It is an Age without heroes.
An Age of reckless reavers,
grim cutpurses, and secretive sorcerers.
An Age undreamed of...
Blade of the Iron Throne
Roleplaying with Steel

"And on this throne of black iron, there shall be seated
the great king of bloodshed and murder,
and he shall be as a god unto slayers of men.
And all who do his work in the lands shall be called his blades,
and they shall strive to become alike him,
and be feared and revered amongst their lesser brethren..."

The Forlorn Tome of Du'Karrn

Blade of the Iron Throne

Roleplaying with Steel

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Special Thanks

To Jake Norwood, creator of The Riddle of Steel, the game that inspired this work, Mary my wife, and to Gordon Lepp, a great gamer and my best friend, I will always miss you.

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Introduction

Eleven years ago today Jake Norwood and team were wrapping up development of their revolutionary RPG, The Riddle of Steel. The following March the game was released at GAMA -- and the first print run sold out. A second printing soon followed and it is this version of the game that most players remember so fondly.

The fact that we're still talking about a game that was released nearly eleven years ago, a game that hasn't had any official material published for it in the last five years, a game that still has an active community behind it, is testament to the originality of Jake's game. What attracted gamers to it all those years ago still holds true today -- player-driven story and detailed, realistic combat mechanics producing a true Narrativist-Simulationist hybrid that appeals to players and referees alike.

About two and a half years ago the trosfans community broached the subject of a successor game in earnest. Over the years many had asked whether a new version of TRoS could be produced, one that addressed the inconsistencies prevalent in the first edition. Issues over ownership and copyright ruled out that option and so the idea of a successor game was introduced. Ninety threads and nearly two thousand posts later every aspect of TRoS has been picked apart and alternatives suggested.

Upon this maelstrom of ideas order needed to be imposed. The greater pool of concepts needed to be gleaned, the numbers winnowed, until a coherent whole was formed. Who better to do this than two of the communities' most active contributors? Phil and Michael had a clear vision for an RPG that worked seamlessly within the classic genre of Sword and Sorcery fiction.

Today, with **Blade of the Iron Throne** *they have produced a successor to TRoS that has none of the anomalies, none of the inconsistencies, none of the gaps -- yet retains a clear link to TRoS through player-driven story and demanding, realistic combat scenes.*

If Conan were to pick up a role-playing game, he'd choose this one.

Ian Plumb – December 2012

Table of Contents

Chapter One

Mechanics 1

What is a Roleplaying Game? 1

What kind of RPG is Blade of the Iron Throne? 2

Basic Rules - Checks 2

I. Dice Types Used 2

II. The Major Checks 2

III. Attribute Descriptions 6

Chapter Two

Characters 13

I - Talents 13

1. Sorcery 14

2. Culture 15

3. Attributes 17

4. Skills 18

5. Proficiencies 18

6. Assets 18

II. Other Details 19

III. Character Creation Example 19

The 4 Shoulds 22

IV. Creating your own Talent Table 23

Chapter Three

Training 27

I. Skills Overview 27

II. Skill Descriptions 27

III. Assets Overview 41

1. Assets Described 41

IV. Proficiencies Overview 58

1. Proficiencies Described 58

V. Maneuvers 63

1. Offensive Maneuvers Described 63

2. Defensive Maneuvers Described 71

VI. Character Progression **75**
1. Passion Attributes 75
Lucky Break *76*
Scene Request *77*
Have a Success *77*
Stealing the Limelight *77*
Optional Drama Use: Melee Survival *77*
Drama Use by NPCs *78*
2. Spending Passion Points 78
3. Karma 78
4. Basic Attributes 79
5. Proficiencies 79
6. Assets 80
7. Skills 80
8. Loot 80

Chapter Four

Melee 85

I. Melee Combat Overview **85**
1. Limelight and the Combat Round 85
2. The Order of a Combat Round 88
3. Steps 1 & 2: Stances, Initiative, and Surprise 88
4. Steps 3 & 5: The Exchange 90
5. Steps 4 & 6: Damage 93
6. Terrain Checks 97
7. Fatigue in the Combat Scene 100
II. Defense **101**
1. Evasion 101
2. Defensive Actions 102
3. Armor Overview 103
4. Armor Types 103
III. Ranged Combat **105**
IV. Mounted Combat **108**
1. Rideby Melee Attacks 108
2. Jousting 109

3. Mounted Archery . . . 110
4. Barding . . . 110
V. Animals in Combat . . . 111
Large Animals and Wounds . . . 112
Huge Animals . . . 112
Fighting Animals . . . 113
Animal Maneuvers . . . 114
Pack Tactics . . . 117
VI. An Example of Melee Combat . . . 118

Chapter Five

Travel and Health . . . 123
I. Travel, Scene Framing, and Scene Requests . . . 123
II. Encumbrance (Optional) . . . 124
III. Health . . . 125
1. Healing and Wounds . . . 125
2. Falling Damage . . . 126
3. Generic Damage . . . 126
4. Poison . . . 126
5. Pain - It's just a scratch! (Optional) . . . 127

Chapter Six

Sorcery . . . 131
I. Sorcery Overview . . . 131
1. The Sorcery Pool . . . 133
2. Taint . . . 133
3. The Lesser Mysteries . . . 135
4. Greater Mysteries . . . 142
5. Arcane Secrets . . . 147
6. Combining Sorcerous Efforts . . . 153
7. Duel of Wills . . . 154
Sorcerous Maneuvers: . . . 155
Offensive Maneuvers: . . . 155
Defensive Maneuvers: . . . 156
8. Effecting Multiple Targets . . . 157

Chapter Seven

S&S Gaming 161

I. A Sword & Sorcery Overview 161

1. The World of Sword & Sorcery 161

2. Faith and the Divine 163

3. Magic and the Supernatural in Sword & Sorcery 163

4. The Racial Makeup of Sword & Sorcery 164

5. Heroes and Villains in Sword & Sorcery 166

6. The Sword & Sorcery Tale 168

II. 20 Tips for running your Blade game! 171

Final Word: The Iron Rule 175

Chapter Eight

Xoth 179

I. Xoth Overview 179

1. The People 179

II. The Gods 188

III. The World 191

Susrah: Land of Warring City-States 194

The Cult of the Keepers: 195

Zorab Mountains 195

The al-Khazi Desert 195

Khazraj, the Wolves of the Desert 196

Khazistan 196

Hills of the Dead 199

Isles of the Sea Reavers 200

Cannibal Coast 200

Silver Lotus Isles 200

The Sunken Isles of Ptahanna 201

Yar-Ammon and the City of Khadis 201

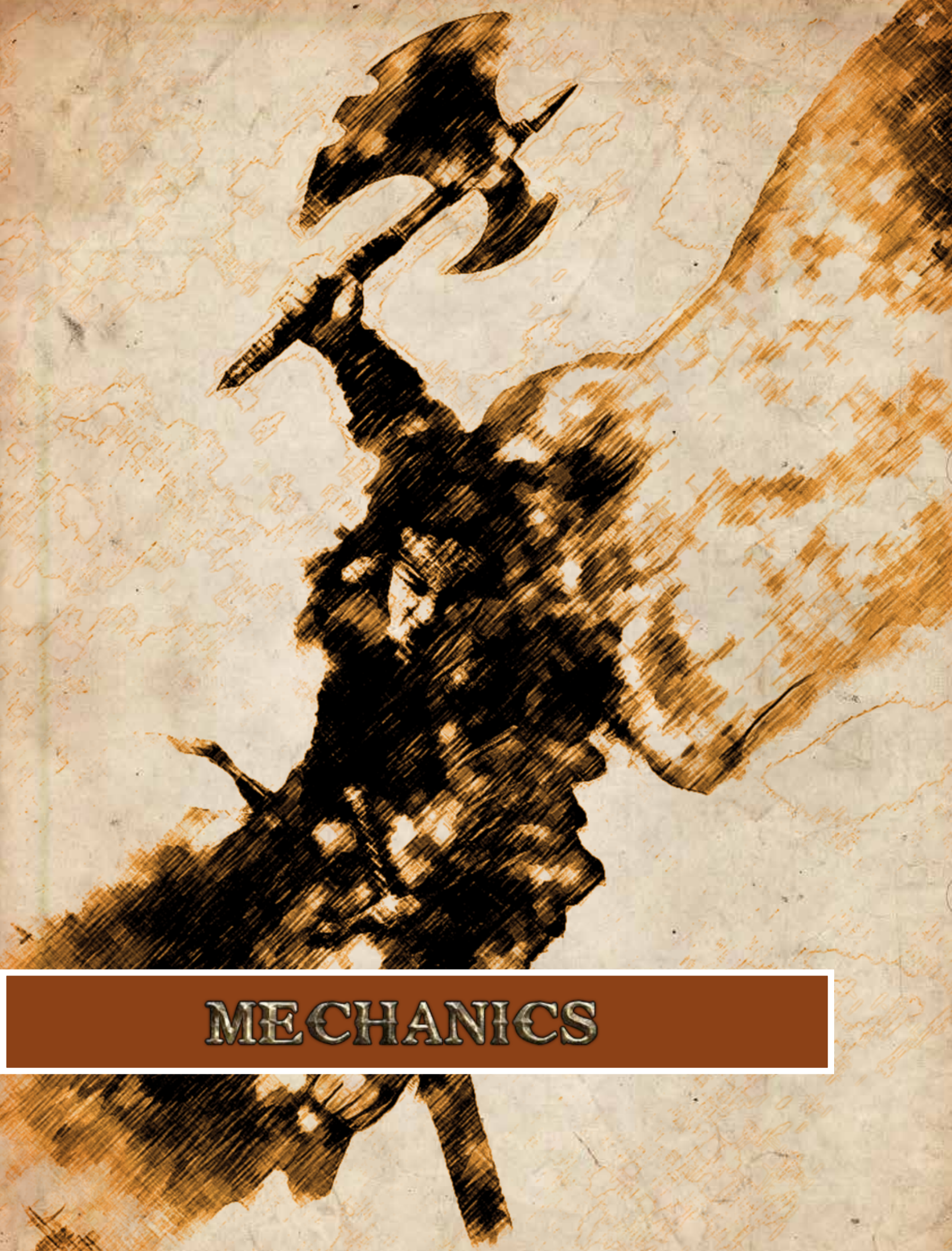
IV. Drugs of Xoth 202

Appendices

Wound Tables 205

CLEAVING DAMAGE TABLES 205

PIERCING DAMAGE TABLES **212**
BLUNT DAMAGE TABLES **217**
SWUNG PIERCING DAMAGE TABLES **229**
MELEE WEAPON TABLES **236**
PUNCHES AND KICKS **245**
ANIMAL WEAPONS **246**
MISSILE WEAPONS **248**
Weapon Quality *249*
Enchanted Weapons *249*
NPCs **250**
Beasts **255**
Supernatural Menaces **258**
Bibliography **260**
1. The Precursors 260
2. The Pioneers 260
3. The Founding Fathers 261
4. The Emulators 262
5. The Defenders 264
Glossary **267**
Index **271**



MECHANICS

"There were five thousand of us, from a score of races and tribes. We had been serving as mercenaries for a rebel prince in eastern Korb, most of us, and when he made peace with his cursed sovereign, we were out of employment; so we took to plundering the outlying dominions of Koth, Zamora and Turan impartially. A week ago Shah Amurath trapped us near the banks of Ilbars with fifteen thousand men. Mitra! The skies were black with vultures. When the lines broke, after a whole day of fighting, some tried to break through to the north, some to the west. I doubt if any escaped. The steppes were covered with horsemen riding down the fugitives. I broke for the east, and finally reached the edge of the marshes that border this part of Vilayet.

"I've been hiding in the morasses ever since. Only the day before yesterday the riders ceased beating up the reed-brakes, searching for just such fugitives as I. I've squirmed and burrowed and hidden like a snake, feasting on muskrats I caught and ate raw, for lack of fire to cook them. This dawn I found this boat hidden among the reeds. I hadn't intended going out on the sea until night, but after I killed Shah Amurath, I knew his mailed dogs would be close at hand."

"And what now?"

"We shall doubtless be pursued. If they fail to see the marks left by the boat, which I covered as well as I could, they'll guess anyway that we took to sea, after they fail to find us among the marshes. But we have a start, and I'm going to haul at these oars until we reach a safe place."

"Where shall we find that?" she asked hopelessly. "Vilayet is an Hyrkanian pond."

"Some folk don't think so," grinned Conan grimly; "notably the slaves that have escaped from galleys and become pirates."

- Robert E. Howard "Shadows in the Moonlight"

Chapter One
Mechanics

"Ushered before it, they prostrated before this throne of iron,
its visage as black as the ravaged souls of those votaries before it.
But its stair granted none its purchase;
It was an ebon boon that none could claim unless first claimed by it…"
- The Forlorn Tome of Du'Karrn

What is a Roleplaying Game?

Role-playing is getting together with some friends to write a story. It's joining around a campfire or a dining room to spin some tall tales. Role-playing is being creative and having fun with friends.

Role-playing games are stories. You create one of the main characters, and you create a story around your character. The rest of the players also create stories around their characters. And there's a "referee" or more simply "ref" who brings those stories together.

In most role-playing games, one person plays the "referee" who can be thought of as the "Director" of the story. The referee will, with input from you if you desire to give any, describe a world or setting. You and your friends, as players, will play a character and protagonist in this world. You will guide your character through the story that you and your friends are creating.

Each player plays a different character, and each character interacts with each other character. Role-playing, in this sense, is very much play-acting in the mind. You imagine what the referee describes. Then, you imagine your character's response to this situation, and describe that to the ref and the other Players. They, in turn, each do the same with their characters.

In most games--board games, card games, and dice games--there is a clearly defined way to win, and a clearly defined way to lose, and winning is the goal of the game. In role-playing games, the concepts of "winning" and "losing" do not exist. Your goal as a player is to help create a story and to have fun. You may give your character other goals, but the success of your character does not determine any sense of "winning" or "losing."

Like life, it's not so much whether you win or lose, but how you play the game.

That's all well and good, you say, but what actually goes on? What do these "characters" do? Most of the time, characters are involved in adventures, adventures of the type that are immortalized in adventure movies and serial novels. In one game, the characters might be a group of secret agents trying to save the world from nuclear destruction.

In another, you might play a rebel force, trying to overthrow an evil star-spanning empire. You might play a group of warriors in eleventh century Europe, or King Arthur's knights, or Superman, or Batman, or an original character you create, in any world you choose.

Like all games and many RPGs, **Blade of the Iron Throne** involves elements of chance, skill, and strategy—the three are, in fact, tightly related.

What kind of RPG is Blade of the Iron Throne?

Blade of the Iron Throne (hereafter **Blade**) is an amalgamation of a number of different game system mechanics, a blend of new and old school gaming sensibilities. It is also very much a game grounded in tales of Sword & Sorcery fiction.

Sword & Sorcery is a sub-genre of the fantasy genre of fiction, taking its name from the sword-slinging adventurers who generally make up the genre's protagonists and the sorcery-using characters who are often the villains and/or antagonists. Common to Sword & Sorcery stories is the mindset of the main character. The S&S hero is always a man of action. He might be very intelligent and given to brooding and pondering (e.g. Kull of Valusia), but when a situation requires a response, he does not hesitate or procrastinate endlessly, but acts.

A second defining thing about the protagonists of the S&S stories seems to be that the hero has a kind of (unofficial and informal) code, one that seems to pervade all the stories of all the writers in the same basic incarnation:

> In S&S stories the world is an intrinsically harsh and tragic place; people's lives are ruined or outright terminated left and right. To just survive, let alone prosper, in this harsh world, the protagonist has to display a fair degree of harshness himself. But there is a line even the more vicious S&S heroes will not cross, and this line divides them from the villains: Friends and companions, people he has shared danger with and even respected enemies of the S&S hero will at the very least be treated fairly, or even with consideration and actual kindness. A S&S villain will not do this, and that's what makes him a villain, even compared to the often quite wicked S&S hero.

See Chapter Seven – S&S Gaming, for more information on running a Sword & Sorcery campaign using **Blade**.

Basic Rules - Checks

I. Dice Types Used

Most of the time in old-style gaming, you don't use a rule; you make a ruling. The players can describe any action, without needing to look at a character sheet to see if they "can" do it. The referee, in turn, uses common sense to decide what happens or rolls a die only if he thinks there's some random element involved.

When needed, **Blade** uses two types of dice during play, 12 sided dice (D12) and six sided dice (D6):

These may be easily purchased online or at your local game store. References throughout this book refer to 12 sided dice unless otherwise noted.

II. The Major Checks

While playing **Blade**, Attribute and Skill Checks are first made by consulting the Skill/Attribute Dice Pool table to determine the amount of dice to be rolled:

TABLE 1.0 Skill/Attribute Dice Pool

Skill/Attribute Level	Dice Pool
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8
9*	9*

**Attribute and Skill values range from 1-8, with one Skill and one Attribute of 9 allowed per PC. No two PCs are allowed to have a score of 9 in the same Attribute or Skill.*

In **Blade** there are five basic Checks:

1. Attribute Checks are made by rolling an appropriate number of dice for the Attribute Level being tested, against a fixed Target Number (TN) of seven (7). The amount of successes needed for both Attribute and Skill Checks are drawn from Table 1.1:

TABLE 1.1 Successes Needed

Successes	Challenge Level**
1	Average
2	Challenging
3	Difficult
4	Amazing
5	Legendary

*** If the applicable dice pool is more than three times the required number of successes, no roll is needed, instead the character is considered to have achieved the amount of successes required.*

Only dice rolled that meet or exceed TN7 are successes. With the exception of Proficiency Checks, all Checks are made vs. TN7 unless modified by Sorcery, Cultural, or Asset Talents.

Quality of Success may also denote an action's degree of success as indicated in Table 1.2:

TABLE 1.2 Quality of Success

Net Number of Successes	Result
Zero	Failure
(Ties)	Result Varies
One	Basic Success
Two	Good
Three	Well done
Four	Expertly done
Five	Perfect

While only one success is normally needed for an action to be successful, some actions at the ref's discretion may be tasked with additional success requirements. One example could be a player character attempting to pick a lock while pressed for time:

Ref: You want to pick this lock? It's a Challenging lock. To do this in time, I want three successes. Two successes will mean you get it done, but it'll take a little longer. No successes mean

you've botched the roll and things get complicated! (See Botches - page 5)

Player: Rats! I don't have Lock-picking as a skill! Can I try it using that lock-pick Otho gave me?

Ref: Sure - but it'll be tougher since you don't know what you're doing. Now it's Amazingly difficult! I'll need five successes; four for the lock itself and one additional success to open the lock in time.

In this example four successes achieves the task (opening the lock), but an additional success was required to achieve the intended result.

2. Skill Checks are tests made vs. one's trained ability. And while Attributes represent the maximum potential of a character, Skills reflect a character's current level of aptitude. Thus when using a Skill, a character's base Skill dice pool may never be as high or higher than twice the value of the situation's most applicable Attribute.

For example, Cunning 3 means that you can use

no more than 5 dice from the Lock Picking Skill in any situation, if Cunning would be the most appropriate Attribute Checked for the situation.

Conversely, characters unskilled in a particular discipline work at a strong disadvantage compared to their skilled counterparts. They may attempt the Check by using the most closely corresponding Attribute instead of the Skill, but require twice as many successes as somebody knowing the Skill would.

Example: *Otho wants to use the skill Animal Mimicry but is untrained in this skill. He has a HT of 6 and therefore may use it for the Check instead. If someone skilled in Animal Mimicry would normally need 2 successes to succeed at a specific Animal Mimicry Check, Otho would instead need 4.*

TABLE 1.3 Skill Levels

0	Default for untrained characters
1	Beginner; most students
2	Apprentice; growing in Skill
3-4	Journeyman; a trained professional
5-7	Adept; a skilled and respected veteran
8-9	Master; well-known and sought after

Attribute and Skill values range from 1-8, with one Skill and one Attribute at level 9 allowed per PC or NPC. While no two PCs may have a score of 9 in the same Attribute or Skill, NPCs are not bound by this stricture and thus may have the same Skill or Attribute at Level 9 that his PC counterpart enjoys.

Skill Check Challenge Levels should always frame the task in terms of how hard it is for someone who does it all the time. They are invariably vs. TN 7, unless modified by an Asset.

Example: *Having bluffed his way into a nobleman's dinner Ball, Otho spots a likely target for a bit of pick-pocketing. The ref advises that guards about the ballroom are unusually watchful tonight and declares a general success level of Challenging (two successes needed) for any light-fingered professional.*

Skill levels are generally rated as per Table 1.3.

3. Proficiency Checks are Checks made from a Pool, and are made by rolling any number of dice from the appropriate Pool (Melee Pool, Archery Pool, or Sorcery Pool) against Target Numbers based on a declared difficulty, using available weapons or magic.

4. Opposed Checks are made whenever two characters or forces battle for supremacy. Examples include attacking an opponent, detecting an ambush, or slipping past a patrol.

All manner of Checks may be tested against any other, with one player possibly attempting a Skill Check, while his opponent rolls an Attribute Check in opposition.

With Opposed Checks both participants roll against TN7 with needed successes dictated by the unique circumstances of their given Check.

Successes are totaled and the participant with the most successes is declared the winner. The loser's successes are then subtracted from the winner's, leaving the winner's Quality of Success (See Table 1.2) as an indicator of the level of victory.

Example: *Otho makes his move at the Ball and invites a rich old dowager (and her beautiful diamond necklace!) to dance. As they swirl about the dance floor he deftly attempts to remove the necklace. Two Opposed Checks now come into play:*

The guard closest to the pair makes an Average Check against his Sagacity 4 Attribute, testing his powers of observation.

The dowager makes an Average Check against her Sagacity 2 Attribute, to determine if she is aware of the necklace being removed.

Otho will make a Challenging Check vs. his skill of Pick Pockets 6 against both. Otho first rolls an Opposed Check against the dowager and easily succeeds with a Quality of Success of 3.

The necklace is now in his pocket! He then rolls an Opposed Check vs. the Guard, but is beaten by the guard by a Quality of Success of 2. Spotted, Otho flings the dowager aside and runs for his life with guards in hot pursuit!

5. Timed Checks can be made of any of the previously mentioned Checks. These rolls are made when time is a factor, such as pursuing research, crafting an item, or tracking a bandit through the wilderness.

Each Timed Check requires a number of successes that must be achieved over the course of any amount of rolls. Each roll usually represents the passage of a fixed amount of time and may take as long as time allows.

Example: *Otho, having been cheated out of some swag from a robbery, is tracking three fellow thieves through the White Knuckle Mountains. The ref advises that Otho will need four successes to catch the riders by nightfall, and also informs Otho's player that each roll represents a passage of two hours, with the sun setting in but six hours.*

Otho rolls his Survival 6 Skill dice pool against the TN and gets 1 success... he rolls again: no successes! And again: 3 successes! At dusk, after six hours of tracking, Otho catches up with the gang.

6. Botches - In **Blade**, any roll that fails to meet its required number of successes by more than 1 is a botch. However, instead of penalties or comedic moments, botches create "Complications".

