe as a level 5 NPC. That means their attack deals more damage and is harder to defend against. It also means less die rolling, so the combat moves along faster.

Beef Up the Foes: You're in charge of the NPC stats. If they need more Armor, more health, or higher levels to be a challenge, simply make it so. It's easy and straightforward to give an NPC a "boost package" of four things:

- +10 health
- +1 to Armor
- 3 additional points of damage
- Attacks and defends as one level higher

That should do the trick, but if necessary, give the boost package to the same NPC again.

Beef Up the Obstacles: Include more exotic materials in doors and other barriers, which increase their difficulty by one to three steps. Make physical challenges more difficult—the surfaces that need to be climbed are slippery, the waters that need to be swum are roiling, and other actions are hampered by strong winds. Don't beef up obstacles in this way too often, but remember that circumstances such as weather are your tools for adjusting the difficulty of any action.



Higher-Tier Characters

Although characters start out quite capable, by the time they reach the fifth or sixth tier, they will be truly legendary. Both you and the players might find reaching the upper tiers more rewarding and satisfying if the journey unfolds more gradually, so you can slow down this progress if desired. To do this, starting at third or fourth tier, you can specify how the players can spend the experience points they earn. Requiring that some XP (as much as half) must be spent on immediate, short-term, or long-term advantages—rather than on character advancement—will slow down the progression through the upper tiers. But it won't take anything away from the play experience because spending XP on those advantages is fun and rewarding, too.

Sometimes players will be unwilling to spend XP on anything other than character benefits, which in turn lead to advancing to new tiers. The truth is, spending XP on immediate or short-term gains very likely provides as much overall benefit. In other words, in the big picture, four crucial rerolls are probably about the same as acquiring a new skill. It will take some players a while to come to that conclusion, however.

Character Death

Challenging characters is important. If there is no threat of failure—or at least the perceived threat of failure—it's hard for players to feel compelled by the story. Very often, the ultimate failure a PC might face is death. An adventurer's life is a dangerous one. But death is serious because it means the player can no longer play his character.

If a character dies, the easiest and most straightforward response is to have the player create a new character. Ideally, he will make a beginning character (which is the easiest to create), but if the other characters are third tier or higher, it will be more satisfying to let the player create his new character at an advanced tier.

However, keep in mind that a lower-tier character can operate effectively in the company of higher-tier characters. The differences are not so striking. If a player brings a new beginning character into a group of advanced characters, be particularly generous with XP to help the new character catch up to the others a bit.

Regardless, arrange the circumstances of the story so that you can bring in the new character in a logical fashion and as quickly as possible.

Not Quite Dead: There is an alternative for a player who really, really wants to keep playing the same character. Allow the PC to teeter on the brink of death but survive, saved by his companions or by sheer luck. He might recover but have serious injuries that result in a weakness, an inability, or some other drawback. The point is not to penalize the PC (although barely escaping death should have some repercussions) but to change the character in a memorable way.



Chapter 20: Bringing the World to Life

Now that you know all about what and who are in the world and how it works, it's time to have a little chat about how to run a game set in it. *Shotguns & Sorcery* has its own distinct flavor that's maybe a little different from other settings you've seen. It's half noir, half fantasy, and all adventure.

As a reader, it's one thing to soak all that up in the middle of one of the published stories. As a Game Master, though, you need to understand it to your core so you can guide your players through the world and maintain a consistent tone and flavor throughout.

So, here's where we draw back the curtain a bit and let you in on how things in Shotgun & Sorcery really work. If you're a player, turn back now, but if you're a game master, welcome! Dive in and enjoy.

Maintaining Tone

Shotguns & Sorcery is officially fantasy noir, a melding of the tropes from epic fantasy and film noir. It also features elements from other genres, including action, mystery, thriller, and horror.

It manages this by taking an epic fantasy setting and nearly destroying it with hordes of zombies, then tossing everything that's left into a pressure cooker. After that, just wait five hundred years until the magic-influenced technology ramps up to a reasonable level. Then add a little humor to season to your taste.

That sounds like a lot to balance all at once, but it's easier than it sounds. The material in the rest of this book should already have given you an excellent foundation for what *Shotguns & Sorcery* is all about. If that's not enough, do yourself a favor and pick up the stories the game is based on.

One of the short stories, "Goblintown Justice," is available for free at excellent ebook retailers everywhere, and also at *Forbeck.com*. Reading that alone should give you a solid sense of how the world works and what kinds of stories and adventures are appropriate for it. You should also pick up "Friends Like These."

If you like those, don't be shy. Go ahead and grab the *Shotguns & Sorcery* trilogy as well: *Hard Times in Dragon City*, *Bad Times in Dragon City*, and *End Times in Dragon City*. Then you'll have the whole set — at least for now.

Even after reading the books, you may have some questions. After all, as a reader, you're supposed to figure out the things the stories implicitly reveal to you. In this game, we can spell them out.

Noirish

Shotguns & Sorcery borrows many of its tropes from the hard-boiled detective or film noir genres, mixing them with epic fantasy to create a unique flavor. Often it does this by taking the standard bits of fantasy and turning them deftly on their heads.

The heroes in *Shotguns & Sorcery* aren't chosen ones or shining knights, for instance. They're anti-heroes, the last people you might expect to step up and save the day. They have dark pasts filled with poor choices, and they indulge in their vices too much, perhaps in an effort to escape the ramifications of those bad decisions.

Despite that, they are honorable people who have their own sense of right and wrong in a world filled with rampant corruption and pragmatic evils. They are existentialists, faithless souls who search their own consciences as well as their city for something they can believe in.

Such heroes rarely come from money, or if they have, they've forsaken it. They are often alone, although they work with others when the crisis calls for it.

Such crises often involve mysteries revolving around murder—or crimes even more dangerous and vile. The heroes start tugging at the mystery's tangled threads until their entire world begins to unravel. And yet, because they're good people at their core—curious people who refuse to give into dismay —they keep tugging at those threads until it all comes apart around them, if only so they can lay the truths about their world bare to themselves and decide what to do about them.

In other words, their adventures start small and then spin wildly out of control. They find themselves drawn in despite themselves—because they still care more than they want to. Maybe more than they should.

They know better than to get involved. They've been burned before. But they can't remain true to themselves if they walk away.

Building It Up

You don't have to have everything spin out of control in a single adventure, of course. If you can manage it, fantastic, but most games wind up better if you start out with a slow burn before you ramp up to the fire that threatens to consume the Dragon's Spire.

To pull this off, start small. Have the heroes work a mystery that incidentally exposes them to the city's rampant corruption and constant moral compromises. But when they try to tie everything up into a neat knot, leave a few threads out of their reach.

They can then follow these to the next adventure, and from there to the next. Reveal a bit more each time, showing them the horrible things the people in charge do to maintain their power. Then, when you're ready, confront them with it in a way they cannot ignore.

After that, the heroes should provide a lot of the game's forward momentum. You can just sit back and watch the sparks fly.

Shotguns

The people of Dragon City have been forced to experiment and innovate as fast as they could—in every way they could manage—just so they could survive. While Dragon City is far more advanced than a typical epic fantasy setting—at least from a technological point of view—it has a long way to go before it catches up with the luxuries of the twenty-first century. That still puts it decades if not centuries ahead of most of the other spots on its planet.

The technology of Dragon City is approximately the equivalent of 1920 in the USA. They have lights, vehicles, and weaponry that fills the same function as their real-world equivalents. The difference is that most of these devices are powered not by electricity or gasoline, but by something even more plentiful: magic.

Glowglobes are a perfect example of this. They're essentially magically powered light bulbs, and they're just about as plentiful. Places that need them have them, and places that are too run down, abandoned, or just plain poor, don't.

The flying carpet is the equivalent of an early automobile. It gets you where you need to be, and in a pinch you can try to outrun or run down someone.

If you discover other needs in your game that the fiction or the RPG doesn't seem to fulfill, feel free to create an equivalent in your game. Neither talks about toilets, for instance, leaving that to your imagination. If you need an equivalent in your game, though, you might conjure up a lidded chamber pot that magically removes anything inside of it once it's closed.

Be careful, though, not to create new things that alter the nature of the setting. Installing magical call boxes in every business and home—the equivalent of a telephone—would drastically change the way Dragon City works. There, if you want to speak with someone, you have to track them down and have your say face to face.

Of course, a determined group of wizards might be able to put together a communications network like that if they put their mind to it. They just haven't gotten around to it—yet.

Have fun with it, and remember that it doesn't have to make perfect sense at any point. If it did, it would be technology. This is magic.



And Sorcery

Speaking of which, just because Dragon City comes off like a magic-powered equivalent of 1920s Chicago doesn't mean it's actually anything like that. At least not entirely. This is a world in which people of different species reside in a massive mountain city with each other, under the rule of a gigantic dragon who protects them from zombies.

Don't forget the sorcery. Things in the game are strange and magical. They're weird in the best ways. While Dragon City may have the trappings of film noir, it's still an epic fantasy setting at its core.

There are monsters here, for instance. Creatures that make no damn sense as physiological beings but that function fine with the help of magic.

The Dragon Emperor is the perfect example of this. No creature so large and powerful could ever manage to soar through the air without the aid of a gigantic catapult, but the Dragon's magical nature makes it all happen.

The Magical Mix

Most of your players probably already know fantasy worlds of several kinds. Use the blend of technology and magic, and an advanced society to re-instill some of that sense of wonder they had the first time they encountered such things. Concoct cool mixes of your own that show the potential of putting such ingredients in the same pot.

What if, for instance, there's a society of vampires secretly living inside the city, trading black-market bags of blood? Or if someone's harnessed a group of their own zombies for slave labor in a private mine? Or if a family of doppelgangers has taken the place of a reclusive group of elves dealing dragon essence in the Elven Reaches?

What's in a Name?

The *Shotguns & Sorcery* stories differ from those in many other fantasy settings in that they often use names that could have come from our world. If you're paying attention, there's a quiet pattern to the names that makes them fall together in a way that should seem familiar to you.

The different intelligent races that reside in Dragon City have names that correspond to real-world ethnicities. See the table below for details.

Naming Conventions

Race	Ethnicity of Names
Elves	Italian
Dwarves	German
Gnomes	Russian
Halflings	Irish
Humans	English

You might notice that the table above is heavily Eurocentric, but you should feel free to make exceptions. This is especially true among humans, who comprise a much more diverse group of people than the other races. They have folks with different skin colors, hair colors, eye colors, features, and so on, and they have different names to go with them.

Such differences don't make a huge difference to people in the Village. Max Gibson, for instance, has dark skin, but no one ever mentions it. The fact that he's human offers different people plenty of reasons to form prejudices for or against him, and the color of his skin pales next to such things.



If you have a hard time coming up with names that fit, don't worry about it too much. Websites like BehindTheName.com offer up all sorts of suggestions for you, including the ethnicity of different names as well as the meanings behind them.

The green-skinned peoples of Dragon City don't have a coherent naming scheme. This is because, as the lowest class of people in Dragon City, it's rare for any of them to even have a last name. Most of their names are short—usually a syllable or two—and simple. For them, you can just take a name of any kind and, if necessary, shorten it, and you're done.

Languages

The people of Dragon City speak a common tongue that was once the language of the people of Watersmeet, the nearest city. They adopted this because when Dragon City was founded, the largest number of its people came from Watersmeet, and they formed the bulk of the people who settled in the Village.

The elves have their own language that they still speak among each other, but few people outside of them bother. There were actually several dialects of the elvish tongue, but they've settled on a single one for simplicity's sake. Some of their human servants have picked it up over the years, but they often pretend they don't know a word of it, if only so that their employers might speak freely—and unwittingly—in front of them.

The dwarves also have their own language, but even fewer people speak it, especially among the younger generations. Again, there were once many dialects of dwarvish, but the dwarves of Dragon City settled on a single one before it began to disappear.

The myriad other languages the original settlers of Dragon City spoke have all faded into obscurity. You can still hear snippets of them, or borrowed words, thrown about in daily speech, but that's all that's left of them, outside of dusty libraries or elvish memories.

Transformed Language

One of the fun things about working in a strange fictional setting is imaging how the world affected the way people speak. Just as magic alters their world, their world alters their terminology.

Dragon City Selected Vocabulary

Term	Equivalent
Dragonshit	A curse
Upslope	North; High-class
Downslope	South; Low-class
Dragon's balls	A curse
Guard	Police
Gem didn't fall far from the vein	Apple didn't fall far from the tree (Dwarf)
What in the bottom of the Dragon's horde?	What in the world?
A scale from the dragon that scorched me	A hair from the dog that bit me
What in the Dragon's seven secret names?	What in the world?
Riding the dragon (smoking dragon essence)	Riding the dragon (taking heroin)
Mojo	Magic

Because of the proximity in which the people of Dragon City live, they often pick up each other's idioms. Things that might have been peculiar to dwarves five hundred years ago are now known throughout the city.