While Drama (See Page 76) adds specific elements to a story that are of interest to the player, Complications are a way for the referee to add their own plot twists to the tale.

Example: *Otho, abducting the Graf's daughter for ransom, battles past a number of guards, and after botching twice during the mission, slips away with his prize slung over his shoulder. BANG! His two Complications kick in:*

1) Complication One - His horse is missing! Rats! The guards are not far behind!

2) Complication Two - Back at the hideout, Otho's partner Rufo has decided that money split only one way is much nicer than sharing. Perhaps a little surprise for Otho is in order...

Complications should be introduced quickly by the referee, certainly by the following scene at the latest, and should have a direct connection with the task that was botched.

III. Attribute Descriptions

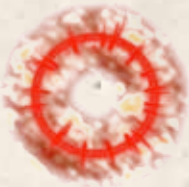
In **Blade** each character is defined by a set of Attributes that combined, form the core of that individual.

1. Basic Attributes, or just Attributes, are the character's inherent physical, spiritual, and social capabilities and govern, among other things, how he is perceived by others, how strong, fast, healthy, knowledgeable, and smart he is, and how well developed his instincts and social intelligence are. The six Basic Attributes are:

Brawn – (BN) is a measure of your muscle, your vitality, or your frame. It indicates how much damage you do unaided, and how easily you resist punishment, disease, and poison.

Daring – (DG) is a measure of your courage and ability to take decisive action. It affects how well you can strike and parry, as well as how skilled you are with actions like climbing, acrobatics and all kinds of athletics.

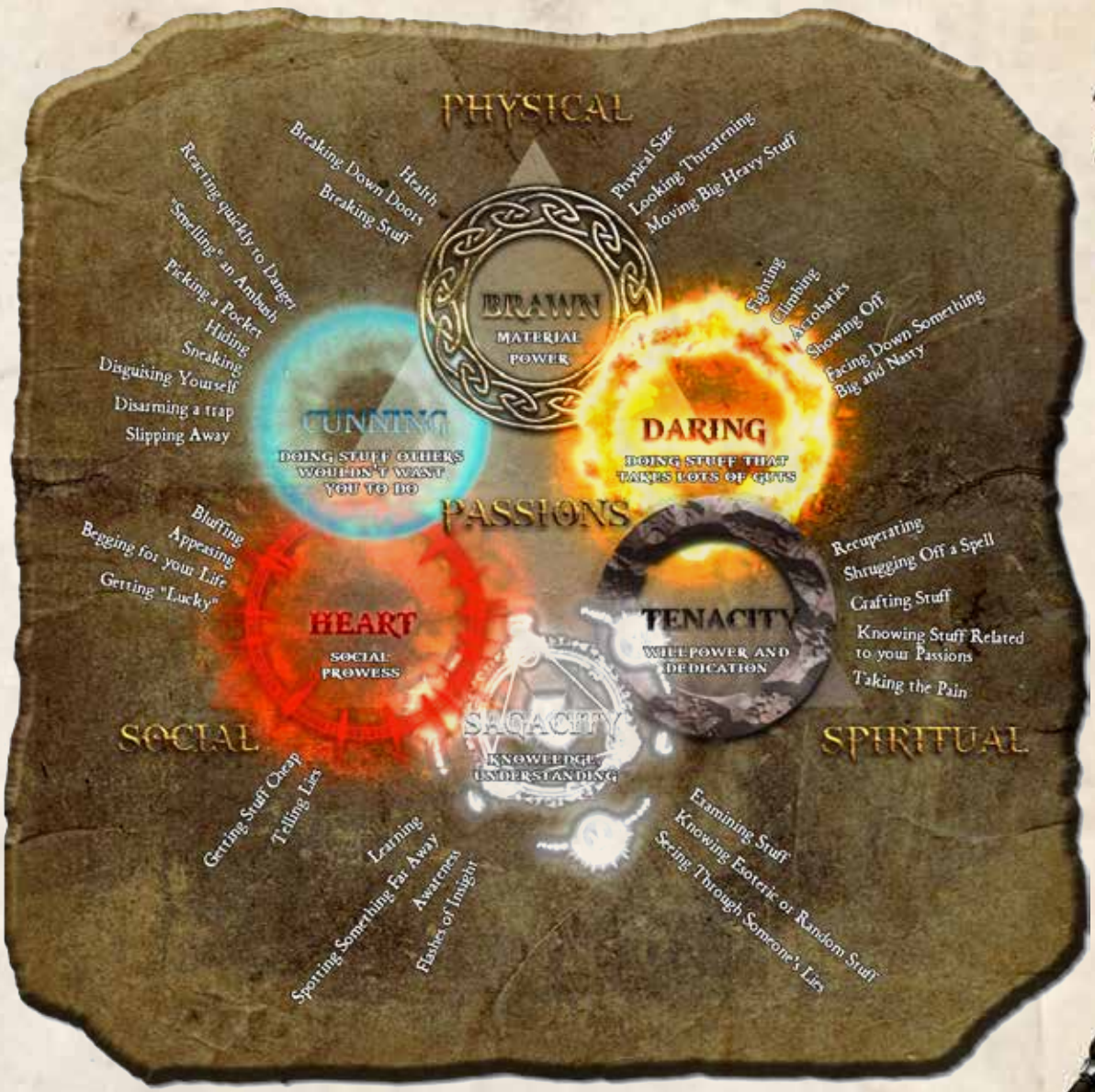
Tenacity – (TY) is a measure of your ability to focus on a task or goal, a meter of the strength of your persona. It affects how easily influenced you are, your inner discipline, and your sanity.



Heart – (HT) is a measure of your social aptitude. It affects both how charismatic you appear to others (people and animals) and how easily you can get them to do your bidding. It governs your ability for empathy, and the understanding of human and animal nature.

Sagacity – (SY) is a measure of your mental agility. It indicates how logical, intuitive, and smart you are. It affects situations which require reasoning, sharpness of the senses, as well as any judgment relating to them.

Cunning – (CG) is a measure of your raw instincts, agility, reaction time and balance. It affects how skilled you are with actions like lock picking, pick pocketing, hiding, and sneaking.



2. Passion Attributes - All characters possess four Passion Attributes, or short Passions, each having a maximum value of 5 points. In addition, each character has a special fixed Passion Attribute known as "Drama".

Quite simply, Passion Attributes give your character the will, drive, and determination to accomplish and succeed when the going gets tough.

Now, how do they work?

If your character is involved in a situation where he is struggling to defend, protect, further, or foster a PA, that PA gives its numerical advantage as extra dice added to the roll. For Attribute or Skill Checks, when one or more PAs potentially apply, the highest applicable PA's value will be added to the appropriate dice pool for the Check.

For example, if you decide that one of your PAs is to find all 6 artifacts of the first Emperor, and you find an ancient rune clue in a tomb you believe has one of the

artifacts, then the ref might let you add your applicable PA's equivalent dice value to your roll to read the rune.

In Combat, PAs work in a similar manner. However, instead the highest applicable PA adding its value to every roll, while in combat, apply the highest applicable PA plus add +1 die for every other applicable PA, regardless of its current rating, as a scene bonus to both the character's Melee and Archery Pools.

All PAs should be collectively determined before play begins, with thought given to the harmony of the varied goals of all players participating in the session. Remember, Passion Attributes let you, the PLAYERS, collectively tell the referee exactly what YOU want the game to be about.

I have to make them up myself?

Yes, you do. This is understandably the most daunting, yet also the most exciting, task of character creation.

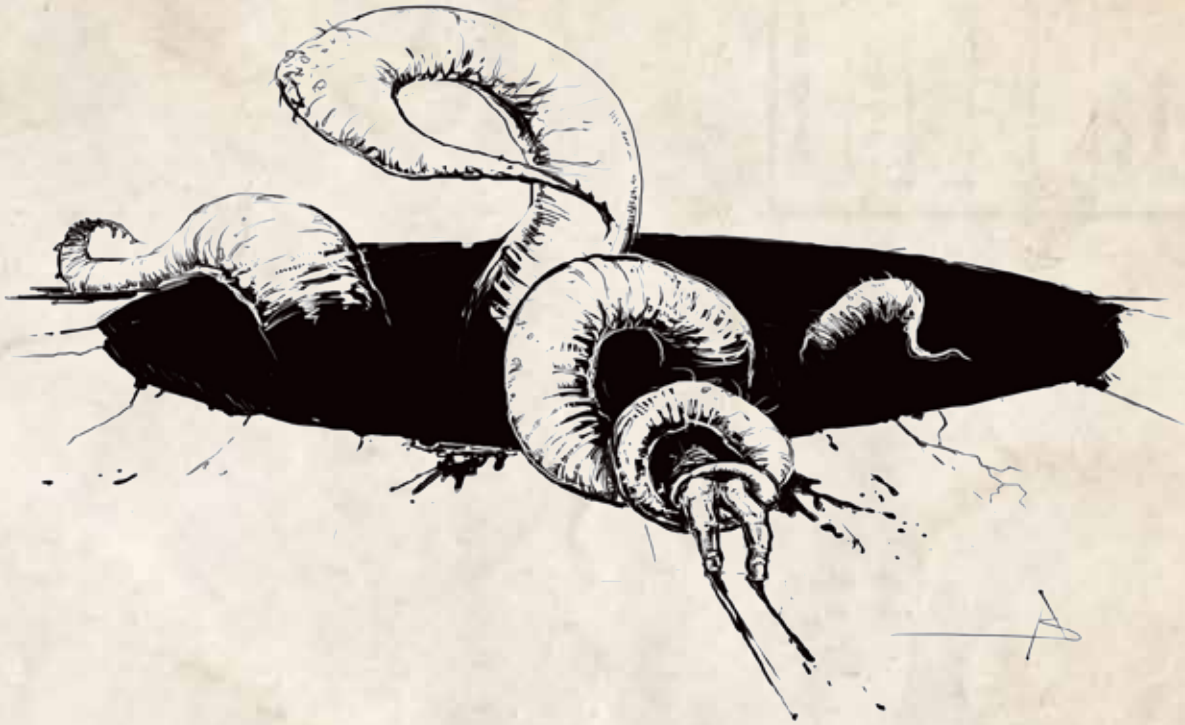
Regardless of whatever else is written on that sheet, no matter how strong or weak the characters other Attributes, combat skills, magical aptitude, or skills, nothing is more influential to that character than those FOUR lines. While your four Passion Attributes define the general story being told, The **Drama Passion** fine tunes the result. Want to develop a love interest with the noblewoman you just met? Spend a Drama point! Need a convenient hay wagon to land in when leaping from a window?

Spend a Drama point! Drama points can be used in most situations and are earned by role-playing your character well.

Passions Also Advance My Character?

Yes, they do. You see, anytime you role-play and act on one of your PA's, the ref may reward your role-playing with a PA point. By acting on a PA, it shows that it means something to the character, and it advances.

Now, as an aside, the numerical value of any PA does not in any way represent its importance to your character or its priority over your other PA's, this is determined by your role-playing alone, and merely defines what PA is currently the focus of you, the player.



So, by playing your PA's, they increase. Now, does the ref keep a tally of what you did and then dole points out at the end of the session? No! He immediately awards you with a point and therefore the game becomes a dynamic field, where emotions and drama fluctuate naturally, instead of waiting for the pause between 'episodes.'

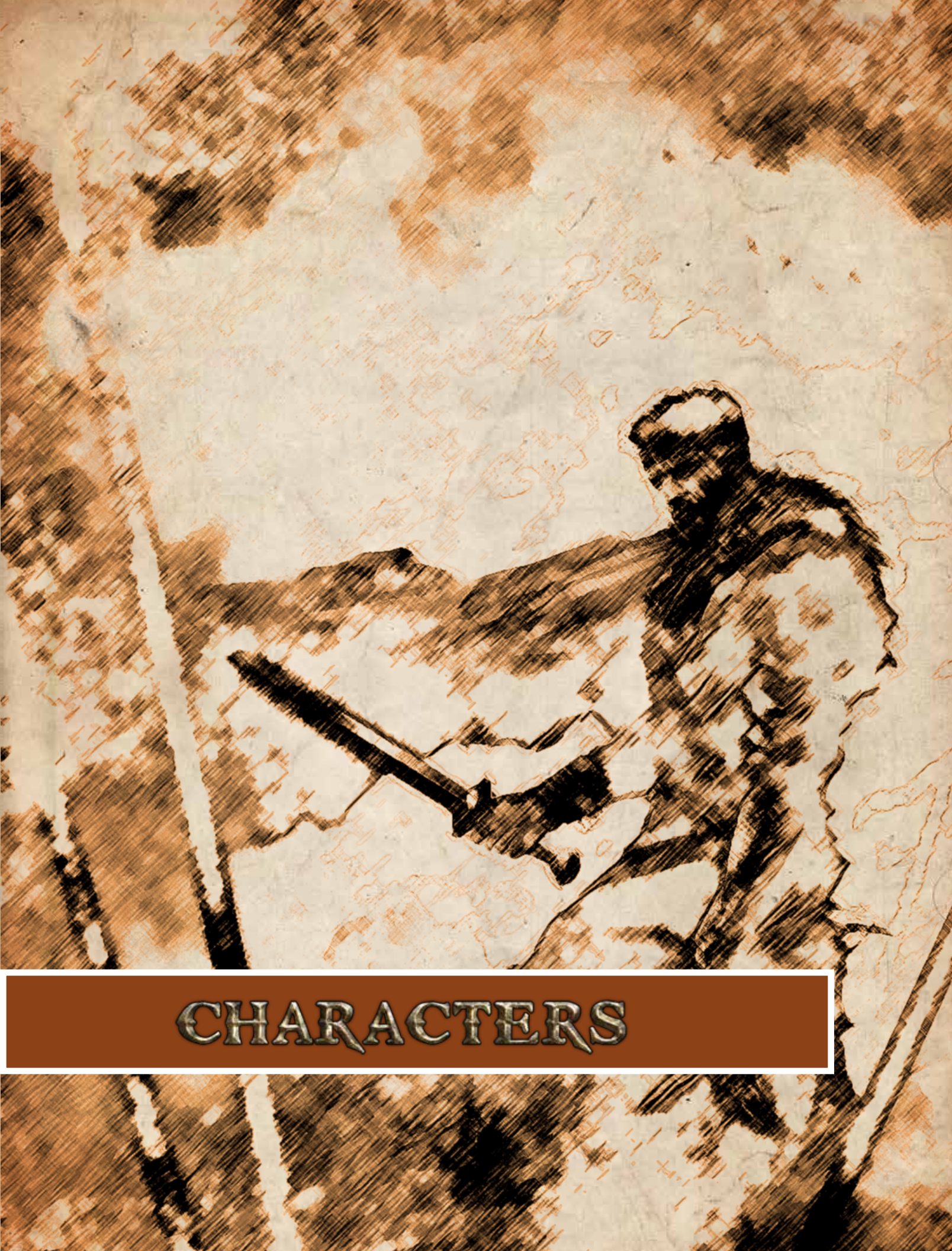
Wait, So If They Get Awarded At Any Time...

That's right! You can spend them at any time. Suddenly do you wish you were a bit stronger, or maybe a bit more nimble of mind? Then spend the points mid game, and it is so. See Chapter Two - Characters, and Chapter Three - Training, for more on choosing and using Passion Attributes.

3. Combined Attributes are derived directly from the Basic Attributes. These are:

- **Reflex** is the combination of Daring and Cunning, which determines how quickly a character may physically react to external stimulus.
- **Aim**, extracted from Sagacity and Cunning, quantifies one's natural ability to hit a target over distances.
- **Knockdown**, derived from Brawn and Daring, is a measure of how solid and balanced one remains after taking a blow.
- **Knockout** is a measure of how hard it is to knock a character unconscious, based on Brawn and Tenacity.
- **Move**, derived from Brawn, Cunning, and Daring, is a measure of how much distance one can cover on foot during one combat Limelight.
- Sorcerous characters have a sixth Combined Attribute governing the use of sorcery, **Power**.

This concludes Chapter One



CHARACTERS

The Cimmerian glared about, embarrassed at the roar of mocking laughter that greeted this remark. He saw no particular humor in it, and was too new to civilization to understand its discourtesies. Civilized men are more discourteous than savages because they know they can be impolite without having their skulls split, as a general thing. He was bewildered and chagrined, and doubtless would have slunk away, abashed, but the Kothian chose to goad him further.

'Come, come!' he shouted. 'Tell these poor fellows, who have only been thieves since before you were spawned, tell them how you would steal the gem!'

'There is always a way, if the desire be coupled with courage,' answered the Cimmerian shortly, nettled.

The Kothian chose to take this as a personal slur. His face grew purple with anger.

'What!' he roared. 'You dare tell us our business, and intimate that we are cowards? Get along; get out of my sight!' And he pushed the Cimmerian violently.

'Will you mock me and then lay hands on me?' grated the barbarian, his quick rage leaping up; and he returned the push with an open-handed blow that knocked his tormentor back against the rude-hewn table. Ale splashed over the jack's lip, and the Kothian roared in fury, dragging at his sword.

'Heathen dog!' he bellowed. 'I'll have your heart for that!' Steel flashed and the throng surged wildly back out of the way. In their flight they knocked over the single candle and the den was plunged in darkness, broken by the crash of upset benches, drum of flying feet, shouts, oaths of people tumbling over one another, and a single strident yell of agony that cut the din like a knife. When a candle was relighted, most of the guests had gone out by doors and broken windows, and the rest huddled behind stacks of wine-kegs and under tables. The barbarian was gone; the center of the room was deserted except for the gashed body of the Kothian. The Cimmerian, with the unerring instinct of the barbarian, had killed his man in the darkness and confusion.

- Robert E Howard - The Tower of the Elephant

Chapter Two
Characters

"Thus born with untamed souls, those slayers prowled like wolves amidst the sheep that were their fellow men. No rules would bind them, and no courtesies keep them.

They thirsted for blood as others for wine, and drank lives with a bleak obstinacy and ardor merely kindled all the brighter by all whom would say them nay."

- The Forlorn Tome of Du'Karrn,

I - Talents

"Let me live deep while I live; let me know the rich juices of red meat and the sting of wine on my palate, the hot embrace of white arms, and the mad exultation of battle when the blue blades flame crimson, and I am content."

- Robert E. Howard, The Queen of the Black Coast

Characters in **Blade** are painted in broad strokes by their Talents. These Talents, primarily Attributes, Skills, and Proficiencies, are used by the player as a metric of their character's strengths and weaknesses.

Players can and should consult the wide body of Sword & Sorcery literature available for their inspiration. Joining in with their referee and fellow players they can then exchange ideas and work on creating character histories (and Passions) that will work in harmony with the rest of the group's goals and story direction.

This is where the Talent table now comes into play. Our particular **Blade** Talent Table is comprised of six Talents. While the described categories of Attributes, Skills, and Proficiencies form the heart of the entries on the **Blade** Talent Table, there are many more possibilities that should be pondered.

Much of the choices concerning the remaining three Talents will be based on both the setting, and the needs and expectations of the gaming group involved.

For example, one should be concerned with the question of if there is to be sorcery in the setting.

TABLE 2.0 Talent Priorities

Priority	Sorcery	Culture	Attributes	Skills	Proficiencies	Assets
A	Mysteriarch	Enlightened	34	43	16	Six Good Assets
B	Sorcerer	Savage	29	30	11	Three Good Assets
C	Dabbler	Hillman/ Nomad	26	23	8	One Good Asset
D	Mundane	Civilized	24	18	6	No Assets
E	Cursed	Decadent	22	13	4	One Poor Asset
F	Doomed	Degenerate	18	5	0	Three Poor Assets

If so, to what degree? Will racial choices other than human be offered to players?

These and many other questions once answered will give a referee his compass points when building his own Talent Table.

Having by now gotten a sense of the character that they wish to build stories around, players then translate these ideas to **Blade** by selecting Talent levels based on their importance to the player's vision of their character.

Will the character be a man of fierce fighting ability? Or, perhaps a deft thief prowling the rooftops of fantastic cities! Whatever the player decides will be the prime focus of his character warrants a priority "A" or "B" pick.

Next come aspects of the character that should still demonstrate competence or training. These will likely merit a "C" or "D" pick. And last comes those picks that the player has determined are not of major concern to his **Blade** experience, the "E" and "F" picks.

For our included sample setting we've created a Talent table as an example.

Using this table as a guideline, arrange the listed categories into priorities A-F (A being the highest priority, F the lowest, least important aspect of your character).

Each of these categories, and the results of placing them in various Priorities, is now explained in detail.

1. Sorcery

The lands of the Sword & Sorcery campaign, though dominated by skillful swordsmen, are still yet haunted by powerful sorcerers wielding their dark magic. The Sorcery Priority governs the relation of your character to the occult mysteries of the supernatural, whether your character is steeped in them, just a regular guy, or victimized by those dark forces. If you plan on playing a non-sorcerer character then select either "Mundane" as your Priority D (the Average priority), or "Victim" as your Priority E. Selecting "Doomed" as your Priority F also gives you a character without sorcerous powers, but shouldn't be done lightly; the character is not likely to survive this choice.

If you want to play any type of wielder of arcane powers, chose Sorcery as your Priority A, B, or C, but choose carefully as the sorcerous Mysteries to which those Picks give your

character access are all he will ever be able to learn; no sorcerer can ever learn more Mysteries than those allowed by his initial Sorcery Pick.

Once you have made your choice, create a background that fits your concept, discussing your choice with your fellow players and the ref. This gives others the chance to riff off your inspiration and create character origins that will work well with your own.

A) Mysteriarch is one of the greatest masters of the arcane alive. He can know all Mysteries, both Lesser and Greater, and he may start out the game with knowledge of a single Arcane Secret. He receives one free point in the Occultism Skill and one free Proficiency point to spend on Mysteries, but may not put more Proficiency points into Greater than into Lesser Mysteries.

B) Sorcerer denotes somebody deeply steeped and well versed in arcane knowledge. He can know either all six Lesser Mysteries, or three Lesser and one Greater Mystery. He receives one free point in the Occultism Skill. Should he opt for a Greater Mystery, it may be of no greater value than his highest Lesser Mystery.

C) Dabbler encompasses hedge wizards, witch doctors, sages of secret lore, some of the more devoted cultists of unwholesome deities and other serious meddlers in the occult. Such characters may know up to two Lesser Mysteries and may also have the Occultism Skill. Enslavement and Witchfire may not both be chosen.

D) Mundane denotes the common man. He has heard whispered of sorcery but has most likely never encountered it, has no affinity for it, and most certainly doesn't know any.

E) Cursed denotes a person not only unskilled in the arcane, but also somehow particularly vulnerable to harmful sorcery. When he checks to resist sorcerous harms or influence, he does so at a +2 TN penalty.

F) Doomed is a person not only devastatingly open to harmful sorcery, but actually already victimized by it. He resists sorcery as per the E Pick, Victim, and on top of this has already somehow contracted a terrible curse. This curse is geared toward a specific, utterly ruinous doom, has a Curse Rating 6, and can neither be lifted by faith nor sorcery.

It must run its course, undoing the PC in some nasty fashion, or rarely, lifted by means of some quest, one which must take more than five entire gaming sessions devoted solely to it to complete – during which time the PC is of course subject to and victimized by the curse.

Please be advised that this Priority Pick should not be taken lightly, as the severity of the curse will more likely than not result in the destruction of the PC before the quest to lift it can be completed.

2. Culture

The protagonists of the Sword & Sorcery genre are often quite a bit darker than those of heroic fantasy works like Tolkien's Lord of the Rings. They tend to be outsiders or social outcasts, rejected or looked down upon by the powers of the society

they find themselves in. Sword and Sorcery also diverges sharply from high fantasy in that non-humans such as elves and dwarves typically don't exist, and both player characters and non-player characters are human.

The archetypes listed are not meant as "character classes" nor do they represent human realities, but rather are descriptive clichés of the genre, tropes that can be used to distinguish characters that otherwise would have the same racial abilities. Both Asset and Skill choices for all archetypes should be discussed and agreed upon by both the player and ref before either is assigned to the character.

A) Enlightened - A few great civilizations rise above others and gain half-mythical status. Learned beyond normal men, people of enlightened cultures are builders of cyclopean pyramids and towers that pierce the skies. Their magnificent buildings can last forever, and likewise monuments to an enlightened one's achievement can withstand the passage of time. Enlightened characters are especially long lived and begin play with these modifiers:

- +1 each to Tenacity, Sagacity and Heart; minimum 2, maximum 8/9
- One bonus supernatural or culture related Asset
- Occultism Skill always allowed
- 10 bonus Skill points
- Double life span – Enlightened ones live twice as long as mere mortals.

B) Savage - Savages include warriors from the frozen north and witch-doctors from the trackless wastes of the south. Savages tend to have a close connection with nature, but remain ignorant of many developments that more civilized people take for granted. Savage characters begin play with these modifiers:

- +1 each to Brawn, Daring and Tenacity; minimum 2, maximum 8/9
- 5 bonus Skill points related to Survival, Climbing, Animal Ken, etc.

C) Hillman /Nomad – Hillmen live in broken mountainous regions that are hard to traverse. Their homeland lies either at the edge of civilized lands or is surrounded by them and might even be at least nominally part of a civilized nation. But in any case, the isolation offered by their hills make Hillmen quite independent, and it is not uncommon for them to sally forth from their mountain fastness to prey upon softer people, forcibly collecting tribute from all who trespass their land.

Nomads roam the empty wastes beyond the civilized cities; quick to strike, and bound by no laws. Nomads live with their animals and usually ride into battle with them; they feel ill at ease without them. Nomadic and Hillmen characters begin play with the following modifiers:

- 5 bonus Skill points related to Survival, Climbing, Animal Ken, etc.

D) Civilized Savages and Hillmen eventually gather together to cultivate the land, build great cities, develop trade, and study medicine, mathematics and languages. In the civilized lands dwell noble knights, wise kings, and learned sages — as well as greedy merchants and cunning thieves. Civilized characters begin play with no particular advantages or disadvantages.

E) Decadent Great civilizations reach their peak and eventually start to decline. Such fallen empires are ruled by jaded nobles, corrupt priests and wicked slave-traders.

Demon-worship, human sacrifice and drug abuse is all too common in these cultures.

Decadent characters begin play with the following modifiers:

- -1 to Tenacity; minimum 1, maximum 7
- Player's choice of either -1 to Brawn (minumum 1, maximum 7) or one Poor Asset related to mental handicaps like Addiction, Sadism, etc.)

F) Degenerate The last survivors of decadent civilizations start to feud over dwindling resources, or are driven away by stronger cultures. Fleeing into the wilderness, or deep underground beneath their ruins, they start to inbreed and devolve into something no longer entirely human. Degenerates may outwardly resemble savages, but they carry the evil taint of fallen empires. Degenerate characters begin play with the following modifiers:

- -1 to three Attributes; minimum 1, maximum 7
- Two Poor Assets chosen by player, focused on bodily handicaps and gruesome mental illnesses such as Necrophilia, Inhuman, etc.

3. Attributes

Assigning points to your attributes is vital to constructing an exciting character. Each player is given a number of points to distribute amongst the 6 Basic Attributes.Available points are determined by the Priority level selected.

These points you may assign as you will, with but two cautions:

All players must nominate one of their attributes as their "Focus". No other attribute may exceed the point value of the "Focus" during the process of character creation.

In addition, no character should start with any Attribute at the unique level of 9. This level should be reserved for development during play with others.

Our example of character creation provides some thoughts on the process of assignment of points to Basic Attributes.

Next, work with your fellow players and ref to create your four Passion Attributes and fill them in on your character sheet.

Beginning Passion Attribute Points are the same for each beginning character: 7 points to be distributed between the four open Attributes and the fixed Drama Attribute. Any given Passion Attribute may be as low as zero or as high as five.

Combined Attributes are calculated by combining two or more existing attributes. These should be calculated once all Basic and Passion Attributes are finalized. All numbers equal to or greater than .50 are rounded up.

- Reflex = (Cunning + Daring)/2
- Aim = (Sagacity + Cunning)/2
- Knockdown = (Brawn + Daring)/2
- Knockout = (Brawn + Tenacity)/2
- Move = (Brawn + Cunning + Daring)/3

4. Skills

Next, assign all available skill points to those skills you desire for your character.

Again, available points are determined by the Priority level selected, and no character should begin initial play with any skill at level 9. Pay close attention for any Sorcery, Cultural, or Asset modifiers to your skills that you may be entitled to, and once each skill has been chosen; write those skills down on your sheet.

For a complete listing and description of skills, see Chapter Three: Training

5. Proficiencies

Proficiencies refer to weapons training. Each selected Melee Proficiency or Missile Proficiency conveys training in a single style of combat or grouping of weapons. As always, available points are determined by the Priority level selected. Points may be distributed in any manner the player desires, though no Proficiency may start out with the maximum rating of 13.

Once you have your Proficiencies assigned, write down any associated Maneuvers or Mysteries (Both are described in Chapters Three and Six respectively) on your character sheet.

Points granted by the Proficiency Priority can also be spent on sorcerous Mysteries, provided the character has access to any. Again, points may be distributed in any way the player desires.

6. Assets

Assets are aspects of a character's personality, background, or physique, that make him better at some activities (Good) and worse at others (Poor), depending on which portion of the Asset is being explored.

In addition to their mechanical effects, Assets suggest characteristics about the character's personality that might lead to interesting role-playing opportunities. Assets offer a way for game mechanics to encourage deeper character backgrounds and more consistent role-playing.

Any character can begin play with up to six Good or three Poor Assets, chosen by the player at the time of character creation, plus any other Assets the character may derive from other Picks such as Culture. On top of the Good or Poor Assets gained from his Picks, a player may opt to choose one (and only one), additional Good Asset for his character, if he balances this with a Poor Asset.

When selecting your "Good" or "Poor" Asset keep in mind that the **entire** Asset (both Good **and** Poor) is now yours to develop as you wish, but whatever form (again, Good or Poor) you initially selected it in will be the aspect that you first focus your role-playing efforts on.

Example: *Picture a Barbarian who arrives in his first big city, a character that has begun the game with the Poor aspect of the "Uncivilized" Asset. He's a savage man in civilized surroundings and therefore his asset would initially be rather detrimental to him.*

But over time as he gradually gets accustomed to city life, he learns to better deal with his own uncivilized nature - he then begins to develop the Good aspect of the Asset, which reflects how he has learned to use his own savage nature to his advantage in certain situations!

With the passing of yet more adventure time, while he is still every bit as uncivilized as he was in the beginning (years before in some cases), he no longer suffers for it, and has apparently learned to compensate for it in other ways. The "Uncivilized" portion of his nature is truly now an advantage for him!

As soon as you feel that you have explored the current aspect of the Asset to your (and the group's) satisfaction and would like to expand your role-playing vision, please feel free to purchase the Asset's opposite side. You can then move between the two aspects of the Asset as desired. When no longer interested in the Asset you can always buy it off.

Note that Poor Assets normally derived from the Culture Priority Pick can only be bought off under exceptional circumstances, and only then if both the referee and the rest of the gaming group agree that PC's experiences warrant such a radical development.

II. Other Details

Now is the time to fill in any blank spaces on your character sheet with such information as your character's Movement rate, or beginning Loot Level and Equipment (see Chapters Three and Appendices respectively for both), for wealth and items that your character may have acquired. Round out your character's Bio information noting such items as your hero's appearance, age, hair and eye color, and height and weight.

You may also now calculate any Pools (such as Melee, Archery, or Sorcery) at this time:

- Melee Pool: Reflex + Weapon Proficiency
- Archery Pool: Aim + Missile Proficiency

Information on the Sorcery Pool is found in Chapter Six - Sorcery.

III. Character Creation Example

"No. Their god spared their city," Kane told him bitterly. "But I returned with an army of a hundred thousand. And I spared not a soul, nor left one stone standing, in all of Andalar."

- Karl Edward Wagner, The Other One

The protagonists in sword-and-sorcery fiction are most often thieves, mercenaries, or

barbarians struggling not for worlds or kingdoms, but for their own gain or mere survival.

They are rebels against authority, skeptical of civilization and its rulers and adherents. A thoughtful back-story or biography for your **Blade** character is the surest way to transform him from a two-dimensional figure to a fascinating and exciting S&S hero.

Hopefully, these character creation tips will help you in that process.

1) First, jot down some notes describing the variety of plotlines that you, as a player, would enjoy exploring. Ask yourself what your character's goals in such stories would be. What would they fight or die for?

Later, you can expand these thoughts by explaining why the character has these goals (What in his history led him to have these goals? Do the character's likes/dislikes have an influence on these goals?).

Use any notes you come up with to generate your four Passion Attributes.

Paul wants a game based on greed, murder, and revenge. His character Otho will be a hoodrat, one of the city's dregs, a sly street tough who nurses a grudge against the local crime lord who murdered his mother years ago. His core motivations in life are revenge for his mother, and the acquisition of wealth.

He quickly decides all four of his Passions:

Passion # 1 – Revenge on the gang boss who murdered my mother!

Passion # 2 - Get the money!

Passion # 3 - Keep my hide safe!

Passion # 4 – Hatred for the rich!

2) While S&S protagonists are rarely lily-white, you should decide what kind of ethics or creed your character lives or dies by.

Otho is not too trustworthy and will exploit people and situations if profit is available (although he doesn't necessarily gain pleasure from such exploitation; it's usually just a means to an end).

When he sees an opportunity for gain he will jump right into it without too much thought, although he is the opposite when danger arises.

In battle he will tend to seek cover and fight only when confident that he will have the upper hand, though if desperate he is capable of fighting with tiger-like ferocity.

3) Determine the physical qualities of your character. This includes most of the things you will find on the character sheet (Name, Culture, Attributes, Assets, Race, etc.).

Many of these items will be imperative to determining the history and tastes of your character.

Paul decides on the following order of Otho's Talents:

First, Paul selects Sorcery for his "F" pick, and decides that Otho is unaware of the nature of the "Doom" that he lives under.

Next, mulling over his choices on the Talent table, Paul selects his "E" choice as "Decadent"

since he feels this will best represent the horrid conditions that Otho grew up in.

This will limit his Tenacity to a maximum value of 7. Paul opts to take a Poor Asset instead of limiting his maximum Brawn value to 7 as well.

Flipping over to the Assets section of chapter three he selects the Poor aspect of **Arrogance**. *This Poor Asset reflects an area of Otho's personality that Paul would like to explore; Otho's temper and the fragility of his ego.*

Having gotten his two toughest picks out of the way, Paul now selects "Proficiencies" for his "D" pick, though this will limit him to only 6 Proficiency points initially. Paul wants to focus his build on strong Attributes and a good selection of skills. All 6 points go into the Cut & Thrust Proficiency.

To balance his Poor Asset, Paul opts to make his "C" priority a Good Asset. From chapter three he selects the Good aspect of **Cautious**, *again, a choice that well reflects Otho's personality.*

On to "B"! Paul now selects skills for his "B" pick. This will give him 30 points to drop on skills! He spends those points in the following skills:

Climbing 3, Disguise 3, Etiquette 4, Falsehood 4, Lock Picking 3, Information Gathering 3, Pick Pockets 6, Sneaking 4.

He now arranges his 34 points for the "A" Attribute pick as follows: Brawn 5, Daring 6, Tenacity 4 (5-1 for Decadent), Sagacity 4, Heart 6, and Cunning 8.

4) Now you get to the environmental influences upon your character. Where did he grow up? What social class is he? Who are/were some of the people closest to him (enemies, parents, friends, love interests, etc.)?

Remember that the physical and social environment a character grew and lives in has a huge effect on the philosophies of that character.

Paul's decides his character Otho is none too pleasant…

Born in the worst slum area of the city, Otho has only fragmented memories of his mother, a prostitute whom the gang lord murdered in a fit of rage when Otho was but 6 years old.

While he has no real friends, he has a healthy libido and can be flirtatious and seductive when he feels confident; however, his lack of sincerity tends to put most women off.

Socially, he tends to keep to himself and is evasive or deceitful about personal information. He frequently seeks out strange and countercultural groups and situations, as long as his anonymity and safety is assured.

5) Start to sculpt the personality of the character by starting out generally and gradually getting more specific (Ex: Is your character more of a type A or type B personality? What does he like and fear? Does he have any quirks? What are some of the secrets your character will have this adventure?)

Keep in mind that fellow players and your referee can help you flesh out those final details and grow your character, so don't worry if you are having difficulty deciding on the specifics.

Otho is a generally anxious person and the idea of having wealth is comforting, and wealth he will need if he is to escape the city if he manages to kill or rob

the gang boss who slew his mother. In all, he is a tough-minded fellow with a bleak and cynical view of the world.

He is generally adaptable to changing situations and doesn't hold allegiances or promises too tightly. He is self-absorbed, greedy, and suspicious of others and has a cold bearing – he is quickly defensive and critical. His sense of humor is dry, subtle, and under-the-radar.

When he does talk, it is usually about money or complaining about something; when he thinks there is potential gain, he will engage in ham-fisted flattery.

Although he loathes people who are socially or financially successful, he is too anxious to act openly outside the boundaries of acceptable behavior; his transgressions are covert.

6) Move on to constructing the history of your character. What has happened to him to make him the person he is today?

Growing up under the worst of circumstances, Otho has mastered both the fine arts of pick pocketing and lock picking as a way of surviving in an uncaring world. He will most often be found haunting the market and great caravanserai of the city center.

A harsh life has taught him to trust no one, nor to grow too attached to any person or place, though if his loyalty was ever earned it would be frightening in its intensity.

7) Lastly, it is up to both you and your referee to graft your character's history to those plot elements that will in turn bind the new character to the **Blade** campaign.

Was your character somehow wronged by a principal antagonist in one of the ongoing plot arcs? Was your character simply out to help himself, or his people, or was he simply swept up into the adventure?

Having finished the history and personality of your character, this should be a rather simple thing to do working alongside your referee.

Both Paul and the referee determine that one plot arc of the upcoming game will revolve around the great shipment of coin that the local gang boss annually moves out of the city.

Even getting information on the timetable of the coin's movement will be extremely dangerous. Otho will most certainly need allies in order to successfully hit the crime lord's money train.

The 4 Shoulds

1. Your character should have a flaw that balances out their strength. E.g.: A fierce swordsman with an inability to trust anybody at all.

2. Your character should have its own vernacular and speech quirks based on where he has come from.

3. Your character should be played in a realistic manner. If role-playing a slightly built teenage girl, she must act like a teenager and not like a full grown woman. She will be innocent in some ways and worldly in others, depending

on her upbringing.

4. Characters should interact with each other! While normally a no-no in gaming, consider having a resentment or rivalry with another player's character. With your group's agreement (Hey, they have to live with your characters too!), work with both your referee and teammate to ratchet up the tension between the two rivals.

In S&S stories characters are more likely to simply need each other rather than being bound by ties of friendship. They can't just all get along like they're on a jolly holiday, and even if they're friendly, there could still be rivalry and insults when the action heats up!

So there you have it. Now it's your turn!

IV. Creating your own Talent Table

The Talent table as presented in this chapter is just one of many possible incarnations of this table; one that will probably suit most games of **Blade**, but not necessarily all.

To some settings, such as gritty historical ones, the Culture column might not apply; others might be either devoid of anything supernatural or keeps such elements strictly out of players' hands, and thus have no Sorcery column; and while the Asset column will likely be common, not all referees will be interested in adding it.

The only three columns that are universal to all games of **Blade** are Attributes, Proficiencies and Skills. Some, but by no means all, possible ideas for the other priorities are:

- Race: In campaigns where non-human races are more common than the default for **Blade**, the group might want to allow players access to such races as PCs. A Race priority would regulate access to the various racial packages.
- Social: In some campaigns the players might have the option to have their PCs belong to widely different social classes. A Social priority would give access to anything from slave to nobleman, with the attendant wealth and legal privileges or limitations.
- Connections: Especially in campaigns of the cloak-and-dagger type, the extent of a PC's access to local flows of power and information may be relevant. A Connections priority would determine how well-connected a PC is.
- Status: In some campaigns all PCs might be members of the same organisation, for instance a cult or an army. A Status priority in such campaigns could be used to determine a PC's status within the organisation, from grunt to mover and shaker.

The design of **Blade** endorses and actually encourages this type of column customisation; take them, make them your own, and remould them to best support the game you want to play.

There's no need to have a column that isn't truly important in your game. To help you design your own columns, here are the basics of how we have designed ours:

The D Pick is considered to be average, providing no special benefit or disadvantage.

Descending the line from D, E is noticeably worse, though not devastatingly; the difference amounts to 2 Attribute or Proficiency points, 5 Skill points, or one Asset.

The F Pick is intended to be truly poor and is set about three times as far below in value to the D Pick as the E Pick is; the equivalent of about 6 Attribute or Proficiency points, 13 Skill points or three Assets seeming about right to us.

Our choice of numbering here is very deliberate; we wanted every step on the table away from D to be larger than the one preceding it. This uneven stepping also applies when one ascends the line of the table from the average D Pick.

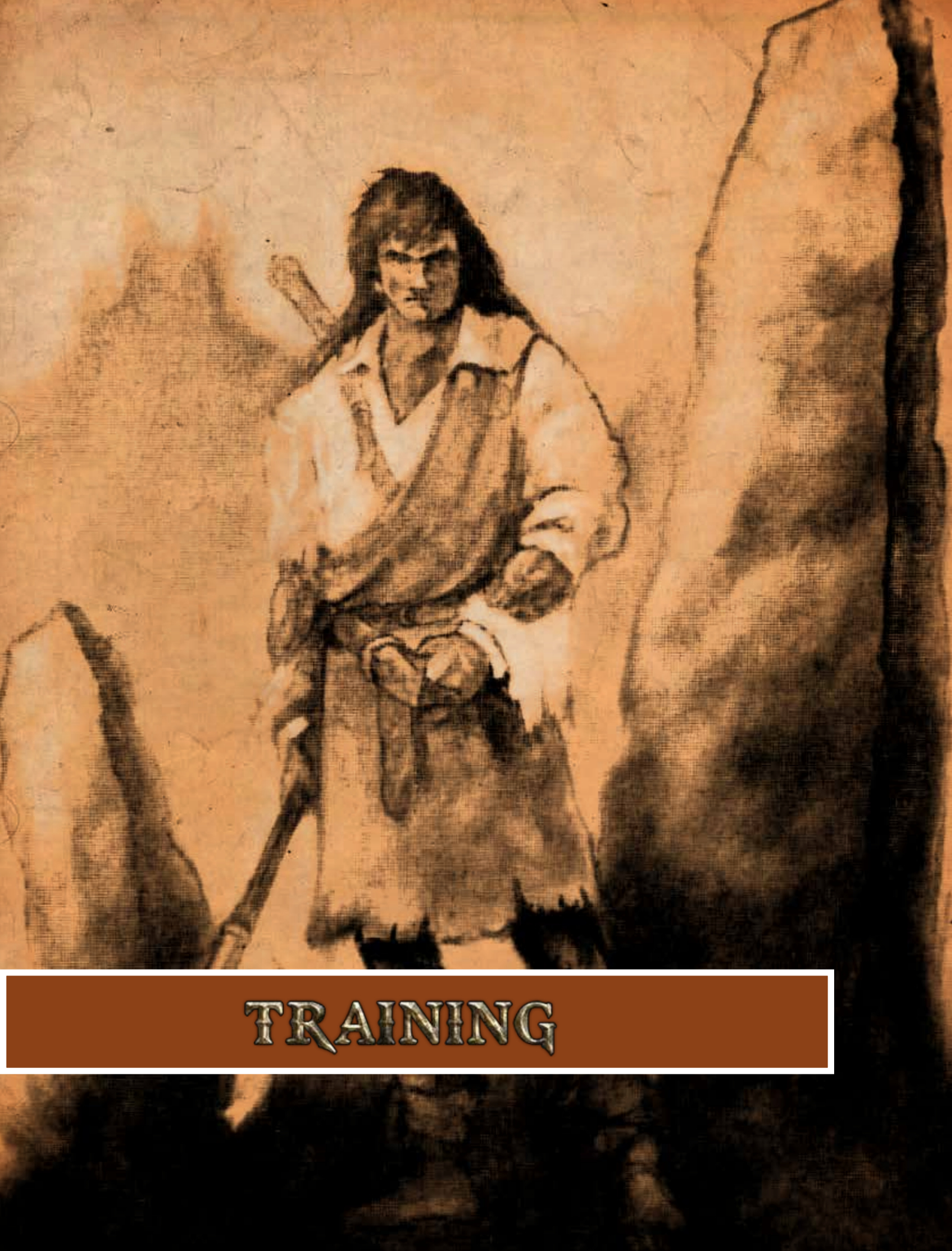
The C Pick equally scales improvement from the D Pick as much the E Pick worsens it; C and E are intended to mirror the other's separation from the D Pick.

In contrast, the B Pick is not intended to mirror the F Pick in the same way. Instead there is a less drastic improvement from C compared to the F Pick's drop from D; the equivalent of 3 Attribute or Proficiency points, 7 Skill points or two Assets better than C seems to us to be on target.

The A Pick is obviously intended to be the most advantageous, and thus is about twice as rewarding compared to the D Pick than the B Pick; the difference from A to D amounting to about 10 Attribute or Proficiency points, 25 Skill points, or six Assets.

So now you have our architecture of the Talent table; now go forth and customize your own!

This concludes Chapter Two.



TRAINING

The oracle chamber held no clue for him. He went forth into the great throne room and laid his hands on the throne. It was heavy, but he could tilt it up. The floor beneath, a thick marble dais, was solid. Again he sought the alcove. His mind clung to a secret crypt near the oracle. Painstakingly he began to tap along the walls, and presently his taps rang hollow at a spot opposite the mouth of the narrow corridor. Looking more closely he saw that the crack between the marble panel at that point and the next was wider than usual. He inserted a dagger point and pried.