A gentle spicing of your speech with such gems can help make the world feel more concrete. Take care not to hammer on this too much, though, as it can quickly overwhelm a listener. A little bit goes a long way.

Interacting With the Novels

Because the *Shotguns & Sorcery Roleplaying Game* sprang from a series of published stories, it presents some interesting challenges. One of the foremost of these is the timing of the game in the setting.

The game presented here is set in the time before any of the published stories happen. That's so the game doesn't spoil any of the plot twists in the books. Also, it means you can play the game without having to read any of the stories at all.

If you do read the stories, they give you a much fuller understanding of Dragon City and its people than you can get from the game. They're the source of everything in this book, plus they're great fun.

Iconic Characters

Many of the characters mentioned in this book appear in the *Shotguns & Sorcery* stories, and that's intentional. Those are fully formed characters with intriguing plans and interesting histories, and they make for some of the most important people in Dragon City. Leaving them aside would feel like cheating you out of all that.

As your game progresses, though, you may find that your players have an effect upon those iconic characters. If enough of this happens, it may make the events in the novels unlikely to happen—or even impossible.

Don't worry about it. As soon as you launch a game of *Shotguns & Sorcery* it become something unique to itself. Your game is yours, and you don't have to adhere to the stories any more than you want to.

Think of yourself and your players as developing your own alternate stories that run along a parallel path to the published tales. It's entirely up to you and your players how closely you want to hew to what's been written.

It can be fun to follow along with the heroes from the stories and have your characters interact with them, but they're just as free to run off and do things on their own. To have their own trials, tribulations, and adventures.

If someone kills (for instance) Max Gibson in the middle of a firefight, his friends will mourn him, but the world—in particular, your version of the world—will go on without him.

Don't fight that. Run with it.

Spoilers

If the players have read the books, you should too. Otherwise, they're going to know all sorts of things you're only going to be able to guess at.

This book reveals as much as it can without barging into the timeframe of the novels—and many more things to boot. But some of the elements of the novels might leak backward in time to your game if you don't see them there.

Having the players read the books really shouldn't be a problem. Again, the world you're running your game in is parallel to that of the stories. If you need to change things around to fit your plans for your game, go right ahead.

If the players seem like they're anticipating the events in the stories a bit too much, remind them that their characters can't possibly have that same kind of knowledge. Not without a prophet of some sort, at least!

Even then, prophesies often turn out to be wrong. Or can be interpreted in many ways. If you want to surprise players who have read the books, change some of the elements from the stories around.

In fact, you can even make the stories red herrings that lead the players in one direction. Then you can spring a massive surprise on them by turning things around. If you go big with this, though, it's a trick you can really only pull once. Be sure you make a real moment out of it. Afterward, the players will realize that they're in their own story—one they're making together with you every time they sit down to play—and they're sure to change their plans.

Playing After the Novels

Alternatively, you can play *Shotguns & Sorcery* in the time after the stories are set—specifically, after the events in *End Times in Dragon City*. Take care with this route, though, since that novel ends with a major shakeup to the status quo in Dragon City, which means that some of the information contained in this book would be outdated.

Still, if you'd like to pursue that option, please go right ahead. Here are a few ideas about how it might work.

There be spoilers here.
Stop reading if you plan to read the books.

By the end of *End Times in Dragon City*, both the Dragon Emperor and the Ruler of the Dead have been killed or destroyed. Much of the Imperial Dragon's Guard is dead as well. The undead no longer roam the land, and Dragon City is now open to the world for the first time.

There's many ways the city could go from here, but there could well be a rush of people from Dragon City to go plunder the rest of the continent. After all, the undead who kept people away from these things now lie rotting on the ground, and there's nothing to prevent people from gathering up as many riches as they can find as fast as they can reach them.

Dragon City is sure to host many new visitors. Some of these may be adventurers from other lands, hoping to grab some of the easy treasure for themselves. Others might be merchants who would like to open up new territories.

Nearby nations may decide there's no point in letting the adventurers have all the fun when they can send armies in to loot the entire continent instead. It's likely that more than one nation will have the same notion. Where they meet, they're sure to clash, bringing old rivalries from their own continent with them. Dragon City could quickly find itself as the central battlefield in a proxy war between such countries. Can it maintain its neutrality



and become a kind of Casablanca of its world? Or will it find itself thrust into the role of kingmaker, helping decide which power will triumph?

This is all-new territory at the moment, so it's entirely up to you. Run with it, and have fun.

A Hero's Job

Now that you have a group of heroes ready to go adventuring in Dragon City, what should they actually do? What troubles does a fantasy noir hero tackle?

In general, *Shotguns & Sorcery* heroes are down on their luck—or maybe never had any to begin with. They're loyal to their friends, even if their friends are terrible. They are happy to make a quick coin, but they refuse to compromise their own sense of honor to do so. They have a hard time trusting people, but once they do, they go all in.

They're also the kind of people that the less scrupulous can take advantage of, either by playing on their moral code or by waiting for the heroes to do all the work while the villains reap all the rewards.

Such people have two basic options. They can make their way inside the Great Circle and do their best to remain true to who they are, or they can venture outside the city to see if they can wrest a fortune from the grasp of the Ruler of the Dead.

Either way, they're bound for trouble.

Adventures in Dragon City

Finding things to do inside Dragon City is simple. The heroes already live in the city, and presumably they were born and raised there as well. They have connections with everyone around them: family, friends, and enemies. As the game master, all you have to do is tug on those connections and watch the heroes' lives start to unravel.

Even if the heroes aren't particularly adventurous, in Dragon City, the adventures can come to them. They may arrive as a knock on the door or a bullet through your hat, but either way, trouble is hard to avoid.

No *Shotguns & Sorcery* adventure should be entirely straightforward. No matter what the heroes think is going on—at least on the surface— be sure to throw in at least one complication to shake things up. This helps keep the story lively and the heroes on their toes.

Scenarios

Here are a number of rough ideas for adventures inside Dragon City.

- A goblin child asks for help. She's lost in the wrong part of town and is terrified she'll be thrown in jail for it. **Complication:** The child's mother brought her along while she burgled a house, and she's now disappeared.
- There are reports of an elf that turned up dead in Goblintown. The family has put up a huge reward for the recovery of the corpse. **Complication:** The elf isn't dead, just hiding out from his parents, but there are plenty of other fortune hunters who won't mind bringing him back in a body bag.
- One of the heroes' homes gets robbed. **Complication:** The robber was actually an assassin looking for one of the heroes' siblings.