Silently the panel swung open, revealing a niche in the wall, but nothing else. He swore feelingly. The aperture was empty, and it did not look as if it had ever served as a crypt for treasure. Leaning into the niche he saw a system of tiny holes in the wall, about on a level with a man's mouth. He peered through, and grunted understandingly. That was the wall that formed the partition between the alcove and the oracle chamber. Those holes had not been visible in the chamber.

Conan grinned. This explained the mystery of the oracle, but it was a bit cruder than he had expected. Gorulga would plant either himself or some trusted minion in that niche, to talk through the holes, the credulous acolytes, black men all, would accept it as the veritable voice of Yelaya.

Remembering something, the Cimmerian drew forth the roll of parchment he had taken from the mummy and unrolled it carefully, as it seemed ready to fall to pieces with age. He scowled over the dim characters with which it was covered. In his roaming about the world the giant adventurer had picked up a wide smattering of knowledge, particularly including the speaking and reading of many alien tongues.

Many a sheltered scholar would have been astonished at the Cimmerian's linguistic abilities, for he had experienced many adventures where knowledge of a strange language had meant the difference between life and death.

- Robert E Howard - Jewels of Gwahlur

Chapter Three
Training

"Thus tempered in the fire of conflict and strife, each slayer discovers that he holds a flame locked within his very heart, a blaze of passion that must ever char his soul lest it instead betray him to his enemies.

And while it may flicker and waver in time, only death can truly quench this fire, yet until such time, it shall seek to consume him – or be unleashed upon those who would oppose him."

- The Forlorn Tome of Du'Karrn

I. Skills Overview

Skills are more specific applications of an attribute, all skills being specialized bits of knowledge that a character can learn and eventually master. For example, the skill Trapping is a more specific use of your character's Cunning. Skill Points are used to purchase initial levels in the particular skills the player is interested in.

Characters learn them through instruction or experience. Skills are areas of expertise that are not necessarily common to every living creature. Some creatures simply don't have the capacity to learn certain skills.

II. Skill Descriptions

As this skill list includes broad definitions not applicable in all settings for which Blade could be used, the referee has the final say on actual skill applications. Skills are described with the Attribute they are most commonly associated with.

Acting (HT)

The character is skilled at all aspects of stage acting in front of crowds, including memorizing lines, voice projection, body control and voice mimicry, all entirely within the range of the normal use of this skill. A character may be required to make Checks when putting on an important show, or in front of an important crowd, or if required to speak especially difficult lines. The character can accurately mimic the voice of any given individual that he has heard speak at least once. Without the Disguise skill, this can be useful when shouting or speaking to another person from behind a door or while otherwise out of sight. When combined with Disguise, Acting can be used to play the part of a specific person. To do this, all skill Checks must be successful. In these cases, only the more pertinent of the two skills are checked during the interaction.

Ancient Languages (SY)

This skill provides the ability to read, write, and eventually speak one chosen language which was used in some long, lost civilization before the character's time. Ancient Languages can only be used to learn languages from the past which are not normally spoken in the character's modern world. The character's ability with this skill is directly related to its level. At levels 1-3, the character can recognize common written glyphs and symbols in the language. As the character's skill level increases, he gains an understanding of progressively more obscure elements of the language. At levels 4-6, he can begin to surmise how the ancient language was spoken, based on both his knowledge of the language and other later languages that developed from it. By levels 7-9 he can speak the language with fluency and flair. When this skill is taken, the character chooses one ancient language that it covers. Literacy is a prerequisite for this skill. At character creation, every Skill point invested into an Ancient Language Skill buys two points in that Ancient Language.

Animal Ken (HT)

The character is particularly keen at determining the drive, desires, demeanor, and feelings of an animal. To use the skill, the character must observe the creature for a few minutes and then roll a skill Check. If successful, the character can sense something about the creature's current drive, desires or specifics of its emotional state. Additional information may be gained through further skill Checks. This skill is useful when attempting to train animals to behave in a particular way or to teach them tricks.

This skill can only be used to teach the animal something that with its intelligence level and body shape it could normally perform.

Tricks which can be taught might include searching out or tracking specific prey, retrieving objects, guarding others or an area, reacting in specific ways to symbols or hand motions, returning home from any location, start or cease attack on command, walking with a particular gait and many more.

This skill can also be used to affect the creature's overall behavior, perhaps to make it more passive or aggressive than it normally would be, for example.

Animal Mimicry (HT)

A character with this skill can accurately produce the calls of a creature. They must have had some observation of or past experience with the creature to know its vocalizations.

Apart from their use in clandestine signaling, the calls are generally used to either draw a creature closer or to warn them of danger.

The actual reaction of the creature is up to the ref based on the situation and the creature's demeanor. The character may need to use a prop to produce certain creature sounds.

This prop could be anything from a specially designed call or whistle, to the character's own hands.

What is required for each type of creature is up to the ref to determine, based on the complexity of the sound and how easy it is for the character to produce vocally. Any use of the environment or the character's body, other than his voice, (stomping his foot, cupping his hands around his mouth, etc.) is considered a prop.

Apothecary (SY)

The character is skilled at creating non-magical, medical drugs from plants, minerals and animal parts. Throughout history, different cultures have created long lists of remedies for a wide range of ailments.

The benefits of these medicines are often not instant and may take several minutes to several hours to be effective. It is possible for medicines to have side effects, especially when the medicine is very potent. This skill also includes the study of poisons, their effects and detection, as well as the treatment of poisoned individuals.

The character can diagnose a poisoned character and recommend an antidote or treatment if he can see the symptoms and knows source of the poison or has a sample of the poison itself.

A successful skill Check allows the creation of medicines, poisons, or antidotes from ingredients that are at hand.

Note that while this skill provides the knowledge of how to prepare ingredients to make medicines, poisons, and antidotes, it does not provide the character with the ability to find the ingredients in the wild.

Battlefield Tactics (SY)

This skill provides the knowledge to move troops and resources to optimum positions on the battlefield. The character knows when and where to fight to make the most of the troops and resources at hand, taking advantage of terrain and weather. This allows an experienced Tactician to fight large scale battles with fewer men than his opponent and still have a reasonable chance of success.

When the character has knowledge of the battlefield and the standard tactics of the opponent which will be faced, the character can spend a few minutes with his comrades explaining the tactics which will be used in the upcoming battle. This talk must take place within two hours of battle. He may then roll a Battlefield Tactics Check. If successful, all comrades that heard the instructions gain +1 die to all Soldiering skill Checks made during the combat.

Bowyer - Fletcher (SY)

This skill provides the character with the ability to create bows and arrows, crossbows (save the manufacture of metal bows), as well as quarrels for use in crossbows. The character can create both self-bows and composite bows. Self-bows are built entirely from one piece of wood. English longbows are one example of a self-bow. When preparing the bow, the character must account for the natural knots, bends and other variations in the wood to prevent the risk of fracturing. A bowyer can generally produce a wooden self-bow in 5 to 15 hours. As their name implies, composite bows are made of a combination of different materials, such as wood, horn, and sinew. They require significantly more time and skill to produce than self-bows, but can produce more power and distance from a shorter bow. Composite bows as crafted by the Mongols and the Turks could require up to a year to produce a single bow (including time to allow the materials to cure). The bow strings are normally made

from animal parts, including sinew, intestine, and hair. Plant fibers may also be used. Beeswax is used to make the string resistant to the effects of moisture.

Climbing (DG)

This skill provides the character with the ability to climb many types of vertical surfaces. The amount of successful Climbing Checks needed to complete the task may vary. The movement rate while climbing depends upon how successful the character is at his Climbing Check. The base movement rate for climbing is 1.

If the character scores 2 successes, then the movement rate is increased to 2. If the roll generates 3 successes, then the rate increases to 3. If the Check was made with 4 or more successes, then the movement rate is 4.

The movement rate while climbing can never be higher than the character's normal movement rate.

Customs (HT)

This skill provides understanding of the customs of other cultures. The character does not run the risk of offending people from a known culture and is adept at quickly recognizing and reacting to the customs of newly encountered cultures. This differs from Etiquette in that Etiquette only provides knowledge of the social intricacies of the elite, whereas Customs is equally effective across all portions of a population. Customs cannot be used to duplicate the effects of Etiquette. So, a character with Customs, but without Etiquette, could not appear as one of the aristocracy.

Dancing (DG)

The character knows the artistry of dancing, and is trained in the art of performing in front of an audience. The character is well versed in all the

popular dances of the time, including those with complex or detailed steps. The character is also adept at picking up new dances, and may create new dances which could become quite popular.

Decipher (SY)

This skill provides the ability to decipher unknown written words, codes or glyphs. When faced with such a text, the character uses this skill to review the frequency and patterns of certain symbols and then connect them to likely theories of what he would expect the communication to hold. This is a time consuming process that, depending upon the length of the text could take several minutes to several months. It should be noted that while Decipher can be used to interpret any text, including unknown languages, the process for reading such a text is much longer than it would be with any of the language skills and does not provide any ongoing knowledge of the language.

Detect Sorcery (CG)

Successful use of this skill allows the character to detect the presence of the effects of sorcerous spells and the eldritch energies emitted by all sorcerous objects and supernatural beings, including a disembodied consciousness using the Scrying Lesser Mystery. This skill is not sensitive enough to allow the user to be aware of spells or effects after they have worn off.

Sorcery can be detected casually, practically in passing, but it is easier to do so if the character touches the object and concentrates for a full Limelight. During this time, a single object or the character's entire immediate vicinity to a distance of about 3 meters can be checked. To detect sorcery in a single object or being, 1 Success is usually sufficient if the character touches it and concentrates, or 2 Successes if actively checking it without touching, or 3 Successes to detect the sorcery by chance, by just touching the object without actively looking for sorcerous energies. To detect sorcery in the character's vicinity, 2 Successes will alert to the presence of such energies, 3 Successes will locate their approximate source, and 4 Successes will accurately pinpoint the origin, provided the character uses this skill actively. To just notice sorcery, in passing, one additional Success is required.

This skill is especially sensitive to the presence of disembodied consciousness's using the Scrying Lesser Mystery. Their presence can be noticed at a distance of up to 10 meters, and one less Success is required, that is 1 to 3 successes if using the skill actively or 2 to 4 successes if using it passively. If enough Successes are achieved to pinpoint the origin of this supernatural effect (i.e. 3 or 4), the character does not just feel the disembodied presence but actually sees it.

Especially faint or strong manifestations of sorcerous energies can require one Success more or less than given above.

This skill is available only to characters created with Talent Table "Sorcery" picks of A-C.

Disguise (CG)

This skill provides the character with the ability to disguise himself or someone else as someone they are not. A basic Check will allow a character to simply appear different than he currently is - changes in hair, clothing, sex, or social class, as well as measurable changes, such as weight, height are possible. When combined with Acting, Disguise can be used to play the part of a specific person. To do this, all skill Checks must be successful. In this situation, only the more pertinent of the two skills need be checked during the interaction.

Etiquette (HT)

The character understands the social intricacies of encounters with the elite. He knows what to talk about and what not to talk about, how to greet others, which utensils to use when eating and how to hold them, which dance steps are in vogue, and any number of other verbal and non-verbal courtesies of the upper-class. With the Customs skill, but without Etiquette, one might pass as a member of another culture, but could not appear as one of their aristocracy.

Falsehood (HT/SY)

Characters may use this skill to both tell lies (Heart), or detect lies (Sagacity) and resist the detection of their own (Heart).

For most lies success is automatic unless the lie is outlandish enough for listeners to become suspicious, in which case a Falsehood vs. Falsehood (or Sagacity with twice the number of successes needed if the target does not possess the Falsehood skill) is necessary.

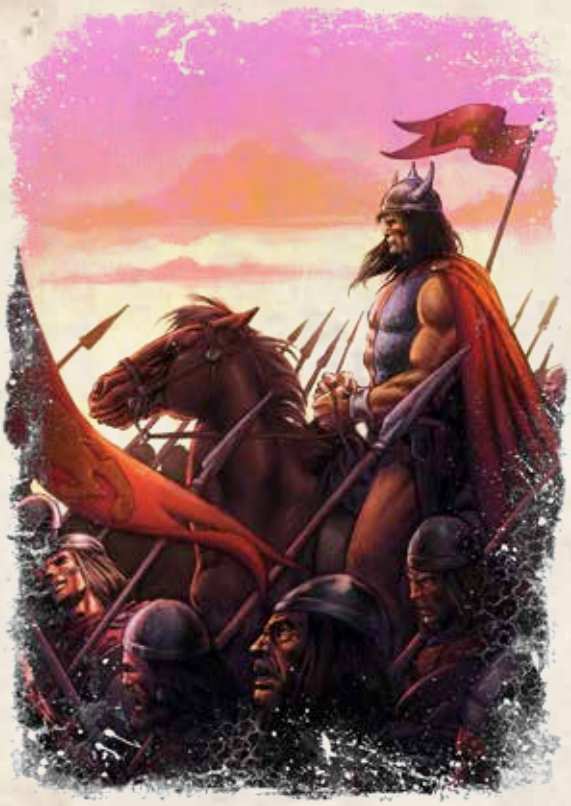
Anyone studying the various forms of dishonesty becomes necessarily both increasingly leery of people's honesty, and learns to behave in a controlled way that gives nothing away.

When somebody proficient in Falsehood tells the truth and is suspected of not doing so, he must use his Falsehood skill and score twice the normal number of successes needed in order to overcome the doubts of the listener, as lying has become second nature to him; if the roll is tied, he is still thought to be lying.

Any Falsehood roll to detect suspected dishonesty where the speaker was actually honest that is failed or tied automatically yields the result that the person has lied – the character has come to expect falsehood to such a degree that he is seeing it everywhere.

Foreign Languages (SY)

This skill provides the ability to speak one chosen non-native language that is currently used in the character's world. The level of the skill determines the extent of the character's knowledge. Thus a character with a level of 1 to 3 would be able to speak similar to a person who has arrived in a new country and read normal signs hung about town. Those with the skill at the level of 7-9 have the vocabulary of a highly intelligent scholar or writer. At character creation, every Skill point invested into a Foreign Language Skill buys two points in that Language.



Haggling (HT)

Provides a character with the skill to get better deals on goods he buys and sells. Used in its simplest form, the skill provides a -2 TN bonus to a character's Loot roll when attempting to acquire goods on a shopping trip.

However, when both parties in the transaction possess the Haggling skill, an Opposed Check occurs between the two parties. The deal will lean in favor of the person that wins the challenge.

The final results are up to the judgment of the ref. Of course, either party can simply back out of the deal and refuse to pay.

Healing (SY)

The Healing skill allows the character to help others and himself with injury and disease. He has an understanding of the medical procedures of the day, as well as the application of medicines to help the patient. Note that creating medicines, poisons, or neutralizing poisons requires the Apothecary skill. One of the most

important uses of the Healing skill is in first aid. When an injury occurs, if a successful Healing skill Check is per-formed within an hour, the patient regains 1 Pain point per success against the wound being tended.

The Healing skill can also be used to provide continued care to an injured patient. When a character rolls his weekly TY Check to determine if he has shed Pain points, a character with the Healing skill can tend to him, rolling his own Healing skill Check just prior to the injured character's TY Check. If the Healing Check is successful, the injured character gains 1 bonus success for their Tenacity Check for each success made by the caregiver's Check.

Patients who are suffering from illness or disease can also be helped with the Healing skill.

Information Gathering (HT)

A character with this skill is adept at tracking down the answers to questions and mysteries by finding the right person in an area to talk to.

Using this skill usually starts at a public location, perhaps a bar or a shop, and then through conversation, purchasing goods, or making small bribes, the character is led step by step to the information he seeks.

This may take several steps, each with a Check of their own, and each with their own role-playing opportunities.

Penalties may be applied to the Checks if the character is speaking to someone who may be fearful of exposing information.

The character should be smart about how he asks questions, especially when he is seeking information about a powerful person that has a lot of influence in the area.

Light Step (CG)

The character can use this skill to place less pressure upon any surface on which he steps. This allows him to resist leaving tracks in mud or snow, or even walk across short distances of liquid. If a trap would be triggered by a pressure plate, this skill could be used to move across it without triggering the trap. In all cases, the character must move briskly while using Light Step.

Lock Picking (CG)

A character with this skill is able to pick or otherwise disable locks. Generally, two tools are needed to pick a lock: a flat-headed implement (called a "tension wrench") used to turn the lock, and a pointed tool (the "pick") used to manipulate the pins inside the lock.

These can be makeshift versions, but without tools of some type, the character cannot use this skill to open a mechanical lock. This skill can also be used to disable other kinds of locks, including bars and latches on the opposite side of the door, as long as some crack in or around the door is accessible.

Locks can vary from simple (-2 TN bonus), average (no bonus or penalty), or complex (+2 TN penalty). The time required to pick a lock varies based on the complexity of the lock, but time constraints will always increase the number of successes needed for the task.

Music (HT)

The character is skilled at singing or playing a select type of musical instrument. Those with a higher skill rating can more accurately perform more complex music.

A character may be required to make Checks when putting on an important show, in front of an important audience, or when required to perform an especially difficult piece of music.

Navigation (TY)

Navigation is the process of monitoring and controlling the movement of a ship from one place to another. It is also the term used for the specialized knowledge used by navigators to perform navigation tasks. All navigational techniques involve locating the navigator's position compared to known locations or patterns.

Negotiation (HT)

The character with this skill understands the procedures and tactics of negotiations between people, groups, and states. He gains a -2 TN bonus to all Negotiation Checks as he assesses and reacts to the various exchanges that make up a diplomatic encounter.

In practice, a Check should be attempted at key points in a negotiation or diplomatic encounter. Success means the encounter turns somewhat towards the favorable side for the character. Failure means that the character may need to give some concessions. Depending upon the importance of the issues and the stubbornness of his adversary, the exchange could go very long with quite a few Checks.

Occultism (SY)

This is the knowledge of the arcane, the supernatural and the sorcerous, the professional knowledge of sorcerers and those intimate with their ways.

It cannot be learned if the character has neither an Asset nor a Talent Pick suggesting such familiarity.

The skill entails more or less mythical knowledge of famous sorcerers dead and living and their exploits, and more concrete knowledge of what sorcery is and isn't capable of. It also grants understanding of exactly how sorcery actually works, to the extent that this is understood within any given setting at all.

Depending on the setting, it also provides knowledge of supernatural beings like demons and their names, spheres of influence, attributes and other purported information on them.

Omen Reading (HT)

This skill allows the character to determine general information about his own future or the future of another person at hand. Omen Reading is often done for profit.

The methods for the fortune telling vary with each culture. Examples include throwing bones, palm reading, astrology, tarot cards, reading tea leaves, visions brought on by drugs, dreams, and signs from gods, gaining insight from dead ancestors, and many others. To use this skill, the character names the person or people he wishes to perform a reading for and makes a skill Check while performing the reading in whatever method he has chosen to use. The time that is covered by the reading is very general, a minimum of a day, and usually is based on some celestial timed event.

So, whatever information is gained could last until the new moon, the next week, or until the group reach the next town. In any case, Omen Reading never provides exact information about an exact event at an exact time.

The information provided by Omen Reading is often very general and very vague, such as "ill luck will come to those that travel during the next two days" or "with great chances comes great rewards in your near future" or "the man in white has a forked tongue." The ref creates the omen, but it is completely up to the characters to determine its meaning. The ref should put real effort into making the omen both meaningful for the characters, but without giving away too much information.

This skill is available only to characters created with Talent Table "Sorcery" picks of A-C.

Pick Pockets (CG)

This skill allows the character to secretly remove an object from another person, plant an object on another person, or secretly manipulate objects when other people are present. This could be used to steal coins from a target's pouch, a ring from his finger, or the dagger from his sheath. Likewise, the character could plant a stolen object on the target to frame him.

Beyond affecting a person directly, this skill could be used to secretly palm an item off of a table or slip poison into someone's drink. When using this skill in front of observers other than the target, the challenge rating increases by one level for every two people that could potentially see the Pick Pocket attempt.

Note that in larger groups, depending upon what is happening in the surrounding area, it is unlikely that everyone would have their attention focused towards the thief and his target. A significant distraction, such as a performer on a stage in front of a crowd, could draw most everyone's attention, allowing an easy harvest for the thief.

Precognition (CG)

A character with this skill has an uncanny ability to sense dangerous situations a moment before they occur. Whenever the character is asked to roll a surprise Check, he may choose to roll a Precognition Check prior to the requested roll. A single success does away with the need for the character to roll for surprise, two successes give the character time to give a sign of warning to his closest teammate, three successes provides the above bonuses, and an indication of the direction from where the danger will come.

Finally, four successes allows for adequate time to warn all teammates of the danger and completely negate the round of surprise. There is no penalty for a failed Precognition Check.

This skill is available only to characters created with Talent Table "Sorcery" picks of A-C.

Prestidigitation (CG)

A character with Prestidigitation is skilled at sleight of hand and creation of non-magic tricks and illusions. The character is able to use the appropriate distraction technics and hand motions to make small objects that he holds seem to disappear, or appear from nothingness. He can perform tricks with decks of cards, small animals, handkerchiefs, coins and other items. Note that Prestidigitation does not duplicate the Pick Pockets skill, which can be used to retrieve objects that are not in the character's grip prior to the skill Check.

Riding (DG)

This skill allows the character to control a mount of a specific type. If the character wishes to control another type of mount, he will need some time to familiarize himself with a new type of mount, until which time his skill Checks are one challenge level more difficult. A character with this skill can keep control of the animal at a full gallop without a skill Check. He can roll a Check to calm a startled animal. The character can direct his mount to leap obstacles and can perform other tricks with the mount, with a Check modified for difficulty.

In combat, the character can mount or dismount at no penalty with a successful skill Check.

If the skill Check is failed, it will require additional time to complete the mount or dismount, but no additional cost. To guide an animal in combat, the character must spend a MP die during any round that he wishes to change the animal's direction or speed of movement. This action does not require a skill Check. In combat, once started at a particular speed or direction, the animal is considered to continue along in that direction and at that speed until the character guides it to a different speed or direction.

Any attack that causes damage on the animal requires the rider to spend an additional MP die as well as make a successful skill Check, with a penalty appropriate for the amount of damage done, to maintain control of the animal.

If it is failed, a rider will be thrown from the mount and the animal will run until calmed on a following round.

Seamanship (TY)
The character is skilled in operating ships and boats. This skill covers all aspects managing such

vessels, from stringing rigging, to organizing the jobs for the crew, to repair of canvas and hulls, to steering and rowing the ship or boat. A penalty may apply to the skill check if the ship or boat encounters rough waters. Especially harsh storms could require up to 3 additional successes, making them treacherous to all but the most seasoned sea captain.

Seduction (HT)
The character is skilled in the art of romance, enticement, and seduction of those in which he is interested. While it is possible for a character without Seduction to have a romantic relationship, a character with this skill is much more adept at successfully pursuing others, including those that may be somewhat hesitant.

He knows the right things to say, when to make eye contact, and how to lie to succeed in his courting. Seduction can be used as a way to seduce those who could serve to benefit the character or his ambitions, and the use of this skill necessarily includes cool calculation and either feigned emotions, allusions, or outright promises. In practice, the character describes his methods and motives for wooing the subject and rolls a skill Check, adjusted for difficulty.

Seduction does take time and the higher the Challenge Level, the longer it will take. If the character is trying to convince the subject to do something that they would not normally do, then the subject may contest the attempt with Tenacity or their own Seduction skill. Successfully using Seduction means that the character has had some level of success achieving his motives.

Until the character has betrayed the subject, it will also raise their trust level, though the victim of this skill is later quite likely to notice that he/she was simply duped.

Continuous failure of this skill Check against the same target will only increase the Challenge Level, as well as the subject's annoyance with the character, until it is likely that the Checks will simply automatically fail.

Sneaking (CG)
This skill provides the character with the ability to obfuscate himself and his movements.

The character knows how to survey his surroundings to find the best places to hide. He has an understanding of how other people in the area will naturally look around and move through it, and knows how to create minor disturbances to distract them.

Most importantly, he knows how to position and move his body to fit into small hiding spots and move silently between them. A character with this skill can hide behind something which provides as little as 50% cover. To use this skill, the character rolls a skill Check, w i t h the Challenge Level based on the amount of coverage available and vigilance of others in the area.

This skill cannot be used to hide from others that are already aware and within vision of the character. The skill Check is rolled when the character first moves into an obfuscated position and again with each period of movement.

Soldiering (TY)
The professional skill of all soldiers, including low-level organisational decisions such as where and how to best strike up camp, how and where to set up guards, estimating the size of an enemy body by the size of its camp, judging the quality of a troop by seeing it perform, performing drills, drawing up in formations, etc.

More importantly, this skill entirely replaces weapon Proficiencies in any battlefield setting where fighting is in a cramped closed formation, such as in a shield wall. In any such situation, a weapon Proficiency functions only at 20% its normal value, but Soldiering can be used in its stead, no matter what the weapon. If a character breaks rank to fight alone – endangering both himself and his comrades to boot – his

Proficiencies are penalized no longer, but he also cannot use Soldiering in their stead.

Survival (CG)

When this skill is taken, the character is competent at survival in all elements, including mountains, tropical jungles, temperate forests, arctic regions, caverns, underwater, or any other easily defin-able terrain. Survival provides the character with the ability to find food, water, and shelter in the current environment. They have knowledge of the harsh conditions of the environment and can plan ahead by packing the proper provisions.

If a character has no experience in a new survival environment, then all Survival tasks are one Challenge Level higher in difficulty until three meaningful Survival Checks have been passed. Thereafter all Survival Checks revert to the Challenge Level normal for the task at hand.

Characters with this skill have a general idea of the risks posed by the creatures, plants and terrain of a given environment, and can take actions to avoid them.

Additionally, this skill helps a character maintain a sense of direction, and to navigate unknown wilderness and other surroundings. This is important to any explorer that travels overland without the benefit of a road, or that delves into the twisted caverns of the underworld.

If the character has somehow ended up in a location where he does not recognize, he can use Survival to get his bearings and a general idea of the direction that he needs to head to reach a familiar destination.

Another use is for the character to retrace his steps in a confusingly arranged environment. The character must have some way to tell basic orientation, such as the sun, stars, a compass, or known landmarks (e.g., a mountain in the distance). Without such clues of direction, the skill check will have a penalty of +2 to the skill Check's TN. In addition to determining direction, Survival allows the character to estimate distance, travel time, and to recall important landmarks along the way.

Swimming (DG)

Every hero of **Blade** can stay afloat and even swim clumsily if unencumbered in reasonably calm waters, but Swimming is the skill of braving agitated waters under difficult conditions, and also of diving. Non-aquatic characters with the Swimming skill can swim at a movement rate of 1 with no Check.

Successfully rolling a skill Check allows the character to increase this rate to 2. In combat, the Check should be rolled once per round of swimming. Out of combat, the Check should be rolled every ten minutes when trying to maintain speed.

Theology (SY)
The character has an intimate academic knowledge of his religion. This skill is the tool of a professional priest, and in many cults not required of them.

Common areas of learning include knowledge of religious beliefs, temples and cults of a chosen region and the surrounding area. This skill is likely acquired during training at a religious school, and is possibly useful to any bureaucrat in a government that has a strong relationship with a powerful religious sect.

Tracking (CG)
A character with this skill has the ability to follow the trail left by another creature by observing clues in the environment – footprints, crushed grass, broken twigs, dropped items, bits of cloth or fur, and others. To use the Tracking skill, the character rolls a skill Check with a Challenge Level based on how featureless the surface is that the trail is on. This Challenge Level is further adjusted by how old the trail is and the current weather conditions. Once the Check has failed, the trail is considered gone.

Trailing (CG)
The character is skilled at covertly following another person or creature. Unlike the Tracking skill, the target must be within sight when the character begins following him. To use Trailing, the character begins by spotting the person or creature he wishes to trail, and then makes a skill Check. A successful Check of average difficulty achieves success for the entirety of the chase with the character unnoticed; greater Challenge Levels occur only if passing through particularly open ground or especially deserted environs. Failure means being seen and remembered, though not automatically being recognized as a trailer.

A single roll also covers the entirety of the chase regarding suspicious targets, though the Check is then Opposed with Trailing, (or Cunning, doubling the required successes needed if the target does not possess the Trailing skill).

Trapping (CG)
A character with this skill can plan, set, find, and disable traps of all sorts. The primary ability that this skill provides is a predictive one: what path will the target likely take? What will lure the target into the trap?

And when searching for traps, the character may ask where he would set a trap in the current area. When planning and setting a trap this skill provides the ability to produce very basic devices, such as a cover of branches and leaves for a pit in the forest. The damage done by a trap should be based upon similar devices.

The ref should secretly roll the skill Check for a character that is setting a trap. Failing the skill Check could mean one of several things: the trap may be visible to the target, the trap may not go off as planned, or the trap may accidentally spring while the character is working on it. Success means that the trap has been properly set.

More Skills?

The Skills listed previously should suffice the majority of campaigns and settings, but groups are of course encouraged to create new Skills they feel are vital for their game. Some care should however be taken:

Skills in **Blade** are quite an expensive commodity when compared with, for instance, Attributes. They should therefore be truly useful; having a Skill or not having it should really matter in a good number of game situations. Stuff like carousing, teamster, fishing, or animal husbandry, while doubtless requiring skill or at least talent and probably know to a good number of characters, are not really suitable for being made into formal Skills, as they are not likely to actually be important in more than rare instances. Things that would do hardly more than add flavour or just flesh out a character's background should not be elevated to Skill-status.

So: If it is not likely to be critical to the action of the adventure with some frequency, it should not be a Skill.

In the following, two examples for additional Skills are provided that might be suitable for select campaigns.

Charioteering (DG)

Proficiency at driving not just any old cart or wagon, but an actual chariot and under adverse conditions at that.

The Skill encompasses, among other things, both battlefield and racing use of chariots, familiarity with all different types of chariot, basic knowledge about their construction and the ability to effect simple repairs, and also proper treatment of the horses or whatever animals might be used with the chariot.

Charioteering might be relevant as a Skill in games where chariots still fulfil a role in warfare, or else in those where chariot races figure prominently.

Streetwise (CG)

This Skill represents familiarity with criminal subcultures and everything that goes them in any given setting. It replaces the Customs, Etiquette, and Information Gathering Skills in many underworld situations.

Characters proficient in this Skill know how to behave among members of the half-world, how to pass themselves off as one their number (if they are not anyhow), how to employ and read secret signs and codes, and knowledge of the usual modus operandi of criminal types.

In addition, it is a measure of a character's knowledge of local criminal structures in any place he has spent some time in, a kind of who-is-who and what-is-what of the underworld and half world and their contacts in a locale.

Streetwise is relevant as a Skill if a large part of the campaign is intended to be set in the urban underworld and to also revolve around it. Don't bother making this into a Skill if the underworld serves merely as a backdrop.

III. Assets Overview

If a player creates a character with one or more of the Assets described here, she has three basic choices for how that Asset affects the character's personality.

First, the character might view the Asset as a weakness. A character with this view might try to hide the Asset or make excuses for his behavior. On the other hand, he might seek out others with the Asset to feel better about his own idiosyncrasy.

Second, the character might view the Asset as a strength. A character might call attention to the Asset, encourage others to act in ways that mimic the Asset, or simply assume that those without the Asset are less worthy than those who possess it.

Finally, the character might not acknowledge the Asset at all. A character might adopt this attitude toward an Asset for several reasons, each suggesting something different about the character's background and personality:

- The character might not be aware of the Asset; for example, a nearsighted character might not realize that others see better at a distance because his impairment is mild and the onset was so gradual that he never noticed the change.
- The character might be aware of the Asset but not want to admit that he possesses it. For example, an abrasive character might realize that his mannerisms affect others, yet find more solace in putting the blame on those whom he offends rather than on himself.
- The character might know but simply not care.

1. Assets Described

Abrasive - You are difficult and demanding in conversation, which tends to oppress those around you.

Good: You gain a -3 TN modifier on all Checks involving intimidation.

Poor: You take a +2 TN modifier on Checks involving endearing oneself to others, or Negotiation.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset might be loud and abrupt or quiet and sinister, but either way, most find them disconcerting or irritating.

Absent Minded - You are fascinated by knowledge and learning and are capable of pursuing complex trains of thought quite quickly. However, your preoccupation with such thoughts makes you a little less aware of your surroundings.

Good: You gain a -2 TN modifier on Checks involving knowledge or learning.

Poor: You take a +2 TN modifier on Checks involving awareness of one's surroundings.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset might flit from idea to idea, trailing off in midsentence or mumbling their way through complex ideas.

Conversely, characters with this Asset might be extremely articulate but still allow their thoughts to move faster than the pace of a conversation.

Addiction - The character is addicted to a some drug that has at least two out of the following three properties: Highly illegal, very expensive, debilitating.

Good – There are no good aspects to the Addiction Asset.

Poor: An addict can go without a fix for a full day, but his TNs increase as his withdrawal pangs rise, by a daily cumulative +1; this does not apply to rolls made in highly stressful situations, when the rush of adrenaline does, for a short time, drown out the withdrawal symptoms.

In addition, this daily penalty also equals the number of successes the character must achieve on a Tenacity Check in order to turn down an offer of the drug, when the player wants to stay free of its scourge.

Roleplaying Ideas: A drug is regarded as debilitating when a character under its influence is either completely

unable to act at all or when it reduces his chances of success to one third or less of the sober state (i.e. three times the number of successes necessary). Player and ref should cooperate to come up with a drug from the setting that fits the bill.

This Asset is appropriate for Decadents.

Aggressive - You are quick to initiate combat, and you tend to press the attack once battle is joined. Your enthusiasm makes you a dangerous foe, but you sometimes leave yourself open to blows that a more cautious warrior would avoid.

Good: You gain a –1 ATN modifier to all offensive Maneuvers made during combat, until you execute your first Defensive Maneuver.

Poor: You gain a +1 DTN penalty to all Defensive Maneuvers made during a combat, until you successfully execute an Offensive Maneuver.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset are often hotheaded and quick to anger, or simply think that the best defense is a quick offense.

Ambidextrous – The character is equally is equally agile and dextrous with his left and his right hand.

Good: The character does not suffer the usual +1 TN for weapons wielded in the off hand. He has –1 TN for certain rare activities requiring dexterity in both hands at the same time, for example juggling.

Poor – There is no poor aspect to the Ambidextrous Asset.

Roleplaying Ideas – Ambidextrous characters might enjoy startling others with surprising displays of dexterity in what is commonly considered their off-hand.

Arrogance - The character is arrogant to a point where it is very hard for him to give first place to any lesser man, let alone follow his orders. Not being treated with the immense respect he believes to be his due is very galling for him.

Good: The character makes all Checks to resist bullying or intimidation, and being cowed, against a TN that is 2 lower than normal.

Poor: The character must succeed at a Tenacity Check to stomach real or imagined slights or condescending treatment. The difficulty of the Check depends on the gravity of the incident; on a failure, he will not stand for such treatment and must take immediate action. In addition, his own condescension towards all he considers his inferiors raises the TN of all his Checks for friendly social interaction with those who do not share his views about their own station by +1.

Roleplaying Ideas: Whenever a character with this Asset looks as if he is about to be outdone in any social situation by somebody he considers a lesser man, he can have his pride fuel his effort; in an Opposed Check in any social situation the player may, after his opponent has made his Check, but before he has made his own, invoke his pride to have his TN lowered by –1. Should he do so and still be bested, he must lash out at least verbally at the victor.

This Asset is appropriate for Decadents.

Berserk - The character is known to have spells of berserk rage when he strikes out violently at all who oppose him, without a care for his own safety.

Good: The character will never slip into a berserk rage by default, but he can enter one by concentrating for one combat round and succeeding at a Challenging Daring Check; if he does not achieve the necessary 2 successes on a single roll, he may opt to continue concentrating and turn the task into Timed Check, with another Check allowed every combat round. When the player wants his character to come out of the berserk rage he must accumulate 5 successes on a Timed Tenacity Check, rolled every combat round; until he achieves these successes, he must go on savaging anyone who seems alive, including friends or allies.

Poor: The character has little to no control over his berserk fits. He cannot enter them voluntarily, but whenever he is wounded in combat, including brawls, he has to roll Tenacity and

achieve at least as many successes as the level of the wound; if he fails, he goes into a berserk rage immediately. The same Check has to be made when the character witnesses somebody for whom he has a positive Passion grievously injured (wound level 3+), this time with successes required equal to the current value of the Passion. The player cannot choose to forego these Checks and fail deliberately. Snapping out of the berserk rage requires 5 successes on a timed Tenacity Check, to be made beginning in the combat round that enemies are sighted, until all within view are defeated.* Until the 5 successes are accumulated, the character must continue his savage attacks on anyone who looks alive, including friends.

Roleplaying Ideas: While berserk, a character cannot take any defensive Maneuver that does not also an offensive component to it, limiting him to Block Open & Strike, Duck & Weave, Evasive Attack, Master-Strike, Overrun, Simultaneous Block/Strike and Winding & Binding. In addition, he may not execute offensive Maneuvers that don't aim at directly injuring his opponent, ruling out Beat, Disarm, Hook, Stop Short and Toss.

While berserk, his frame of mind is thus that he suffers only ½ Shock and ⅓ Pain from all wounds received (make sure to record unreduced values, as these will return once the berserk rage wears of). Finally, facing a berserk fighting without regard for himself is greatly unsettling to any opponents, who pay double the normal activation cost for all offensive Maneuvers aimed at the berserk (activation cost 0 becomes 1).

This Asset is appropriate for Degenerates.

Brawler - You naturally move close to your opponents when fighting, instinctively grabbing and punching rather than striking with weapons.

Good: You gain a -1 TN modifier on unarmed attack rolls and grapple Checks.

Poor: You take a +1 TN modifier with all attacks you make at medium range or longer.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset often disdain the use of weapons entirely, and some eventually learn more refined martial arts based on their instinctive fighting techniques. Many brawlers might not even be consciously aware that they fight differently from other characters; they simply know that the best way to take someone out of a fight is to grab him or punch him in the face.

CANNIBALISM - The character feels a craving hunger for human flesh.

Good: There is no good aspect to the Cannibalism Asset.

Poor: If the character is found out to be a cannibal, most persons not sharing his taste will be shocked and cease their dealings with him. Any roll for friendly social interaction by a known man-eater has its TN raised by +1 to +3, the former for rather impersonal ones like haggling, the latter for eminently intimate ones like seduction.

Roleplaying Ideas: This affliction is one that does mostly pertain to roleplaying, but if the character has the opportunity to feast on human flesh when it would be impolitic to do so, he has to Check Tenacity to resist his appetite.

The difficulty of this Check depends on just how awkward it would be to sate his hunger, on the period of abstinence and on the likelihood of another opportunity to feed arising soon.

This Asset is suitable for Degenerates.

CAUTIOUS - You are cautious in combat, even a bit cowardly, and you take more care to defend yourself than others. However, this caution renders you susceptible to fear effects.

Good: You gain an -1 TN modifier when Evading or Partially Evading

Poor: You take a +2 TN modifier on Checks made to resist and overcome fear, and +1 TN to Surprise Checks, as you tend to "freeze up" in face of sudden danger.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset might consistently urge talking rather than fighting, or they might do little to encourage that their companions avoid combat and simply remain as far away from foes as possible, using ranged weapons or spells.

CONNECTION - The character has either a very useful friendly connection to a person or organisation in the core area of the campaign, or else a dangerous enmity with a person or organisation in this region.

Good: The individual or organisation is a friend of the character and is willing to go to great lengths to aid the character, up to and including a risk to his own reputation, affluence, wellbeing and even life. If the individual or organisation gets destroyed, the player has to wait for sessions equal to 5 – successes on a Heart Check before he is allowed to replace his connection with another one which he develops together with the ref.

Poor: The individual or organisation is a sworn enemy of the character and willing to go to considerable lengths to damage and ideally undo the character. In any session set in the area of this enemy's operations the ref rolls for the enemy's occurrence (7+ or 10+ on d12, see below), and when the enemy appears, he will oppose the character in addition to any other opposition from the main adventure itself.

If the individual or organisation gets destroyed and the player passes a Heart Check, the ref must allow a number of sessions equal to the successes on this Check to pass before he replaces the former enemy with a new one which he then develops together with the player.

Roleplaying Ideas: Varies immensely with the exact nature of the Connection – which could even be supernatural in nature, for example a totem spirit or some such.

Detached - You maintain a distance from events that keeps you grounded but limits your reaction speed.

Good: You have a -2 TN modifier on Checks to keep your cool and remain sane or unimpressed, and –1 TN to resist intimidation.

Poor: You take a +2 TN modifier on Surprise Checks and +1 TN to notice things without actively watching out for them.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset are likely to be quiet and restrained, but they might be vocal when others falter in their beliefs.

Dishonest - You are naturally deceitful and insincere with others. You have a talent for lying, but have difficulty convincing others when you do speak truthfully.

Good: You gain a -2 TN modifier on Checks related to bluffing or guile.

Poor: You take a +2 TN modifier on Checks related to Negotiation and to all Checks related to gaining trust or appear trustworthy.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset might be portrayed as crafty liars, or lying might simply be second nature to them, making actually telling the truth a difficult chore.

Distinctive - You have some distinctive physical feature such as a scar, a prominent nose, a limp, or some similar characteristic that is hard to disguise or conceal.

***Good:** You gain a -2 TN modifier on all Checks related to Reputation.

Poor: You take a +2 TN modifier on all Checks related to disguising yourself.

***Special** - This Asset is available only if your S&S campaign includes a Reputation system.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset might be sensitive about it, or they might play up its presence to gather attention, sympathy, or notoriety.

Dwarf - The character is abnormally small, measuring no more than 75% and maybe as little as 65% of the average for people of his gender.

Good: There is no good aspect to the Dwarf Asset.

Poor: The character's Move score is decreased by –1. In addition, all his weapon lengths in combat are decreased by one increment, to a minimum of Hand.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset attempting to use the Disguise skill to imitate any normal-sized person is impossible, and for the reason of general disguise all TNs are raised by +2, unless he is attempting to pass as a child.

This Asset is appropriate for Degenerates.

Easygoing - You are naturally friendly. Others feel comfortable around you, but this Asset also makes it more difficult for you to be pushy or suspicious.

Good: You gain a -2 TN modifier on Checks related to making casual acquaintances and gaining their trust, including Checks for Information Gathering. You also Check Seduction at –1 TN.

Poor: You take a +2 TN modifier on all Checks related to intimidation and formal social interaction, including most applications of Etiquette.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset might be more easily manipulated in interactions with NPCs, or they might simply prefer not to argue and instead use their natural talent to learn more about the world around them.

EUNUCH - The (male) character has been castrated.

Good: The character has been castrated after the onset of puberty and is not readily recognizable as a eunuch and able to function sexually. Hits to his groin use the wound description and values of hits to a woman's groin. He resists attempts at seduction with TN –1 and is affected mechanically by a sexually compatible character's beauty as if sexually incompatible.

Poor: The character has been castrated before the onset of puberty and is therefore a readily recognizable eunuch. Most other men and quite a few women (ref's discretion), Decadents excepted, will react poorly to an allegedly "effeminate" eunuch, causing all TNs for the eunuch's attempts at friendly social interaction with them to be raised by +1.

This does not apply to close acquaintances of the character knowing him well enough to look beyond prejudices. In addition, if he uses the Disguise skill to try to pass himself off as an uncastrated man, his TN to do so is increased by +2. He is unable to function sexually.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset need not be overweight, but if they have been castrated before the onset of puberty there is definitely a certain soft plumpness to their features, their voice is lacking male depth, and the character cannot grow a beard. In any case he is unable to father children.

Farsighted - You have difficulty focusing on nearby objects, but your distance vision is more keen than normal.

Good: You gain a -2 TN modifier on Checks related to spotting or discerning something at mid to far distances. You gain +1 die to your AP for every Range Band beyond Near (maximum +3).

Poor: You have a +3 TN modifier on Checks when attempting to discern small details very close to you, such as when searching an area, or scanning an object closely for clues.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset might be sensitive about it, or they might simply be oblivious to its presence, having never known any different way of experiencing the world.

Feral **-** During at least your early infancy you were actually brought up by wild animals, or else have been raised under conditions much closer to wild beasts than even primitive humanity.

Good: You take –2 to TNs to Animal Ken and Survival and –1 to TNs to Surprise and Tracking Checks.

Poor: You take +1 on TNs to Custom Checks and for all social interaction save intimidation, and an additional +2 to TNs for social interactions under even remotely formal circumstances.

Focused **-** You can keep your attention on a task despite many distractions; however, events in the background pass you by.

Good: you gain a -2 modifier on Checks to ignore distractions, and on Timed Checks to work on some task under pressure.

Poor: You take a +2 TN modifier on Surprise Checks and +1 TN to notice things without actively watching out for them.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset often seem single-minded or even obsessive in their focus on a specific task.

Giant - The character is abnormally huge, at least 25% and maybe up to 35% taller than the average for people of his gender.

Good: The character's Terrain Check TNs are reduced by 1. In addition, all his weapon lengths in combat are increased by one increment, effectively allowing him to attack at Short with his bare hands.

Poor: The character's hulking frame is lacking grace. The TNs for all Checks involving graceful and agile body movement are increased by +1, including evasion Checks in combat.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset are virtually unmistakable; use of the Disguise skill to imitate any normal-sized person is impossible, and for the reason of general disguise its TNs are raised by +2.

This Asset is appropriate for Degenerates.

Hallucinations - Either because of a strangely mystical bent or a long history of heavy drug abuse the character suffers from frequent hallucinations. These hallucinations arise from the character's imagination, seem perfectly real, and are devoid of any real prophetic content.

Good: There are no good aspects to Hallucinations.

Poor: In any scene, no matter whether stressful or relaxed for the character, on 11+ on a d12 there is a chance for the occurrence of a disruptive hallucination. Minor hallucinations of no consequence can occur more frequently than this.

What makes these attacks critical is that they compel the character's belief that something is happening that requires a reaction by him that will at best be awkward and alienate people, and at worst be downright dangerous.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset have no way of telling whether a hallucination is real or not; they must

decide this by themselves and react or refuse to react to it based on their judgment. This might well lead to them taking an unexpected real event for a mere hallucination.