- A halfling approaches the heroes with the chance to buy a flying carpet of their own, cheap. **Complication:** The flying carpet was stolen, and the original owner wants it back—along with a little revenge on whoever has it.
- After catching the heroes doing something technically wrong but usually ignored (like jaywalking), a Guard shakes the heroes down for some coins.
- The heroes hear a call for help and spot an orc fleeing past them at top speed. **Complication:** The orc is the one in trouble. Having run afoul of his own gang, he's no longer welcome in Goblintown and is trying to hide out in a nicer part of town.
- A portion of the street gives way under the heroes' feet, exposing a tunnel that leads off into the darkness. **Complication:** The tunnel does not date from the city's founding, as perhaps guessed at. Instead, a burrowing monster dug it out while trying to flee from someone who'd destroyed its home.
- A horde of zombies appears on the city's streets and attacks anyone nearby. **Complication:** The Ruler of the Dead didn't send them there. They're homegrown.
- A shopkeeper hired the heroes as protection from the gangsters who have been shaking down the store. **Complication:** The shopkeeper has a bunch of stolen property in the shop's basement—including things stolen from the gangsters.



- An old enemy of the heroes turns up dead on the wrong side of town, and the heroes are the number-one suspects, according to both the Guard and the enemy's friends. **Complication:** The corpse was magically altered to resemble the enemy, who is alive and well and, behind the scenes, is coordinating the hunt for the heroes.

Adventures Outside Dragon City

While city adventures make up a good part of the fun in *Shotguns & Sorcery*, players may also want to stretch their legs and roam the lands beyond the Great Circle. While the stories don't define the area outside of Dragon City much—at least not yet—there are plenty of opportunities for adventure out there.

While outside the Great Circle, heroes have to worry about two huge problems. The first, of course, is the number of hungry monsters who wander about, always hunting for fresh prey.

The second is that there are no safe havens outside of Dragon City. No inns offering food and shelter. No shops selling supplies. No healers to help patch wounds. The heroes are truly on their own.

Smart heroes should recognize this and plan accordingly. Well-equipped travelers can survive in the wild for weeks at a time, as long as they don't attract the attention of any monsters they can't handle. Fires—whether used for cooking or warmth—often draw such creatures in, as do any loud noises, like the sound of gunfire.

Many adventurers have had easy trips throughout the wilds, right up until their first fight with a monster. The sounds of that fight brought other creatures to investigate, and then others to that. The effect snowballed until the curious creatures overwhelmed the heroes by sheer force of numbers.

In some rare cases, the heroes might be able to pit two types or groups of monsters against each other. This is a challenging trick to pull off, though, and only the desperate would consider it.

So, the heroes will likely give it a shot.

Scenarios

Here are several rough ideas for adventures outside of Dragon City.

- The heroes discover the safe of a long-dead merchant filled with treasure beyond imagining. **Complication:** The treasure is all in worthless letters of credit and heavy gold coins. The heroes must decide how much they can carry and if it's worth it to keep carrying it while under pursuit.
- An insane elf—who has managed to hole up away from the zombies for all these centuries—attacks the heroes, believing them to be ghosts from his past, come back to haunt him after all these years alone in the wild. **Complication:** The elf is actually the ghost.
- The heroes find a dead-filled town in which the zombies shamble about in a sad approximation of their lives during the day. **Complication:** At night, the zombies attack anything that breathes.
- Hungry heroes stumble upon the tracks of a herd of deer and decide to replenish their stores with a bit of hunting. **Complication:** The deer are actually a pack of monsters who start hunting the heroes instead.
- As the heroes look toward Watersmeet, they spy something glinting in the ocean. It seems to be signaling them to come closer. **Complication:** The signal comes from a tribe of merpeople hoping to rescue any strangers. Once the heroes join them, though, the merpeople refuse to let them leave.
- The heroes find a map that leads them toward a legendary treasure vault that has remained undisturbed for all this time. **Complication:** When they enter the vault, they discover that this is a trap set for them by another team of adventurers who have decided that it's easier to rob the living than risk their lives among the walking dead.
- The heroes find an extensive underground complex once populated by dwarves but now resettled by a stalwart group of orc survivors. **Complication:** The orcs use zombie dwarves as labor, and a goblin crew out for revenge cuts the creatures loose.
- In the mountains, the heroes find a walled and well-locked city that seems undisturbed by the undead, but is also entirely empty. It seems as if it were abandoned on an instant's notice, and there's no sign of fighting. **Complication:** The occupants of the town were magically sealed away in a pocket dimension and frozen in time until someone comes to their town and sets them free. This, of course, attracts the zombies, who haven't been eradicated as the townspeople had hoped.
- While flying over the wilds, the heroes spot lights in the canopy of a forest. Investigating, they discover a settlement of flying faeries who retreated here to avoid the zombies who roam the lands below them. **Complication:** The fairies blame the people

of Dragon City for the loss of the ground, and it's not long before this anger erupts.

- The lake outside of the Great Circle seems to have calmed down of late, and the heroes decide to put a boat on it to travel to Watersmeet. **Complication:** The waters seem calm because a river monster has been eating the zombies who come close to it — and it's thrilled to have found some fresh meat.

Coming and Going

The first trick for the heroes who want to adventure in the wild, of course, is figuring out a way to get out of Dragon City. The Imperial Dragon's Guard frowns on leaving for any reason, as they know all too well how dangerous wandering about those lands can be.

The roaming zombies are just part of the problem. Without people fighting back against them for the past five centuries, many other types of monsters have flourished in civilization's absence. It's bad enough should the heroes encounter such creatures and be slaughtered. It's even worse if they lead those lethal beasts back home to threaten the rest of the city.

The Guard has orders to arrest anyone crossing the Great Circle. Those who resist or attempt to escape are to be shot on sight. That's not to say it doesn't happen though. All the time.

The Guard has been trained to look for zombies encroaching on the city. Such creatures usually move slowly and aimlessly, and the Guard has become lazy about trying to spot them over the years. The fact that the Ruler of the Dead hasn't mounted a serious offensive against the city for years has helped dull their worries.

Someone who can fly, ride a flying beast, or take a flying device—a carpet, broom, armored palanquin, or whatever—can usually emerge from the city's roofs and soar straight over the wall without incident. The Guard isn't as worried about people trying to escape as they are about things trying to get in, and they often miss seeing such people until they're already over the wall.