The ref is encouraged to roll twice for the occurrence of a hallucination in some scenes while forgoing the roll in others, so as to keep the player unsure about the absolute limit of one hallucination per scene.

This Asset is suitable for Decadents.

Hard of Hearing - You have a slight hearing impairment.

Good: There is no good aspect to the Hard of Hearing Asset.

Poor: You take a +2 TN modifier on all Checks related to hearing something.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset might be sensitive about it, or they might simply be oblivious to its presence, having never known any different way of experiencing the world.

Hardy - You are made of tougher stuff than the average person, but you're not quite as quick to react to dangerous effects.

Good: You gain a -1 TN modifier for enduring physical hardships like torture. Your Tenacity is treated as being 1 higher for the purpose of reducing Pain from wounds.

Poor: You take a +1 TN modifier on Reflex Checks, including those for Surprise.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset might see their physical prowess as normal and look down on less hardy individuals, or they might see it as their duty to play the role of protector and help those less able to endure physical hardship.

Hideous - The character is not just plain or ugly, but truly hideous.

Good: There is no good aspect to this Asset.

Poor: Any Check for friendly social interactions of the character with strangers or passing acquaintances have their TNs increased by +2. Close acquaintances and friends have learned to look past the revolting face and interact normally with the hideous character.

Roleplaying Ideas: Plain scarification of the face is not sufficient to attain this level of ugliness, which requires birth defects or deliberate mutilation of the face. The character is sure to become the subject of pity, but more likely of abuse – should people dare to abuse him.

This Asset is suitable for Degenerates.

Honest - You are naturally straightforward and sincere. This quality helps you persuade people to your viewpoint, but you have difficulty telling lies and seeing deception in others.

Good: The TNs of all the character's Checks to detect a lie are reduced by –2. In addition, when he is telling the truth and somebody else is using the Falsehood skill to ascertain the truthfulness of the statement, that person's TN is also reduced by –2. Finally, if he uses the Negotiation skill and is not being secretive about his goals and motives, his TN is reduced by –2.

Poor: The TNs of all the character's Checks whether to tell a lie or to smell out the truth of somebody else's statement, are increased by +2. Also, all of his attempts at Haggling and Negotiation are made with TNs increased by +2.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset might be naive and too unsophisticated to lie, or they might be aware of worldly matters and simply choose to take a higher ground.

Hunchback - The character's spine is deformed in such a way that he is constantly bent forward significantly and has a very prominent hunchback.

Good: There are no good aspects to the Hunchback Asset.

Poor: The difficulty of all the character's Checks for action where fluidity and grace of movement of the entire body are important (e.g. uses of the skills Light Step, Dancing, or Climbing) have their TN raised by +2. Evasion TNs are raised by +1.

Roleplaying Ideas: Apart from this malformation being considered unattractive by quite a few people, and possibly causing discomfort or even some pain, it does affect the grace of the character's movements.

This Asset is suitable for Degenerates.

Inattentive - You are skilled at finishing simple tasks, but you have a difficult time dealing with longer, more complex tasks.

Good: You get a -2 TN to any Checks to notice things going on around you.

Poor: You get +2 TN to Timed Checks requiring prolonged concentration, and +1 TN to notice things you are actively looking for.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset might flit from subject to subject in conversation, or they might seem typical in most situations but leave most of their long-term projects perpetually unfinished.

Inhuman - Somehow, the character is akin to some demi-human species that preceded man. Maybe it is a distant strain asserting itself surprisingly in the character, maybe he is the product of some freak experiment of sorcerous crossbreeding, or maybe the fruit of some unsavoury union in the not too distant past, but whatever he is, he is not entirely human.

Good: The character has some easily-hidden bodily feature setting him apart from the rest of humanity (e.g. complete hairlessness, lack of body odour, absence of a navel, or something else appropriate determined communally by player and ref). In addition he has some instinctive knowledge of his inhuman ancestors and a strange rapport with them; the TNs of his Checks to know facts about them or to interact successfully with them are decreased by –2.

Poor: The character not only has some conspicuous feature branding him as unusual (e.g. extra digits, strange-looking eyes, an unusual complexion, or something else appropriate determined communally by player and ref), he has also something about him that makes most people very uneasy.

The TNs of all his social interactions with Savages, Nomads and Hillmen are increased by +2, and by +1 for those with Civilized people; Enlightened and Decadent people and Degenerates are unaffected. If the campaign does not use Cultural Archetypes, he interacts with everybody at +1 TN.

Roleplaying Ideas: This Asset can only exist in campaigns where an appropriate non-human race exists at least in legend.

This Asset is appropriate for Degenerates.

Lame - Somehow, maybe due to a wound or a birth defect, one of the character's legs is either decidedly shorter or weaker than the other, or both.

In combat, all three types of evasion and any Maneuvers that include a great amount of stepping (Stop Short and Evasive Attack, and others as the situation demands) have their TNs raised by +1.

Good: There are no good aspects to the Lame Asset.

Poor: All the character's Checks for actions in which being lame in one leg might be a detriment (the use of the Dancing, Climbing, or Light Step skills, etc.) have their TNs raised by +2. In combat, all three types of Evasion and any Maneuvers that include a great amount of stepping (Stop Short and Evasive Attack, and others as the situation demands) have their TNs raised by +1.

Roleplaying Ideas: The character walks with a very noticeable limp and is severely handicapped in all endeavours where quick or sure steps are important.

This Asset is suitable for Degenerates.

Lecherous - Most heroes of S&S are very fond of wenching, but this character takes it to extremes.

Good: All the character's TNs to win over somebody he has cast an eye on are reduced by –2. This is not limited to the Seduction skill alone, but can also apply to other actions provided their main purpose is to impress a person the character wants to bed, including some uses of such skills as Acting, Customs, Dancing, Etiquette, Music and others.

Poor: The character is virtually addicted to pretty faces. If he wants to avoid having to make passes at either every possible attractive partner he comes across or at the most attractive one if encountering several at once, he has to pass a Tenacity Check.

The ref adjudicates the difficulty of this Check by how sexually sated the character currently is, how eligible the possible partner, and how awkward a pass would be, but will set it very rarely, if ever, at below Challenging.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset will hardly pass up an opportunity to have a tryst with members of the sexually compatible gender.

This Asset is appropriate for Decadents.

Legendary Beauty - More than just being beautiful, the character's looks are actually singularly breath-taking.

Good: All the character's rolls for friendly social interaction with sexually compatible people have their TNs decreased by –2, and by –1 for those who are not sexually compatible; these modifiers do not apply to close companions of the character.

In addition, the ref must not use the character's beauty to harass the character, as in pestering him with unwanted attention of any kind due to his beauty; the character may well be ravishing, but fate smiles upon him in such a way that he somehow does not attract special attention of slavers, or powerful letches and the like.

Poor: All the character's rolls for friendly social interaction with sexually compatible people have their TNs decreased by –1, as his looks are of a kind that attracts scorn and jealousy from sexually incompatible persons, with whom he interacts at TN +1; these modifiers do not apply to close companions of the character.

In addition, the character will regularly attract unwanted attention from powerful but obnoxious suitors, letches, slavers and others of the kind; the ref is justified in introducing a potentially dangerous episode arising from the character's beauty about every other game session.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset could either be happy-go-lucky social mixers who are used to getting their way, or quiet and introverted souls; made shy by their own beauty.

Literacy - The character can read and write when this is uncommon, or he can't when this skill is rather common.

Good: The character can read and write.

Poor: The character cannot read and write and also can never learn such, either due to some defect, a poor attention span or a plain dislike of "book larnin'".

Roleplaying Ideas: The Good aspect of the Asset is available only in campaigns where few people are literate; characters without it are automatically illiterate. The Poor aspect of the Asset is only available in campaigns where few people

are illiterate; characters without it are automatically literate.

Lithe - You are fast, but less sturdy than average members of your race.

Good: You gain –2 TN for most Reflex Checks, excluding Surprise Checks.

Poor: reduce Knockdown score by 1 and treat Brawn Attribute as 1 lower for the sake of resisting blunt trauma.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset typically try to stay away from physical combat, but a rare few might relish it, striving to see if their superior speed is enough to best hardier warriors.

Lost Love - Somehow, somewhere, the character has found and enjoyed what he is convinced was his one true love, but he has since irrevocably lost it.

Good: The character is virtually immune against attempts at seduction. He resists any such attempts against him at TN –2 and even if failing in his resistance will at best have a purely carnal interest without being smitten at all. He is also completely unfazed by exceptionally good looks of sexually compatible persons, who have no better interaction modifiers with him as if he were sexually incompatible.

Poor: The character suffers from reflective bouts of depression and black moods. Such spells will befall him automatically when he does closely witness other lovers' happiness, but can also afflict him at random; at the onset of any new scene, the ref rolls D12, with a result of 10+ signifying a spell of black mood. Such a bout and the accompanying listlessness and acerbity needs to be role-played, it's purely mechanical implications being +2 to the TNs of all attempts at friendly interaction by the character.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset could be firmly convinced that they will never be able to regain the happiness they have once known.

Missing Arm - Not only is the character missing one of his hands, but he has actually lost an entire arm from at least his mid upper arm downwards.

Good: There is no beneficial mechanical side to having lost an arm.

Poor: Too little is left of the lost arm to allow for any kind of effective prosthetic. Most activities where the grip of two hands would be necessary are outright impossible, but a few can be attempted at steep penalties.

Roleplaying Ideas: Use common sense to adjudicate any difficulties of having only one arm. If this happened to be his dominant arm, he has already retrained himself to be able to use his other arm without handicap.

This Asset can only be taken in conjunction with Missing Hand.

Missing Hand - The character is missing one of his hands, possibly together with a small portion of his forearm.

Good: There is no beneficial mechanical side to having lost a hand.

Poor: There is enough left of the forearm to strap on a specially adapted shield or to wear a crude prosthetic, but any activity where the grip of two hands would be necessary is either heavily penalized (e.g. climbing) or outright impossible.

Roleplaying Ideas: Use common sense to adjudicate any difficulties of having only one hand. If this happened to be his dominant hand, he has already retrained himself to be able to use his other hand without handicap.

This Asset can be combined with Missing Arm.

Muscle-bound - You are good at almost everything that requires strength, but less adept than most at tasks that require coordination.

Good: Your Brawn is treated as 1 higher for the purpose of resisting Blunt and Cleaving damage. You take -2 TN to any feat of raw strength.

Poor: You take +2 TN to feats requiring grace and agility.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset are likely to solve problems with physical strength rather than through trickery or finesse.

Nearsighted - You have difficulty focusing on distant objects, but your near vision is more keen than normal.

Good: You gain a -3 TN modifier on Checks related to spotting or discerning something at close distances.

Poor: You have a +3 TN modifier on Checks related to spotting or discerning something at mid to far ranges.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset might be sensitive about it, or they might simply be oblivious to its presence, having never known any different way of experiencing the world.

Necrophilia - The character feels sexually attracted by fresh or at least reasonable fresh corpses.

Good: – There are no good aspects to the Necrophilia Asset.

Poor: If the character is found out to be a necrophiliac, most persons not sharing his taste will be shocked and cease their dealings with him. Any roll for friendly social interaction by a known necrophiliac has its TN raised by +1 to +3, the former for rather impersonal ones like haggling, the latter for eminently intimate ones like seduction.

Roleplaying Ideas: The main impact of this affliction is that it has to be role-played, but if the character has the opportunity to engage in sexual acts with a corpse when it would be impolitic to follow this urge, he has to check Tenacity to resist his lust.

This Asset is suitable for Degenerates.

Night-sighted - Your eyes are particularly well suited to darkness, but they are less well adapted to what others consider normal light.

Good: Suffer only 1/3 the normal penalty to Melee Pool from poor light or near darkness.

Poor: You take +1 TN for all activities made in very bright light (at least equivalent to a sunny day), and if also fighting in such conditions then you also lose 1 to 3 dice (ref's call) from your Melee and Archery pools.

Roleplaying Ideas: This Asset might not affect a character's personality at all, but it might make the character prefer going on underground or nighttime adventures.

This Asset is suitable for Degenerates.

Overconfidence - The character thinks himself far more accomplished than he really is, and is more than ready to go up against prohibitive odds.

Good: Any Check to resist being bullied, intimidated, frightened or cowed has its TN decreased by –2. In addition, the character receives +1 die in all situations where he going up against a

clearly stronger opposition.

Poor: Whenever the ref feels that the character is showing too much sound judgement, he can ask for a Daring Check that the character must pass so as not to throw caution to the wind. The difficulty of this Check is Average if the opposition appears more than three times as formidable as the character, Challenging if more than twice as formidable, and Difficult if only slightly more formidable.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset should be constantly challenged by the ref. Any situation where the character is going beyond passively following orders is ripe for a Check. This has to be role-played to the hilt!

Panther Reflexes - You are difficult to surprise and strike your opponents with catlike speed, but this Asset also makes it more difficult for you to relax and interact with others.

Good: You gain a -2 TN modifier on all Surprise Checks or when Stealing Initiative in Melee combat.

Poor: You take a +2 TN modifier on Checks related to Information Gathering, or Seduction.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset typically prefer operating as scouts when seeking out the enemy, as any noise from companions is a distraction to the character's finely tuned instincts and reaction time.

Plodding - You are slow, but sturdier than average members of your race.

Good: You take -2 TN to Knockdown, with Brawn being treated as 1 higher for the sake of soaking up blunt trauma.

Poor: You take +2 TN to all movement Checks.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset tend to be relatively immobile in combat. They typically prefer to wear strong armor (or other protective devices), since it's hard for them to flee a fight.

Plucky - You have a strength of will not reflected in your limited physical gifts.

Good: You gain a -1 TN modifier on Tenacity Checks.

Poor: You gain a +1 TN modifier on Brawn Checks.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset might be annoyingly positive-minded, or they might only show their mental resilience in times of dire need.

Polite -You are courteous and well spoken.

Good: You gain a -2 TN modifier on all Checks related to Negotiation and Etiquette, and a –1 TN modifier on other social Checks in formal surroundings.

Poor: You take a +2 TN modifier on all Checks to pass yourself off as a member of uncouth social strata and to intimidate such people, and a +1 TN to interact with them in a friendly way.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset might be honestly polite and kind, or they might simply be adept at mimicking social conventions to get what they want.

Reckless - You naturally sacrifice accuracy to put more power behind your blows.

Good: You gain a -1 Activation cost to Offensive Maneuvers (minimum 0).

Poor: You pay a +1 Activation cost for defensive Maneuvers.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset might be loudly passionate about entering combat and overcoming foes through strength of arms, or they might be quiet and so desperate to avoid confrontation that they put extra effort into every blow in an attempt to end the encounter more quickly.

Relentless - You don't know the meaning of the word "tired." You go all out until you simply can't continue.

Good: The character is at –2 TN to shrug off fatigue and keep going. This does include fatigue Checks, if that optional rule is being used.

Poor: If the optional Fatigue rules are not being used, they are used for this character only. If the optional fatigue rules are being used, all the character's fatigue Checks are at +3 TN.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset may see others as soft or weak, especially anyone who complains about being tired or fatigued. They might openly scoff at others' weaknesses or might quietly encourage them to "tough it out."

Saddleborn - You are a natural in the saddle, but you have little patience for handling animals when not riding them.

Good: You gain a -2 TN modifier on Ride and related Checks with one particular type of riding beast.

Poor: You take +2 TN to Terrain and Move Checks due to horseman's bent legs and rolling gait.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset rarely bother to consider walking all but the shortest of distances.

Sadism - The character enjoys witnessing and inflicting suffering and pain.

Good: There is no good aspect to the Sadism Asset.

Poor: If the character is found out to be a sadist – which most of his closer associates will sooner or later – the more considerate among them will react with displeasure. Any Check for friendly social interaction by a known sadist usually has its TN raised by +1, or by +2 if the person in question is particular scrupulous; persons who are callous themselves are unfazed by sadism.

Roleplaying Ideas: This does mainly impact roleplaying – the character will never miss public executions, press for the torturing of prisoners, regularly beat animals and servants, etc. When it would be impolitic to follow his cruel streak, for instance when the victim is somebody who might well directly or indirectly get back at the character, or when the character should urgently devote his attention to something else, he can Check Tenacity to supress his sadistic vein. The difficulty of this Check depends on just how awkward it would be to indulge his sadism, on the period of abstinence and on the likelihood of an equivalent opportunity arising soon.

This Asset is suitable for Decadents and Degenerates.

Skinny - You are very slender for your race.

Good: You take a -2 TN modifier on all Checks related to agility, elusiveness, or moving in confined spaces.

Poor: You take +2 TN to Knockdown, with Brawn being treated as 1 lower for the sake of soaking up blunt trauma.

Roleplaying Ideas: Skinny characters tend to be pushed around by tougher types, so those with this Asset might be shy, or they might be very defensive when faced with such situations.

Slippery - You are less adept at grappling and wrestling than others of your size and strength, but you are adept at slipping out of another's hold.

Good: You gain a -2 TN modifier on Checks to escape a grapple or avoid being grappled.

Poor: You take a +2 TN modifier on all other grapple Checks.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset might fear close combat, knowing they are less adept grapplers than most opponents. On the other hand, good escape artists with this Asset might enjoy baiting larger foes into grappling them, knowing they can easily slip out of the grasp of most foes.

Specialized - You have a knack for one kind of work or study, but other tasks are harder for you to accomplish.

Good: Choose one specific craft, knowledge, or profession Skill. You gain a -2 TN modifier on Checks using the specified Skill.

Poor: There are no poor aspects to the Specialized Asset.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset often see themselves as elite artists or experts rather than mere professionals, and they might regard their chosen vocation or study as more useful or interesting than other tasks.

Spell-gifted - Choose a particular Greater or Lesser Mystery of sorcery. You take –2 TN when using that particular Mystery.

Good: Choose a particular Greater or Lesser Mystery of sorcery. You take –2 TN when using that particular Mystery.

Poor: Choose a particular Greater or Lesser Mystery of sorcery. You take +1 TN when using any other Mystery than that.

Roleplaying Ideas: Choose a particular Lesser or Greater Mystery. Casting and Containment Checks in this Mystery are made with a -1 TN bonus. Casting and Containment Checks in all other Mysteries are made with a +1 TN penalty, or a +3 TN penalty if a Dabbler.

Stout - You are heavy for your race.

Good – You take -2 TN to Knockdown, with Brawn being treated as 1 higher for the sake of soaking up blunt trauma. This reflects your heaviness and the difficult task of driving you back.

Poor: You take a +2 TN modifier on all Checks related to agility, speed, or elusiveness.

Roleplaying Ideas: Overweight characters are often bullied, so those with this Asset might be shy, or they might be very defensive when faced with such situations. Some turn to humor to defuse such situations, while others become bitter.

Suspicious - You are naturally suspicious of everyone and everything. While this Asset makes you hard to fool, it makes others slightly more likely to disagree with you or find you threatening.

Good – You take -2 TN to all Checks to detect and see through lies and deception.

Poor: You take a +2 TN modifier on Checks related to friendly social interaction.

Roleplaying Ideas: This Asset might express itself as comic levels of paranoia, or it might make the character quietly cautious about others.

Swindler – Lying, swindling, and obfuscating are not just a way of life to a character with this Asset, they are his second nature.

Good: The character takes –2 TN to all Falsehood Checks to tell convincing lies, and –1 TN to Checks of Acting, Disguise, Haggling, Negotiation, and Seduction, as well as of the HT and CG Attributes, provided telling or projecting an untruth is a significant part of the activity that is Checked for.

Poor: The character constantly tells major, minor, and petty lies, and this becomes apparent to anybody who knows him for even the shortest time or has heard of him. Against such characters, the character takes either +1 TN or +2 TN on Checks for all activities where being perceived as honest would matter, depending on the degree to which truthfulness would be a key issue. This does include, amongst more readily apparent things, uses of Seduction, Negotiation, and Haggling to sell, and many uses of HT and CG for plain social interaction.

Roleplaying Ideas: Somebody with this Asset may be a habitual and even compulsive liar, possibly aggrandizing himself at every possible and impossible opportunity. He might also be a sly and shifty individual who makes a living of the gullible – whom he might despise.

Torpid - You are sluggish and slow to react to danger, but also resistant to others' commands.

Good: You gain a -2 TN modifier on Tenacity Checks against enchantment (compulsion) effects.

Poor: You take a +2 modifier to TNs to notice and react to any kind of hidden danger, including Surprise Checks.

Roleplaying Ideas: Torpid characters may be seen as lazy, or as methodical and measured in their actions.

Tough as Nails - You are made of sterner stuff than the average person.

Good: –1 TN to healing Checks and Checks to resist and recover from poison, and to "It's just a scratch" Checks, if those are used.

Poor: There is no poor aspect to the Tough as Nails Asset.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset might be gruff and place extreme value on overcoming physical ailments.

Uncivilized - You relate better to animals than you do to people.

Good: You gain a -3 TN to Checks of the Animal Ken Skill and –1 TN to Checks of Riding, and to Tracking if related to animals.

Poor: You take a +2 TN modifier on Checks related to Etiquette, Negotiation, and Information Gathering, and to all social Checks made in even moderately refined surroundings.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset are likely to feel awkward in many social situations; that might be expressed as shyness and quiet behavior, or it might be expressed through an overly exuberant need to participate in conversations.

Wastrel - The character either does not care at all about hanging on to money or else is spectacularly bad at it.

Good: There is no good mechanical side to being a wastrel.

Poor: When other characters do not have to roll a Check for a decrease in Loot between one session and the next, this character must roll. When others must Check, his Challenge Level is (7 - Loot). He also takes +3 TN to all Checks to buy at a good price (not to sell).

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset allows wealth to slip through their fingers at an incredible pace.

Zealot – The character adheres to very clear-cut and uncompromising morals. He is absolutely convinced that his moral standards are correct and is unable and unwilling to view moral questions other than in terms of black and white.

Good: The character takes –2 TN to all his Checks to shrug off mental and physical hardship while pursuing what he perceives to be right in the face of opposition.

Poor: The character takes +1 TN to all his Checks while doing something he considers morally wrong.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this Asset will often be harsh and uncompromising in their judgements. They may take silent strength from their convictions or be haunted and driven by them.

IV. Proficiencies

Overview

Proficiencies are the metric that measures the skill that a **Blade** character has with a particular style of fighting or family of similar weapons. Proficiencies describe the elements of how varied weapons in combination are utilized, and what the resulting effects will be.

These Proficiencies are divided into broad categories —a mace could be used with a sword-related Proficiency so long as the mace is used in a similar fashion. Thus, it is possible that multiple Proficiencies could cover the potential use of any weapon. It is more important how the weapon is wielded, rather than what the weapon is.

The Maneuvers listed under each Proficiency are specific applications of that Proficiency. Some Maneuvers such as basic attacks are automatically granted to any warrior with but a single point in the applicable Proficiency. Maneuvers may also require the payment of an "activation cost" from the character's Melee pool (MP).

This cost may be found in parentheses next to each maneuver cascaded below each Proficiency. Other Maneuvers may only be learned through play, and even then are only available at certain Proficiency levels.

Some fighting styles are quite similar to others, and each Proficiency lists those styles that are closely related. These "Defaults" are designated with a negative Proficiency modifier based on which Proficiency the default originates from.

Defaulted Proficiencies may never be greater than level 6 without formal training (after which it's no longer a defaulted Proficiency). Most maneuvers, unless close to those in the original Proficiency are unusable through Default.

Defaults are listed in the section following the weapon they are derived from. Thus, if you need to find your Default for Doppelhanders when your primary weapon Proficiency is "Sword and Shield" look to the end of the Sword and Shield Proficiency where Doppelhander is listed as -4 (meaning your Default Doppelhander Proficiency is 4 less than your normal Sword and Shield Proficiency).

1. Proficiencies Described

"Who won the war, Kane?" "I did." "You didn't win a thing, Kane. You only survived." "It means the same thing."

Karl Edward Wagner, Lynortis Reprise

Brawling - The one weapon everyone has is his or her own body. Variations of unarmed combat exist all over the world. This version is popular throughout the western half.

Brawling consist of punching, kicking, grappling, and dirty tricks. These weapons are infinitely portable, but ineffective when compared to a "real weapon".

Offensive Maneuvers:

Disarm (2), Grapple (2), Kick (1), Punch (0)

Defensive Maneuvers:

Disarm (5), Evasion (0/*), Grapple (2), Overrun (3), Parry (0)

Defaults:

Cut & Thrust —4, Dagger —1, Greatsword —4, Longsword – 4, Mass Weapon & Shield —3, Pole-arms —4, Sword &Shield —4, Wrestling —1

Cut & Thrust - This Proficiency refers to swords that are usually not wielded in conjunction with a larger shield, but rather in a quick fencing style. This includes such blades as sidesswords, rapiers, and perhaps sabres. With this Proficiency, the sword is often accompanied by a buckler, dagger or arming glove in the off-hand.

Offensive Maneuvers:

Beat (0), Bind & Strike (0), Cut (0),Disarm (1), Double Strike (0),Feint (variable), Master Strike (6), Quick Draw (2), Simultaneous Block/Strike (0), Stop Short (0), Thrust (0), Toss (0)

Defensive Maneuvers:

Block (with bucklers) (0), Counter (2), Disarm (3), Evasion (0/*), Expulsion (2), Grapple (2), Overrun (2), Parry (0), Rota (2), Winding & Binding (2)

Defaults:

Brawling −2, Dagger −2, Greatsword −3, Longsword −4, Mass Weapon & Shield −2, Pole-arms −3, Spear & Shield - 2, Sword & Shield −2, Wrestling −3

Dagger - This small, easily-hidden weapon comes in many forms. Found in every place in the world, daggers and knives are used as both tools and instruments of death. Daggers are extremely popular civilian weapons, and are carried by almost everyone.

This Proficiency covers stilettos, poniards, rondels, and all manners of short stabbing and slicing blades.

This Proficiency is directly attached to Brawling and Wrestling due to the short range of daggers and the like.

Offensive Maneuvers:

Cut (0), Disarm (2), Grapple (2), Kick (2), Punch (1), Quick Draw (1), Thrust (0)

Defensive Maneuvers:

Disarm (4), Evasion (0/*), Grapple (2), Overrun (2), Parry (0)

Defaults:

Brawling −1, Cut & Thrust −4, Greatsword −4, Longsword −4, Mass Weapon & Shield −4, Pole-arms −4, Spear & Shield - 4, Sword & Shield −4, Wrestling −1

Greatsword - The true two-handed sword is an enormous weapon, and resembles a spear more than a sword in actual use.

Greatswords are generally at least 1.5 meters long, with about a quarter of that hilt, and often sport a second pair of cross guards. They are fearsome weapons with great range, but easily overcome by any fighter quick enough to close range.

Offensive Maneuvers:

Beat (0), Cut (1), Disarm (1), Feint (variable), Half-sword (variable), Master Strike (4), Stop Short (0), Thrust (0)

*If used defensively

Defensive Maneuvers:

Disarm (4), Evasion (0/*), Half-sword (variable), Parry (0), Winding & Binding (3), Overrun (3), Rota (2)

Defaults:

Brawling −4, Cut & Thrust −4, Dagger −4, Longsword −2, Mass Weapon & Shield −3, Pole-arms −2, Spear & Shield - 3, Sword & Shield −3, Wrestling −4

Lance - As fighting from horseback became more and more practical, efficient, and popular, heavy cavalry came into being. Their weapon of choice for the opening charge is the lance. This weapon is found anywhere knights or heavy

cavalry are. Lance range from about 2.5 to just over 4 meters in length.

They are usually butted under the right arm and used with a shield. Lances, though made of wood, are usually capped with a long steel or iron point. A sporting version, the jousting lance, has a blunted tip for tournaments. The primary advantages to a lance are its range and power in a charge, where it uses the mount's Brawn Attribute, not the rider's.

Offensive Maneuvers:

Simultaneous Block/Strike (0) used in a charge (mount's BN)

Thrust (1) used when stationary (rider's BN)

Defensive Maneuvers:

Block (0)

Defaults:

Pole-arms –4, Spear & Shield –3

LONGSWORD - For those warriors who prefer not to use shields, large swords are very popular. They are fierce weapons, capable of heavy damage when either cleaving or thrusting, as well as complex maneuvering and countering.

The Longsword Proficiency is built around all swords that are mainly intended to be wielded with two hands, but can be wielded in just one with little or no discomfort. Primary advantages of these weapons include an extended range, great cleaving power, and a wide variety of maneuvers.

Offensive Maneuvers:

Beat (0), Cut (0), Disarm (1), Evasive Attack (1), Feint (variable), Half-sword (variable), Master Strike (5), Murder Stroke (1), Stop Short (0), Thrust (0)

Defensive Maneuvers:

Counter (2), Disarm (3), Evasion (0/*),Expulsion (2), Grapple (2), Half-sword (variable), Overrun (2), Parry (0), Rota (2), Winding & Binding (2)

Defaults:

Brawling —4, Cut & Thrust —3, Dagger —2, Greatsword —2, Mass Weapon & Shield —3, Pole-arms —2, Spear & Shield – 2, Sword & Shield —2, Wrestling —3

Mass Weapon & Shield - Since the earliest clubs, mass weapons have found their place in warfare. With the advent of better armors, clubs and farming tools were transformed into battle-axes, picks, flails, morning stars, and maces.

These weapons are in use the world-over, holding particular popularity with the peasant infantryman (these weapons are cheap) and the armored gentry (these weapons are especially effective against tougher armors).

Mass weapons include any single-handed (and occasionally two-handed) weapon that is particularly heavy on the business end. Axes, maces, flails, and picks are good examples. These weapons' balance makes parrying especially difficult, and forces the use of constant evasion or—more commonly—shields.

Additionally most axes and hammers are outfitted with a secondary spike or hammer on the back and/or top. To flip the weapon over spend 1 MP *if done during a Combat Round*. As with Pole-arms, exact Maneuvers are dependent on the weapon at hand.

Use discretion and common sense. This Proficiency may also be used without a shield at no penalty, but any shield-based maneuvers are also impossible.

Offensive Maneuvers:

Bash (0), Bind & Strike (0), Cut (0), Disarm (1), Hook (1), Simultaneous Block/Strike (0), Thrust (1)

Defensive Maneuvers:

Block Open & Strike (2), Block (0), Disarm (3), Evasion (0/*),Overrun (3), Parry (1), Rota (2)

Defaults:

Brawling —4, Cut & Thrust —3, Dagger —3, Greatsword —4, Longsword —4, Pole-arms —4, Spear & Shield – 2, Sword & Shield —2, Wrestling —4

Missile Weapon Proficiencies - Missile Weapon Proficiencies are not nearly as complicated as hand-to-hand Weapon Proficiencies. These Proficiencies go towards building the Archery Pool (see Chapter Four). There are no attached Maneuvers, though each has a few defaults. These Proficiencies are:

- Black powder Weapons (defaults from Bow and Crossbow at –2)
- Bow (including long and short varieties; defaults to crossbow at —4)
- Crossbow (all sizes; defaults to Bow at —2)
- Slings
- Spear/Javelin (defaults from Pole-arms and Spear & Shield at –3)
- Thrown Knives (defaults from Dagger at –3)
- Thrown Axes (defaults from Mass Weapon & Shield at –4)
- Thrown Rocks/irregularly shaped objects (defaults from any other Missile Proficiency for thrown weapons —3)

Pole-arms - This wide grouping of weapons encompasses items as ancient as the spear, as new as the the halberd, and as everlasting as the quarterstaff. This school includes all staff or pole-mounted weapons over 5 feet long, though most range anywhere from 7 feet (most spears) to 9 feet (halberds).

They have the advantage of range and (often) speed, but are hard to transport. Available Maneuvers vary greatly due to the design of each individual weapon. Use discretion and common sense.

Offensive Maneuvers:

Bash (0), Beat (0), Cut (0), Disarm (2), Feint (variable), Hook (1), Stop Short (0), Thrust (0)

*If used defensively

Defensive Maneuvers:

Counter (4), Disarm (5), Evasion (0/*), Parry (0)

Defaults:

Brawling —3, Cut & Thrust —4, Dagger —4, Greatsword —2, Longsword —3, Mass Weapon & Shield —3, Spear & Shield – 3, Sword & Shield —3, Wrestling —4

Spear & Shield - This Proficiency covers the use of a one-handed spear used either over- or under arm together with a sizeable shield in the opposite hand.

This way of fighting and combination of equipment is the mainstay of countless armies and warrior cultures throughout the ages.

While not this Proficiency's focus it also imparts ability to fight without shield, with the spear held in either one, or more commonly, two hands.

Offensive Maneuvers:

Bind & Strike (0), Feint (variable), Simultaneous Block/Strike (0), Thrust (0)

Defensive Maneuvers:

Block (0), Block Open and Strike (2), Evasion (0/*), Overrun (3), Parry (1)

Defaults:

Cut & Thrust –4, Dagger –4, Greatsword –3, Longsword –4, Mass Weapon & Shield –2, Pole-arms –1, Sword & Shield –2, Wrestling –4

Sword & Shield - This proficiency involves the use of a shield held in a fist grip, or through straps over the forearm in addition to the sword, and was vastly popular among the aristocracy as well as those common soldiers rich or lucky enough to acquire swords.

This Proficiency involves any one-handed sword and a shield. Although this proficiency could be used without a shield with no penalty, any shield-based maneuvers would be impossible.

Offensive Maneuvers:

Bind & Strike (0), Cut (0), Disarm (1), Feint (variable), Master Strike (6), Simultaneous Block/Strike (0), Thrust (0)

Defensive Maneuvers:

Block Open & Strike (2), Block (0), Counter (3, 2 w/o shield), Disarm (3), Evasion (0/*), Overrun (3), Parry (1, 0 w/o shield), Rota (2), Winding & Binding (2)

Defaults:

Cut & Thrust –2, Dagger –2, Greatsword –4, Longsword –2, Mass Weapon & Shield –2, Spear & Shield – 2

Wrestling - Wrestling, though popular as a sport, is really the most desperate of all battles. As with Pugilism & Brawling, Wrestling is always an option for the unarmed character.

Additionally, many fighters find themselves unarmed on the ground in the course of battle or a duel (the Dagger and Greatsword schools are particularly fond of this). The following maneuvers are by-products of training as a wrestler. They are generally used to enter a wrestling situation, not used during.

Offensive Maneuvers:

Grapple (1), Kick (2), Punch (1)

Defensive Maneuvers:

Evasion (0/*), Grapple (1)

Defaults:

Brawling –1, Cut & Thrust –4, Dagger –1, Greatsword –4, Longsword –4, Mass Weapon & Shield –3, Pole-arms –4, Sword & Shield –4

V. Maneuvers

"My enemies are all dead, or wished they were."

David Gemmell, Legend

Maneuvers are listed together in a lump sum. Each Maneuver has an Activation Cost which is outlined under Proficiencies, above. What follows are mechanics for using offensive and defensive Maneuvers in the course of a bout or battle.

Much of the information below will be difficult to use and understand without having first read Chapter Four – Melee Combat.

This information is included here instead for ease of reference.

1. Offensive Maneuvers Described

Offensive Maneuvers are those initiated from the aggressor side of any Exchange (see Chapter Four – Melee Combat). Most Maneuvers may be combined for a greater effect, so long as all Activation Costs are paid. All offensive Maneuvers, unless otherwise stated, use a weapon's Attack Target Number (ATN) for all Checks.

Bash: This is the standard attack for all swung blunt weapons, learned immediately. Extra power may be added to a Bash by expending one (and only one) extra MP die prior to rolling, and adding 1 to damage in the event of a successful hit. If a Bash successfully strikes the head, the Shock rating of such a hit is increased by +X, where X is half the attacker's total of QoS +DR +half BN before the defender's BN and AV are subtracted. This Shock even applies if no actual wound is caused. All blunt weapons have an Attack Target Number (ATN) for bashing. All beginning fighters—and most people in general—know how to bash.

This Maneuver is available at all Proficiency levels.

Beat: The Beat is an attack upon an opponent's weapon or shield in attempt to temporarily remove it from the equation. Beats may only be performed at the start of a bout or following a "pause," as described in Chapter Four. This sudden, brutal, and effective Maneuver is executed by declaring "Beat" as your offensive Maneuver, along with the dice allotted to the attack. The defender assigns defense dice to a defensive Maneuver (Parry, Evade, Block, etc.) and the contest is rolled normally. If the attacker wins the Beat, then the defenders weapon (or whatever else was being "Beaten") is knocked aside and cannot be used in defense on the following Exchange.

Additionally, every success in the attacker's QoS costs the defender 2 MP (this functions similarly to Shock, described under Damage in Chapter Four). If the defender wins, then the round is resolved normally and initiative changes over. Using a Beat is an excellent way to handle opponents with longer weapons as well: all Reach penalties are cut in half (.50 rounds up) when Beating.

The Beat Maneuver is available at Proficiency level 3.

Bind & Strike: This Maneuver uses off-hand weapons (shields, poniards, etc.) to bind or pin down an opponent's weapon, opening up a clean follow-up attack. On one Exchange roll attack as normal with the off-hand weapon/shield (use the DTN as an ATN for shields). If this attack is successful your opponent loses 1 MP for every net success, good on the next Exchange. Thus if you beat your opponent by 4 successes, his MP for the next Exchange would be reduced by 4 dice. If this would take the MP into the negative range, those negative dice are still added as bonus dice to the winner's MP for the next Exchange.

This Maneuver is available at all Proficiency levels.

Cut: This is the standard attack for all edged weapons, learned immediately. Extra power may be added to a slash by expending one (and only one) extra MP die prior to rolling and adding 1 to damage in the event of a successful hit. All edged weapons have an Attack Target Number (ATN) for slashing and cleaving. All beginning fighters— and most people in general— know how to cut.

This Maneuver is available at all Proficiency levels.

Disarm: Disarming is a popular Maneuver when you are trying to avoid hurting your opponent or trying to make him surrender, but it can just as easily be used as a prelude to an easy kill. Disarms may be performed as an attack or a defense.

As an attack, it is performed in a similar manner to the Beat Maneuver, except that it is not necessary to perform the Disarm after a break in the combat like a Beat. The attacker assigns as many dice to the Disarm as he likes (after paying the Activation Cost) while the defender makes whichever defense he chooses. If the Disarm attack is successful, the defender must make a Knockdown Check with a Difficulty equal to the attacker's Quality of Success.

If this Check is failed then the weapon has been dropped. If the Knockdown Check is successful, then the defender has managed to retain his grip on his weapon but the attacker retains the role of aggressor.

As a defense, the Disarm Maneuver is performed in a similar manner to a Parry. Perfect timing is required, as the defender must wait for the attack to come, and sweep the weapon aside at the optimal moment, twisting it out of the attacker's hands. After the Activation Cost has been paid, dice are assigned as if for a Parry.

If the defence is successful, then the attacker must make a Knockdown Check with a Difficulty equal to the defender's Quality of Success.

Failure in the Knockdown Check means that the attacker has been disarmed. Whether the attacker drops his weapon or not, the defender takes initiative. Of course, if the attacker wins, then the Disarm attempt has failed and the attack goes through (minus the defender's QoS, as usual).

This maneuver is available at Proficiency level 3.

Double Attack: Attacking with two weapons at once is a tricky thing. Divide your dice on this attack in any proportion between both weapons (remember weapon Reach penalties) and attack. Note that any weapon wielded in the off-hand adds a penalty of +1 to ATN for that weapon's use. Your opponent may defend by (a) Evading (b) Blocking and parrying or parrying with both of his weapons at once (c) Parry one of the attacks (his choice) and hope the other doesn't land or (d) pre-empt (Steal Initiative).

This Maneuver is available at Proficiency level 4.

Evasive attack: This is a defensive measure that takes place during an attack (thus it counts as an offensive Maneuver). In principle the attacker cuts with his weapon while simultaneously leaping backward so as to evade an opponent's attack.

This Maneuver requires a great deal of skill, but is indispensable to those who encounter themselves in quick-draw style duels where opponents that go straight for the attack.

To execute this Maneuver one attacks as normal, spending an additional 2 dice to Activate the Maneuver.

Once the Maneuver is activated any number of additional dice may be spent to raise your opponent's ATN by one per additional die spent.

On the downside, your own ATN also raises, though only by one for every two additional dice spent (as usual in **Blade**, round up all fractions of .50 and above) – it's hard to hit a guy when you're going the other way…This Maneuver is activated with any slash or slash-like Maneuver; it is relatively impossible to use in conjunction with any Thrust-based Maneuver.

This Maneuver is available at Proficiency level 4.

Feints fall into two categories: Feint & Cut and Feint & Thrust.

Feint & Cut: This consists of slashing at one region of the body, then changing direction mid-swing in an effort to bypass the defender's defenses entirely.

This is relatively difficult and slow, with a high Activation Cost. Once the Activation Cost is paid any number of dice may be added to the attacker's hand, at a cost of 1 MP for every additional die rolled in the attack. A Feint is always declared after the defender declares defense but before dice are rolled.

It's important to note that a Feinted attack lands in a different spot than originally declared. The attacker must also state the new location of attack (usually within one or two areas of the original attack—more exotic Feints may be performed at a greater execution cost).

Feints have a tendency to lose their novel effect after a while when used against the same opponent. Each repeated identical Feint against a single opponent, in the same location (over any number or duels—not just one!) costs an extra MP die to execute.

The Feint & Cut is available at Proficiency level 3.

Feint & Thrust: This is a more practical Feint, among the first "tricks" that most swordsmen know, as easily performed with longer swords as with shorter weapons. Like the Feint & Cut it begins with a false slash—usually overhand or across (areas 3, 4, or 5), but finishes with a Thrust to the head, neck, or torso.

This Maneuver is executed almost identically to the Feint & Cut. When attempting a Feint & Thrust the attacker declares an attack, usually a slashing one, complete with location and MP dice expenditure. The defender then declares his own defense—unlike the Feint & Cut this Maneuver is good against Parries only.

The attacker now states that he is Feinting & Thrusting and adds any number of MP dice to his pool at a cost of one MP die thrown away for every one added to the attacking hand (as per Feint & Cut, above).

Feints do have a tendency to lose their novel effect after a while when used against the same opponent. Each repeated identical Feint against a single opponent, in the same location (over any number or duels—not just one!) costs an extra MP die to execute.

The Feint & Thrust is available at Proficiency level 2.

Grapple: The basics of this Maneuver are imparted by many Proficiencies. It consists of grabbing the opponent, removing any weapon currently wielded by him from the equation, and changing the bout from free-flowing combat into a wrestling match, with the purpose of immobilizing the opponent, throwing him to the ground or breaking his limb.

The Activation Costs listed for the Grapple Maneuver presume that it is launched against the limb of an opponent's limb, specifically the primary attacking limb if used defensively. If used offensively (and only then), it may be targeted against other parts of the body, for instance the torso or the head, but its Activation Cost is in this case increases by +1. Also, if used defensively against any attack other than an unarmed one, the Activation Cost is increased by a further +1. Finally, Reach modifiers apply to both offensive and defensive use of the Maneuver, which of course has a Reach range of Hand.

Example: *Using Grapple to defend against a Longsword (Reach Long) by attempting to grab the opponent's weapon arm carries an additional Activation Cost of +4 (+3 for Reach, +1 for defending against a weapon).*

The Grapple's TN, both for offensive and defensive use, is invariably 7.

If the Maneuver is successfully used defensively, a hit is not only avoided, but a hold on the opponent's weapon arm is also established; if used successfully as an offence, a hold on whatever part of the body that

was targeted is established. In any case the successful grappler is now the aggressor (even if he was previously the defender and merely tied the opponent's attack), both combatants are now in a clinch at the Reach range of Hand, and until the clinch is broken both must use MP dice from their Wrestling Proficiency.

Should the clinch be entered mid-Round when another Proficiency other than Wrestling was being used in the first Exchange, the MP is recalculated for the second Exchange based on Wrestling Proficiency, with dice spent in the first Exchange subtracted from the Wrestling MP.

Example: *On Exchange 1, character A attacked with 6 dice from his Longsword MP but was successfully defended against and grappled. He is now in the clinch. With Reflex 5 and Wrestling 4 he has Wrestling MP 9. Having spent 6 dice in Exchange 1, he now has 3 MP dice remaining for Exchange 2.*

Once the clinch is established, the aggressor, receiving his QoS in executing the initial Grapple Maneuver as bonus dice for his subsequent MP, now has three options:

1) Immobilise: The aggressor tries to improve his initial hold in such a way as to completely immobilise his opponent. Achieving this can require several Exchanges of wrestling.

The aggressor assigns MP dice and, without paying any Activation Cost, checks against TN 7. If he is beaten by the opponent's defense, the hold is broken and combat returns to a normal melee at engagement range Hand, with the former defender now being the aggressor.

If the defense is however tied or overcome, the victor's QoS is subtracted from the opponent's MP for the next Exchange. If this does at any time lead to one combatant beginning a Combat Round with an MP of 0 or less dice, he is completely immobilised and unable to break free until circumstances change significantly.

2) Throw: The aggressor tries to throw his opponent to the ground. To do so, he assigns MP dice and rolls his Opposed Check; the TN is 6 if the initial hold was on a leg, and 8 if on torso, head or arm.

If the defense against the throw was successful, the hold is broken and the previous defender becomes the new aggressor, at a current engagement Reach range of Hand.

In case of a tie, the clinch is also broken and the combat also continues at Reach range Hand, but without a change of aggressor.

If the aggressor is victorious, the clinch is also broken and he remains the aggressor, but the opponent is thrown to the ground, with all the attendant penalties of being prone.

3) Break: The aggressor attempts to break the limb he has grabbed. To do so, he assigns MP dice and rolls them in an Opposed Check. His TN for this roll is 7 if an arm is grabbed, 8 for a leg, and 9 for the neck, and is opposed by the defender's assigned MP dice.

If the defender is victorious, the clinch is broken, and he becomes next Exchange's aggressor, at an engagement range of Hand.