Few Guards will bother to shoot at someone escaping into the lands beyond. It would be like spitting at someone already dead.

If the Guard spots those same people on their way back home, though, they're bound to try to stop them with everything they have: bullets, lightning bolts, even swords. Things outside of the Great Circle are the troubles of the Ruler of the Dead. Things that get inside the city, though, threaten everyone.

The easiest way to get back into the city is to fly in at night, preferably somewhere high up the mountain, where the Guard patrols aren't so thick. Such people still run the danger of being shot down, though, by a sharp-eyed Guard on the lookout for flying threats.

Other people have made themselves invisible or camouflaged themselves well and then simply climbed the wall. This is no simple feat either, as the wall is a sheer, sometimes slick surface meant to keep intruders away—but others have managed it.

There are rumors of tunnels that run beneath the Great Circle—passageways that were carved out during the building of the wall. These were actually created, but they were sealed after the Great Circle was completed. It's possible that someone could reopen one, however unlikely. If someone actually found such a disused tunnel and unsealed it, though, they'd have to somehow ensure that the zombies that roam outside the wall couldn't find it and let themselves into the city too.

Dragon City in Other Games

If your home game uses a different system from the Cypher System, don't worry. Much of the information presented in this book stands independent of the system, and you should be able to lift it wholesale into your home game with relatively little work.

If you're a fan of *Pathfinder*, Outland Entertainment is preparing a full rules conversion for that system, so you don't have to do any extra work at all. Fans of *Dungeons & Dragons, Third Edition*, should be able to use the *Pathfinder* conversion with little work as well.

While *Shotguns & Sorcery* is set on a world all its own, the stories and the game all focus tightly on Dragon City. This is not by accident.

For one, noir tales tend to be about a single city rather than sweeping epics that encompass nations and continents. They're more often about fights than battles or even wars.

They're personal. This is why most noir tales are told from a single point of view. You zoom in on the troubles of that one person rather than that of an entire people.

One side-effect of this is that Dragon City feels self-contained. What goes on outside of the Great Circle—or the environments around it, at least—is far less important than what transpires inside. As far as most subjects of the Dragon Emperor are concerned, any maps of the world feature Dragon City in the center, and outside of that there are only the words "Here there be zombies."



This makes Dragon City fairly easy to drop into an existing setting, whether that's something published for another roleplaying game or a world entirely of your own concoction. All you have to do is find a relatively isolated place on the map of that world and drop Dragon City into it.

Because of the undead who have overwhelmed the region around Dragon City, it's best if its location is cut off from the rest of the world. Perhaps it's cut off from the rest of the world by a high mountain chain. Or maybe it's on a large island or continent of its own. Just as long as there's some reason for the zombie hordes of the Ruler of the Dead to not have spilled over into the rest of the world, it should work.

Dragon City and The Strange

Because *Shotguns & Sorcery* uses the Cypher System, Dragon City can make for a perfect recursion in *The Strange*, the Monte Cook Games roleplaying game of traveling among wildly different dimensions.

If you've gotten this far into the book, you hopefully already know Dragon City cold. Here are the extra facts you need to be able to use Dragon City as a recursion. If you have *The Strange* core rulebook, this should all make sense.

Dragon City Attributes

Level: 4

Laws: Magic

Playable Races: Dwarf, Elf, Gnome, Halfling, Human, Orc

Foci: Any of the Special Abilities described in this game.

Skills: Dragon City lore.

Connection to Strange: Certain doorways that lead into blind alleys.

Connection to Earth: A locked gate deep in the lair of the Dragon Emperor.

Size: 2,500 square miles (6,475 square km)

Spark: 20%

Trait: Noir. If a character does the right thing, even though it costs them (as judged by the GM), the difficulty of a chosen next task they attempt within the hour is reduced by one step (assuming that task isn't doing the wrong thing).

What a Recursor Knows about Dragon City

- Dragon City operates under the laws of magic and is seeded by many published stories and even a roleplaying game. It also feeds upon the epic fantasy and noir genres.
- Dragon City sits on a mountain surrounded by legions of zombies, and it is ruled over by a Dragon Emperor who keeps his people safe from the Ruler of the Dead in exchange for their loyalty.
- The Imperial Dragon's Guard carries out the will of the Dragon Emperor, and they often treat visitors from other realities as monsters to be thrown into jail and tortured for information, or—as often happens—shot on sight.





Appendix

Shotguns and Sorcery

Character Name _____

Is a _____ _____ **who** _____

Descriptor | Type | Focus

Tier	Effort	XP

Might		Speed		Intellect	
Pool	Edge	Pool	Edge	Pool	Edge

Advancement

- ☐ **Increase Capabilities** (+4 points into stat pool)
- ☐ **Move Toward Perfection** (+1 to the edge of your choice)
- ☐ **Extra Effort** (+1 into effort)
- ☐ **Skill Training** (train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill)
- ☐ **Other** (refer to the *Shotguns & Sorcery* Rulebook)

Recovery Roll

1d6+

- ☐ 1 action
- ☐ 10 mins
- ☐ 1 hour
- ☐ 10 hours

Damage Track

- ☐ **Impaired**
  +1 Effort per level
  Ignore minor and major effect results on rolls
  Combat roll of 17-20 deals only +1 damage
- ☐ **Debilitated**
  Can move only an immediate distance
  Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

Skills • Might

T: Trained • S: Specialized • I: Inability

	T	S	I

Skills • Speed

	T	S	I

Skills • Intellect

	T	S	I

Attacks

	Mod	Dam

Cyphers

_____

Limit

Equipment

_____

Armor

Money

Special Abilities

_____

Background and Personal Details

Portrait

Allies, Contacts, and Enemies

Notes

Thank You, Backers!

Goblintown Resident

Anorak
BADunn
Brian McMullen
Bryan Cp Steele
Chris Piazzo
Dana Lombardy
Don Cox
Douglas Chadwick
Hunter Koerner
Kevin A Swartz, MD
Matt M McElroy
Matthew Price
Mike Diamond
Ray Walters
Ryan Chaddock
Samuel Montgomery-Blinn
Sean K Reynolds
Steven Spohn
Stewart Wieck
Thorne N. Melcher
Wes Platt

Big Burrow Resident

Byron Broadnax
C.E.L. Welsh
Christian Steudtner
David Pauwels
Eric Muller
Lone Shark Games
Oli Palmer
Tyler Walpole

Elven Reaches Resident

Aaron Alberg
Aaron Brown
Aaron J. Adams
Aaron Pothecary
Abba Elfman
Abraham Brown
Adam Aaron
Adam Baker-Siroty
Adam Makey
Albert Gonzalez



Christopher Stone

Alejandro Astorga
Alessio Cavatore
Alex Dingle
Alex Manduley
Alexander "Xan" Kashev
Alexander Cherry
Alien Mole
Amy Keyes
Andrea Steyer
Andrew
Andrew Betts
Andrew Cherry
Andrew Doucet
Andrew Osterburg
Andrew Parran
ArdRhi
Arlie Alsup
Barry Baker
Barry T Snyder
Bekir Cihangir Buyukataman
Ben Archer
Benjamin Mishler
Beth Perrin
Billy Walmsley
bkee
Boyd Kleen
Brad Davies
Brad Warren
Bradley Russo
Breon Halling
Brian "Chainsaw" Campbell
Brian Zuber
Brooks G Banks
Bruce
Bryce Kaspar
C4rdninj4
Calvin Hill
Carey Williams
Carlos Restrepo
Carly Robertson
chad brown
Chad Drummond
Charlie Kivi
Chris
Chris Edwards
Chris Moore
Chris Smythe
chris stewart
Chris Tihor
Chris.P.Noodle
ChrisB
Christopher Anderson
Christopher Baerman
christopher gmelch
Christopher Northern
Christopher Reed
Chuck Dee
Chuck Mock
Claire Conway
Claus Bundgaard Rasmussen
Clay Karwan
Cliff Hilliard
Cody
Colin Sng
Colin Wilson
Connor Byrt
Craig Brown
Craig Hackl
Craig Rasmussen
Craig Wright
Curtis
Dana Bayer
Dana Myers
Daniel Markwig
Dars1m
Dave Harrison
David Booton
David Dalton
David Harold
David Jenks
David Mandeville
David Parrier
David Ross
David West
David Windrim
DavidMumaw
Declan Feeney
Demian Walendorff
Derek
Dirk Schlobinski
DivNull Productions
Donald Ferris

Doubleclick
Doug "Dhomal" Raas
dragonwolf
Dustin_00
e-sabbath
Edward Durant
Edward Kabara
Emma Allen
eremon
Eric Bonnet
Eric Hanson
Eric Jackson
Eric Magnuson
Erik CF
Erin Hartshorn
evil bibu
EvilGardenGnome
Ezekial West
Fabien Jonca
Fabio Mano
Federico Manuri
Festy_Dog
FIG
Fitzpatrick, Scott
Floyd Wesel
Francis Juracko
Francis Richardson
Frank Emanuel
Frank Falkenberg
Galen Pejeau
gary shelton
Gian
Gian Domenico Facchini
Glen Ivey
Glenn
Gray Detrick
Griffin D. Morgan
Gustavo Martinez
Gwythaint
Haakon Grov Melkevik
Hans Messersmith
Harebrained Schemes LLC
Helena Silva
Herman Duyker
Herschel Hoffmeyer
Hershaddow
Ian Borchardt
Ian Whitehead
ianquest
IdleDice
Isaac 'Will It Work' Dansicker
J-P Spore
James Blanton
James Dillane
James Husum
Jamie Boyle
Jareld
Jarrod Quebodeaux
Jason Bean
Jason Flowers
Jason Schneiderman
Jason Vines
JD
Jean-Paul Skeete
Jeff
Jeff Butcher
Jeff Iverson
Jeff Rutherford
Jeff Scifert
Jeffrey Allan Boman
Jeffrey Hosmer
Jennifer Dulock
Jerry
Jesse C
JH
Jim Hart
Jim Moss
Jim Ryan
Joe
Joe Bianco
Joe Fusion
Joe steventon pell
John Allen
John Clayton
John D Kennedy
John Daly
john ferrick
John Hartwell
John Ickes
John Paul Ashenfelter
John Randecker
John Tiglias
Jon Michaels
Jonathan Ly Davis
Jonathan Morton
Jonathan Rose
Jonathan Shaver
Jordan Lennard
Jordan Springer
Jordi Rabionet Hernandez
Josh Jasper
Josh Morrison
Josh Parrish
Joshua Stull
Joven Carandang
JReynolds
Juan Fernandez
Judd M. Goswick
Justin Beeh
Kamillo Fitzek
Karl Kreutzer


Richard Tamalavitch

Ken Herbert
Kevin Grider
Kevin Schantz
Kevin White
Kevin Wilson
Krasnov
Kyle Simons
Laura Thompson
lbstouder
Lee DeBoer
Legendsmiths
Lester Smith
Lian
Lisa Padol
Lobo
Logan Collins
Loki Carbis
Loren Foster
Lukas Myhan
Majogu, the Above Average of Brimstone
Marc Langworthy, Red Scar
Marc Margelli
Marc Tassin
Mark
Mark Llewellyn James
Marko Sertic
Markus S.
Martin Steers
Martin Wagner
Martyn Findley
Matías Nicolás Caruso
Matt
Matt Burns
Matt Nixon
Matthew
Matthew French
Matthew Tucker
Matthew Z.
Matti Rintala
Mattia Norando
MattK: Pathfinder inXile for Eternity
Maurizio Mancino
Maya h mausli
Megan Tolentino
Michael
Michael Bentley
Michael Bowman
Michael Cody Meyer
Michael Grancey
Michael Malm
Michael Pruden
Michael Raichelson
Mike Carlson
Mike de Jong
Mikko Västi
mldickin
Mofte
Morgan
mwchase
Nate Taylor, Beanslayer of Valoria
Natebot
Nathan Christenson
Nathan Olmstead
Nevrose
Nicholas Muehlenweg
Nicholas Peterson
Nick D.
Ninjar
Noah Jones
Oscar Ulloa
Ospprod
Owen Thompson
palmi8
Paris Conte
Patfam
Patrick Gurdgiel
Paul Baldowski
Paul Barrett
Paul Barron



Ray Karnes



Sam Piaggio

Paul Counts
Paul Hayes
Paul Roberts
Paul Sheppard
Paul Williams
Phil Ulrich
Philippe Niederkorn
Pineapple Steak
Praemus
PrimeLoki
ProtonAx
Pyke van Zon
Ralf van der Enden
Realm Master K
Rees Hinton
Rich Warren
Richard Dansky
Rick Blair
Rick Purcell
Rinnen Christian
Robbie Taylor
Robert B Ooton
Robert Clark
Robert Daley
Robert G. Male
Robert Huss
Robert Van Natter
Rocambole
Rod Chanas
Rod Shelton
Roman Kalik
Roy Sachleben
Ruth Hyatt
Ryan Robel
Ryan Young
Sam Do
Sam Wright
Samantha Watterson
Sandfox
Scaenicus
Scott Cawson
Scott Dicken
Scott Kelley Ernest
Sean
Sean
Sean Kelly
Sean O'Dell
Sebastian Weil
secondrevan
sehmerus
Sergio Silvio Herrera Gea
sev
Shane McDougal
Shane Mclean
Shannon Maclean
Shawn
Sheri Bryan
Simon Early
Simon Moore
sparky1479
Stargazer
Stephan Szabo
Stephen
stephen.esdale
Steven Lord
Steven Thesken
Steven Ward
Storium / Stephen Hood
Strictura
Sue London
Sumeet Jain
Svend Andersen
Tara Cameron
Terry Roddy
Thad Doria
Thayne
The Bearded Goose
Thierry Nouza
Thomas Frank
Tim Bogosh
Tim Ellis
Tim Watkins
Todd Rafferty
Tony Love
Top Cow Productions
Travis Webber
Trip the Space Parasite
Tristan Harness
Ty Kendall
Tyler Knudsvig
Umberto Lenzi
Vincent Arebalo
Vincent_Langlois
VindicaSean
Vojtech Pribyl
W. Andrew Robinson
Warren
Will Scotland
William Robertson
Zalzator

Wizards Way Wizard

9thLevel
Aaron
Aaron Dykstra
Aaron F Stanton
Aaron M. Wilson
Aaron Roudabush
Adam "Cero" Ludwig
Adam Derda
Adam Hidalgo
adayinverse
Adrian
Aidan Grey
Albert
Alex
Alex Gagnon
Alexander
Alloyed
alon ferency
Amanda Shafer
anderland
Andreas
Andrew
Andrew Brown
Andrew Cady
Andrew Cowie
Andrew E
Andrew Matiukas
Andrew Piseck
Andy Zeiner
Angus MacDonald
Antero Garcia
Anthony
Anthony R Cardno
Anthony Sato
Arthur Chenin
Aspicientis
Austin F
B.M.Laing
Barbro Westlund-Storm
Battlefield Press, Inc.
Ben
Ben Barber 2
Ben Feehan
Ben Harrison
Ben Madden
Bill "Wystan" C.
Bill Benham
Bill Bridges
BlackWyrm Publishing
Blarghedy
Bob Cram
Brad Bean
Brad Gunnels
Bradley Beach
Brandon Metcalf
Brandon Ording
Brandon Reed
Brendan McAuliffe
Brett Granger
Brian Allred

Brian Hagen
Brian Isikoff
Brian Koehler
Brian Melcher
Brian Rosenberger
Bruce R Cordell
Bruce Turner
Bryan
Bryan Lott
Bryce Perry
C. Kettering
Caelestis Designs
Camilla
Canyon Cappola
Capellan
Carl Gilchrist
Carl Ross
Carlos Ovalle
Cassandra de Andrade
Cdorf
Chad Andrew Bale
chance
Charles Dexterward
Charles Fitzpatrick
CharlesDM
Chip Warden
Chris
Chris Anderson
Chris Basque (deleted)
Chris Bekofske
Chris Brind
Chris Callicoat
Chris Chambers
Chris Linton
Chris Meyerle
chris mobberley
Chris Nehring
Chris Plambeck
Chris Robinson
Chris Snyder
Chris Thompson
Chris Volcheck
Christian Kuck
Christian Nord
Christopher Ahle
Christopher Avery
Christopher Merrill
Christopher Robichaud
Christopher Wong
Chuck Miller
Claude Weaver III
Clem Powell
Cody Uhlman
cOgnaut
Corbett Kirkley
Corey Liss
Corey T Kump
Craig
Craig Steinhoff
Craig Stokes
Cullen Gilchrist
D.j. Babb
Dale C. Blessing
Dan Massey
Dan Taylor
Daniel
Daniel C. Fischer
Daniel Gochnauer
Daniel Horne
Darian Brown
Darren
Darren Orange
Darrin Fesperman
Dave
Dave Stoeckel
David
David
David A Perkins
David Bickley
David Bresson
David E Ferrell
David Farnell
David Harrison
David Margowsky
David Millar
David Nett
David Starner
David Womack
David Zurek
ddonahoo
Dean Mitchell
Dennis Kadera
Derek
Derek Lynch
Derek W. White
Derick Schweppe
Desmond Wooten
Devin Meeshkul Sayers Helmgren
Don Corcoran
Don Price
Douglas Hill
Drew Daniel Brigner
Drew Wendorf
Drew Wilson
Dustin Dean
Eamon
Ed Hall
Ed Kowalczewski
Eli Edmunds
Ely Dane
Emil Scott
Enoch Ulmer
Eric
Eric Anton
Eric Buetikofer
Eric Coates
Eric J.
Eric R
Eric Shaffer
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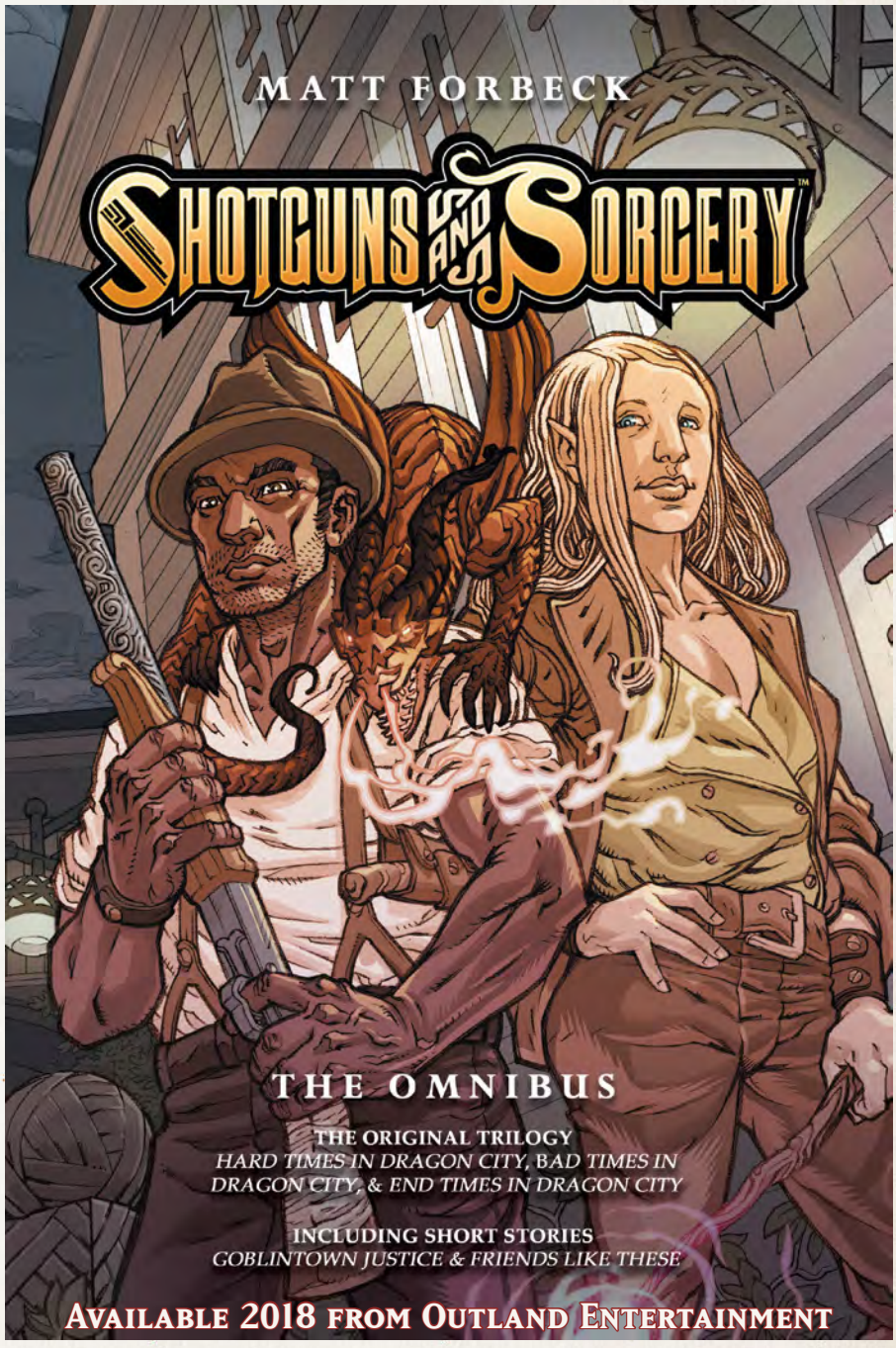
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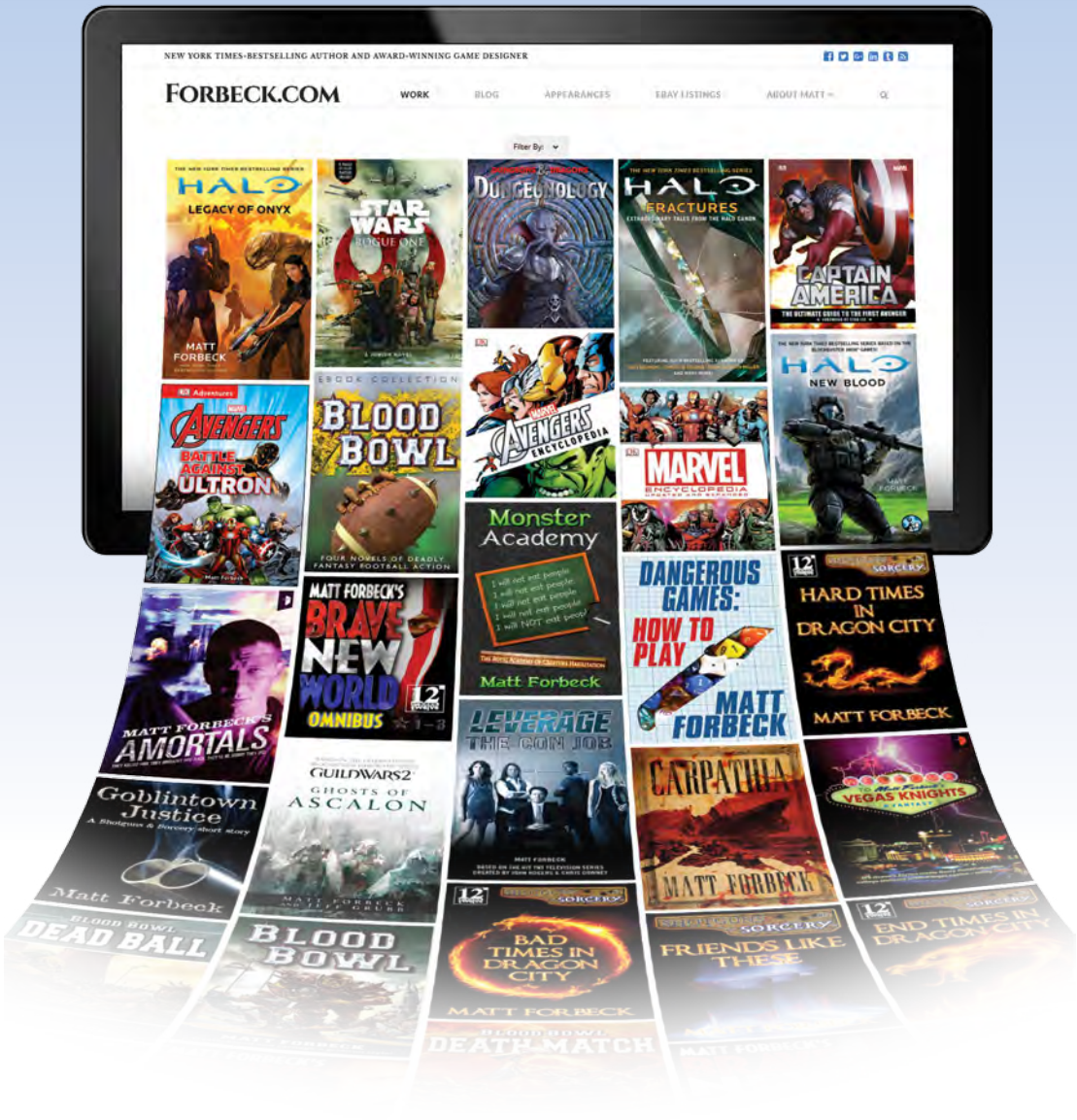


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