If the roll is tied, the outcome is identical to a tied attempt to immobilise.

If the aggressor is victorious, aggressor and defender immediately make an Opposed BN Check, with the aggressor receiving his QoS as bonus dice.

If the aggressor wins this Opposed Check with a QoS of at least 2, the limb in question is broken – which in case of the neck is quite fatal. If any limb other than the neck is affected, refer to the Blunt Swing Damage Tables, Zone 1 for broken legs and Zone 7 for broken arms. Roll d6 on the table for Zone 1 or 7 and apply the result of a level 4 wound to the exact location determined by the die.

Any other outcome is treated like a tied attempt to immobilise.

Break Out: The defense against attempts to immobilize, throw, or break a limb is always by trying to break out of the opponent's hold.

This is a defensive use of the Maneuver free of any Activation Cost; the defender simply assigns dice from his MP and checks them against TN 7.

Victory on this roll usually signifies the breaking of the clinch and a switch of the role of aggressor and defender, but this may vary with the actual wrestling attack defended against; for details see the three offensive uses of the Maneuver above.

Alternatively, a grabbed opponent may choose to forego any attempt to break the enemy's hold on him and simply attack him instead.

He cannot use the held limb for such an attack, and the MP for attacks with another part of the body are modified by –1/2 MP due to the awkwardness of having one's freedom of movement restricted by the hold. Engagement Reach range for this attack is Hand, and it is only conducted after the enemy has carried out his – now unopposed – offensive Grapple Maneuver.

Grapple Activation Costs: Brawling: (Offense) 2, (Defence) 1, Cut & Thrust: (Defence) 1, Dagger: (Offense) 2, (Defence) 1, Longsword: (Offense) 2, (Defence) 1, Wrestling: (Offense) 1, (Defence) 0

Half-Sword: This is one of the few practical ways to kill an armored opponent in full harness (full plate) with a sword. Used with long swords, bastard swords, and other longer weapons, the Half-Sword technique is performed by grasping the blade of the sword with the off (usually left) hand in order to use the sword as a short spear or pole-weapon.

This technique is particularly useful in close-quarters as well, when swinging a long weapon may be impractical.

Half -Swording reduces a swords effective Reach by one or two steps from Long to Medium or Short, at player's discretion; note that the Half-Sword may be released into a one-handed attack at any time, nullifying any Half-Sword bonuses, but gaining Reach.

Half-swording precludes the sword being used for slashing but increases control over the weapon and thus lowers both DTN and Thrust ATN by 1. The latter does effectively also increase damage dealt, but against any type of armor half-swording also raises the Thrust DR by +1.

One can shift from normal grip to the Half-Sword at any time, though doing so during an Exchange (shifting suddenly into or out of the Half-Sword in order to execute a particular counter, for example) costs 1 MP.

This Maneuver is available at all Proficiency levels.

Hook: Many pole-arms and axes are capable of hooking an opponent's limb or head. This Maneuver is executed like a Thrust that intentionally misses, and then the shaft is pressed against the target and pulled.

This Maneuver is particularly effective on the legs, causing one's opponent to fall and become prone. After spending the Activation Cost (usually 1) allot dice for a regular Thrust-like attack.

The hooked party checks Knockdown with a Difficulty equal to the aggressor's Quality of Success. Failure drops him to the ground; with the usual attendant penalty of –1/2 total MP for lying prone. Botching causes damage as per a 6' fall (see Chapter Five). The attacker still retains initiative.

This Maneuver is available at all Proficiency levels.

Master-Strike: The jewel of the art of fighting is the Master-Strike, a type of attack that both defends and offends in one motion.

The technique, as it applies to **Blade**, can be used either as an offensive or defensive Maneuver, and in many ways resembles the Simultaneous Block/Strike Maneuver, but uses only one weapon.

As an Offense, declare a Master-Strike alongside any Cleaving attack and pay the Activation Cost. Divide the attacking dice into offense and defense, in any proportion. This is clearly most useful in a situation where both opponents are attacking simultaneously.

As a Defense, declare a Master-Strike as your defense or alongside a Parry and pay the Activation Cost. Split this Exchange's dice into offense and defense.

Roll the defense first, as your opponent attacks. If your defense is successful, carry the dice in your Quality of Success over into the offensive roll! Should your defense fail, regardless of offensive or defensive role, the attack also fails, and all dice assigned to it are lost.

This maneuver is available at Proficiency level 10.

Murder Stroke: The murder stroke is an unusual Maneuver, used to take down a foe in heavy armor when you're having trouble getting through the armor with your blade.

The Murder Stroke can only be performed when using heavier one- or two handed blades, and involves reversing the entire weapon, gripping the blade with the hands and beating the opponent in the head with the pommel of the sword.

Obviously, this requires gauntlets or some other form of hand protection! The Murder Stroke reduces the effective Reach of the weapon by one step, and the attack must be a swing aimed at area 5, or 4 (either side). If successful, and if the head is struck, the DR is +1 Blunt, but the attendant Shock rating is increased by +X, where X is half the attacker's total of QoS + half BN + DR before the defender's BN and AV are subtracted, exactly as with any other Bash to the head. This Shock even applies if no actual wound is caused, also as usual for Bashes to the head. This Maneuver is not available to bashing weapons, which hit the head for additional Shock in any case.

This maneuver is available at Proficiency level 3.

Quick-Draw: Characters using this maneuver can attack with a Cut, Bash, or Parry with any weapon of Medium Reach or shorter.

Because the curvature of a weapon makes this Maneuver easier, straight-bladed or hafted weapons of Medium or longer Reach require an additional 1 MP over the normal Activation Cost. Weapons with a Reach of Hand and Short need no such curvature, and can be quick-drawn with no penalty.

Weapons of Long Reach and shorter can also benefit from this Maneuver by making a sudden thrusting attack with the pommel or butt end of the weapon. This has no additional cost, but does have different statistics than the parent weapon: Reach Hand, Thrust ATN 6, and DR –1 Blunt.

In all cases, the weapon being quick-drawn is assumed to be at the hip or in some other very accessible place.

Less accessible carrying places, such as a boot knife or short weapon over the shoulder, add 1 MP to the Activation Cost (compounding with any other penalties or modifiers). Weapons in packs or other immediately inaccessible places are just that—inaccessible.

To perform this Maneuver in play simply declare which weapon is being quick-drawn at the beginning of any Exchange (usually the first, but not necessarily), and whether it is being used to Cut, Bash, or Parry.

After spending the Activation Cost and any penalties added thereon, a Terrain Check is made against the weapons normal ATN -1 (if the drawing hand is free) or ATN -2 (if the drawing hand is on the weapon's grip already).

If this Terrain Check is successful, the attack or Parry goes forward normally, using standard attack and defense rules. If this Terrain Check fails then the character is forced to use some form of Evasion or get hit; the weapon will be free for the next Exchange.

This Maneuver can be combined with the rules for initiative (and stealing it. Likewise, don't forget to use Reach rules here, including those rules for getting inside of a weapon's Reach, or this Maneuver will lose much of its bite).

This maneuver is available at Proficiency level 4.

Simultaneous Block/Strike: This gutsy Maneuver is not unlike the Bind & Strike Maneuver, except that it all happens in the course of one Exchange. To perform this Maneuver, divide your MP between attack and defence (remember that you'll still need dice for the next Exchange).

The defence is then rolled against your opponents attack, and your offense against his defence (if any). This Maneuver is obviously only useful in situations where both you and your opponent are attacking at once. All attacks are resolved normally.

This Maneuver can also be performed with a parrying weapon instead of a shield in the off hand, in which case it should more properly be called "Simultaneous Parry/Strike". Don't forget that, unlike shields, parrying weapons wielded in the off-hand have their DTN increased by +1, though.

This Maneuver is available at all Proficiency levels.

Stop Short: This Maneuver consists of leaping or stomping at an opponent and then halting suddenly to throw your opponent off guard. To execute the Maneuver, pay the Activation Cost and then roll an Opposed Check of the attacker's CG against the defender's SY.

The attacker, and only he, may spend additional dice from his MP to purchase bonus dice for this Check, up to his HT score. This counts as an attack.

If the defender wins, then he may take initiative normally. If the attacker wins, then his opponent loses a number of dice from his MP for the next Exchange equal to the attacker's Quality of Success. Should this take his MP below 0, any negative dice are still added as bonus dice to the winner's MP for this next Exchange.

This is a Maneuver that can be performed without expenditure of MP dice, apart from any Activation Cost, and is therefore available to an attacker having run out of MP. It is however effective only really once per opponent (ever – not just per combat). Every additional attempt against the same person, whether previous ones were successful or not, acquires a cumulative +1 MP Activation Cost.

This Maneuver is available at Proficiency level 2.

Thrust: All Thrusting-capable weapons have an ATN for Thrusting. Some weapons are better suited to this form of attack, as reflected in the ATN. Thrusts are also notoriously fast—in cases when two combatants attack at the same time, if one of them Thrusts as his Offensive Maneuver, he receives a +1 die on his Opposed Reflex Check to determine who goes first.

Should two parties with equal Reflex Thrust at the same time both attacks are rolled at once—it was not uncommon for two adversaries to die upon one another's blade after such a mistake.

This Maneuver is available at all Proficiency levels.

Toss: Distraction has always been an important part of combat. This Maneuver allows you to toss a hat, glove, sidearm, or other object into your opponent's face, causing no actual physical injury but distracting the opponent and making him lose MP dice.

To execute this Maneuver, the aggressor pays any Activation Cost and then assigns dice from his MP for throwing a hand-held object at the defender.

The ATN for most objects suitable for the Toss Maneuver is 6, but as it will usually be thrown with the off-hand is normally increased by +1 for a final ATN 7.

The opponent may defend either by using a shield to block, but due to the surprise must use the DTNs for projectile weapons from Table 4.4, or he may opt to use Partial Evasion as his defence.

If the defender wins by a QoS of at least 1, he takes initiative if having used a shield, or may purchase it if having resorted to Partial Evasion, as normal.

If the attacker is victorious, he not only retains initiative but also subtracts his QoS from his opponent's MP for the following Exchange. As always, if this would take the MP into the negative range, these negative dice are still added as bonus dice to the winner's MP for this next Exchange.

This Maneuver is available at all Proficiency levels.

2. Defensive Maneuvers Described

"I will be back," he told the tousled head and pair of bright – and disappointed – blue eyes peering at him from the bed, while he pulled on leggings. "If I am not, I'll ha' been slain. Sure and that's not likely."

Andrew J. Offut & Keith Taylor, The Tower of Death

Defensive Maneuvers are actions used on the defensive side of a combat Exchange. Most can be combined with others for greater effect. All Tests are assumed to be made against the Defense Target Number (DTN) of the weapon at hand unless otherwise stated.

Block: This is the most basic of defenses, halting or deflecting incoming attacks. Where game mechanics are concerned, Blocking works essentially the same as any Parry, except that it uses the shield's DTN. See Chapter Four for more on basic defenses.

This Maneuver is available at all Proficiency levels.

Block Open & Strike: This Maneuver consists of Blocking or Parrying an incoming attack wide open, then using a second (usually primary) weapon to attack the new opening. During one Exchange defend with either a normal Block or Parry, but declare this Maneuver alongside this defense and pay its Activation Cost. Assuming a successful defense, the follow-up attack in the subsequent Exchange may be executed with bonus dice equal to this Maneuver's Quality of Success.

This Maneuver is available at Proficiency level 4.

Counter: Though primarily an offensive action, Counters are initiated by the defender. Sometimes called a Riposte, a Counter relies on receiving an opponent's attack, then using it against him. There are

TABLE 3.0 Effects of Counters

Roll (D6)	Roll (D12)	Effect
Half-sword*	Normal	
	1	Slash to area 1
	2	Slash to area 2
	3	Slash to area 3
	4	Slash to area 4
	5	Slash to area 5
1	6	Pommel to 13 (DR-1 Blunt)
2	7	Thrust to face (13)
3	8	Slash at same location that was attacked by opponent
4		Grapple **
5	10	Disarm***
6	11	Thrust to body (11 or 12)
	12	Thrust to body (11 or 12)

*Roll on this column when half-swording.

**See the Grappling Maneuver. Note that no Activation Cost is necessary for this Grapple.

***Defender has to pass a Knockdown Check with a Challenge Level equal to the aggressor's QoS. Failure results in the defender being disarmed, as per the Disarm Maneuver.

literally hundreds or even thousands of Counters, designed to deal with almost any attack from most any direction.

Counters generally prove weak only against Feints. When a defender declares "Counter" as his chosen defense he spends this Maneuver's Activation Cost and then allocates dice as in any standard Parry.

If the defender fails the Counter, his Parry also fails and he is hit. If the Counter is successful, so is the Parry, and the defender takes initiative as normal, but receives bonus dice on his counterattack equal to the number of Successes that were rolled in the attack that was successfully defended against with the Counter.

Additionally, due to the myriad nature of Counters, the countering party should roll on table 3.0 to find out the exact effect of his Counter (note that Counters with light, fencing-style blades use the Half-sword column of the table). Counters may also be performed when Half-Swording.

This Maneuver is available at all Proficiency levels.

Evasion: This is the Maneuver of avoiding an attack by moving out of its way. If Evasion is chosen as Defensive Maneuver, any number of Evasions are possible during the Exchange, provided that dice from the MP are set aside for each individual Evasion. Activation Cost, DTNs, and rules for use of the Evasion Maneuver under various circumstances can be found in Chapter Four.

This Maneuver is available at all Proficiency levels.

Expulsion: This Maneuver is not dissimilar to the offensive Beat, but is initiated from the defender's side. This Maneuver is only effective against Thrusts and Thrust-based attacks, or against Slash-based attacks made with 4 dice or less.

To execute an Expulsion, simply declare "Expulsion" alongside the standard Parry, pay this Maneuver's Activation Cost, and allocate dice to the Parry as usual.

The effects are nearly identical to those of an offensive Beat. If the Parry fails, then the round is resolved normally. If the Parry is effective, then all Maneuvers utilizing the weapon that was successfully expulsed receive a penalty equal to the defender's Quality of Success, applicable in the Exchange immediately following the Expulsion.

This Maneuver is available at Proficiency Level 3.

Half-Sword: This technique has fine defensive properties as well. See Half-Sword as an offensive Maneuver, above and Counters, also above.

Overrun: An Overrun is a highly specialized Maneuver, similar in concept to a Simultaneous Block/ Strike or a Master-Strike. It combines an attack and a defense in the same action, but instead of defending against the opponent's blow, it involves avoiding the attack while launching an attack of your own.

The character leaps aside to avoid an incoming attack, launching an attack of his own at the same moment. The Overrun is thus similar to the Evasive Attack Maneuver, but more specialized. After paying the Activation Cost, dice are assigned to an attack and a Partial Evasion (don't forget any additional Activation Cost for Encumbrance) in any proportion.

Resolve both sets of attacks as usual, except the Quality of Success for defense from the Overrun is carried over as bonus dice into the attack (the better you evade into prime position, the better your counter blow).

If the defense fails, then any Shock result from a failed or only partially successful Evasion are subtracted from attack pool before the attack is determined, as usual.

This maneuver is available at Proficiency level 8.

Parry: This Maneuver is the basis for all non-shield non-dodging defences. It consists primarily of using one's own weapon to deflect—not halt—an incoming attack. Parries are performed by simply rolling defence with the DTN of the weapon at hand as the normal Opposed check of a combat Exchange.

This Maneuver is available at all Proficiency levels.

Rota: The Rota is a riposte maneuver. The back edge of the blade is used to deflect an opposing attack, after which an immediate cut with the forward edge is performed.

The weapon is not moved far, and as such, the location of the counter attack is fixed. This maneuver is only available against swinging (Cleaving or Blunt) attacks, and the counter attack must be a Cleaving or blunt swinging attack, not a thrust.

The Rota is similar to the Counter Maneuver with the same 2-die activation cost and the same benefit for success (the attacker's successes as bonus dice for the counter attack the following exchange). However, instead of the random location of the counter attack, the Rota counter attacks the same Cleaving zone on the opponent that the opponent had originally attacked on the character.

This maneuver is available at Proficiency level 2.

Winding & Binding: Winding & Binding is a deadly game that results from the clash of two weapons "sticking" together for a time. While declared as a standard Parry, the Activation Cost of both Maneuvers must be paid.

If the Parry fails, the defender is struck as normal, but if successful, the Winding & Binding now comes into play, with an opponent's weapon not so much deflected, but instead collected on the defender's sword, with both weapons now "stuck" together.

Even if the defender merely ties the attacker, initiative still passes to him, and he receives the Quality of Success of his Winding & Binding defense as bonus dice for his counterattack from the bind in the subsequent Exchange.

The nature of this follow-up attack, which has no Activation Cost, is somewhat random, the result of the shoving and winding match of the two combatants locked together, each trying to either

disengage or strike past his foe's defending weapon.

While a Thrust past an opponent's guard is the most likely outcome, it is by no means the only one possible.

To determine the actual form of the follow-up attack, the initiator of the Winding & Binding rolls 1D6 on **Table 3.1**:

TABLE 3.1 WINDING & BINDING

1 – Wind for advantage*
2 – Thrust to area 13
3 – Thrust to area 12
4 – Thrust to area 11
5 – Grapple opponent's (primary) weapon arm
6 – Head butt or hilt strike (player's choice) to area 13
7 – Swing to area 7 (left or right, player's choice)

** The combatant winds into an advantageous position for an attack. The Winding & Binding continues into the next Exchange without change of aggressors, but with twice this Exchange's QoS as bonus dice for the current aggressor, any or all of which may also be used as a + / - modifier on the D6 roll on Table 3.0.*

Winding & Binding actually changes the engagement range. All attacks from **Table 3.1** happen at optimum Reach for the attacker, this now being the new engagement range.

The defender has the choice of three defenses against the Winding & Binding attack determined on **Table 3.1**:

1) If he knows the Winding & Binding Maneuver himself, he may declare it alongside a standard Parry, paying the Activation Cost for both. If he at least ties his opponent, the bind is maintained, but he becomes the new aggressor, carrying his QoS in the defense over as bonus dice into is follow-up attack, as determined by a roll on Table 3.1.

2) He may try to disengage his weapon. This is handled like a normal Parry with an additional Activation Cost of +1. In addition, initiative only

switches to the defender if he was successful by a Quality of Success of at least 3.

3) He may try to run off completely. This is handled like an Evasion with an additional Activation Cost of +3.

On the first Exchange of the Winding & Binding, only Partial Evasion is possible, as the defender was attacking on the previous Exchange. Should the Winding & Binding continue into a second Exchange, the defender may now also try a Full Evasion, which if successful ends the bout as usual.

No matter how the Winding & Binding ultimately ends, the loser is now at an optimum engagement range for the combatant who emerges from Winding & Binding as the aggressor, provided the bout is not broken up by a successful Full Evasion.

This maneuver is available at Proficiency level 5.

VI. Character Progression

As your character experiences new things, furthers his own goals, beliefs, and personal philosophies, he will also improve in many ways. Instead of character "levels", each trait grows independently, allowing the entire character to grow and change according to his player's wishes. All advancement comes from one source: Constant effort in playing out and furthering one's Spiritual Attributes. Each major aspect of your character, and how to advance in that area, is now discussed.

1. Passion Attributes

"To the mistress of all true adventurers!" he whispered, choking on his own blood. "To the Lady Death!"

Robert E. Howard, The Lost Valley of Iskander

Passion Attributes mirror things that are important to the character, but they are first and foremost about what is important to the player. Within the constraints of his character's fictional personality, the player sets whatever he wants as Passion Attributes.

The constraint of the character's personality will mean that a Passion Attribute has to concur with something the character wants, likes or dislikes, but they need not be identical to the character's personality descriptor.

The Passion Attributes are a way for the player to signal his ref what he would like to have adventures about. Together with making the character more – almost cinematically – efficient in these adventures, these are the most important functions of the Passion Attribute.

A player may for instance create a character with a fierce hatred of slavery as one of this character's central personality traits, but if he is not interested in leading the character through adventures where he will regularly face slavers and must contend with slavery, he need not and indeed should not turn this hatred of slavery into a Passion Attribute.

In this case, the character's hatred of slavery will be sitting there, in the background, adding colour to his personality and certainly impacting the way he is role-played, but it will not be a central issue in this character's adventures. Only items that a player wants to figure heavily in his character's adventures should ever be made into Passion Attributes.

Should a player ever wish to change the focus of his character's adventures, he can just change one or more of his Passion Attributes. Doing so is allowed even in the middle of a session, and the sole constraint of what the new Passion Attribute can be is a degree of plausibility – if it is, within the framework of the character's established personality, plausible enough that the player feels that a new Passion Attribute is warranted, then the change is allowed.

This process is not adjudicated by the referee, but by the entire group <u>communally</u>; the ref has no more say than anyone else at the table.

If the group approves of the change, the player only needs to drop the Passion Attribute to be changed down to a score of 0, and spend 1 point from any other Passion Attribute, and the change is affected.

The score of a Passion Attribute advances in different, but similar ways. Every time the character takes a considerable risk (e.g. enters combat) or accepts a considerable disadvantage (e.g. alienating powerful people) to either further or defend one of his Passion Attributes, he is immediately awarded a single point in the pertinent Attribute. Also, if the Passion Attribute represents a goal (e.g. freeing somebody or attaining something), every time the character does by his own efforts take a significant step towards the realization of this goal, he is awarded a single point in it. How many points are gained in this way each session depends on a group's tastes, but we think that it shouldn't usually be less than 3 or more than 6.

The flip side is that the score of Passion Attributes can– rarely – also decrease. Every time a character acts grossly against one his Passion Attributes (e.g. trafficking in slaves if he has a Passion Attribute of hatred for slavery), or

alternatively fails to follow up on an obvious opportunity to draw nearer to a goal, he immediately loses a point from the Passion Attribute in question.

Passion Attributes may not be kept secret from one's fellow players, even if they represent some secret goal of the PC. Any player is not only entitled to at any time know the Passion Attributes of all his fellow players, but this kind of knowledge is actually strongly advised and encouraged, as Passions can and should be used to tie the individual PCs together into the semblance of a group.

Protagonists of Sword & Sorcery fiction are often loners and outcasts, rather headstrong and callous individuals governed mainly by self-interest. Such persons do not form well or naturally into the traditional kind of adventuring group. Instead, some plausible reason for such PCs' cooperation needs to be found, and the most plausible one is of course mutual benefit. Passion Attributes, often representing goals and drives of a character, are an excellent tool to this end.

By making sure that all PCs have one or more Passion Attribute compatible or even similar to each other, the group will be given coherence. Some of the goals of the various PCs of such a group will complement each other, and the PCs will have good reason to cooperate.

PC A might for example have the Passion: Hate for Sultan Zafra of Samara, PC B the Passion: Become Sultan of Samara, and PC C the Passion: Destroy Cult of Baraz (the main protector and adherent of which happens to be Sultan Zafra). Without the three Passions being identical, any adventure in which Sultan Zafra is the opponent or in which Sultan Zafra stands to suffer will engage the Passion Attributes of all three characters, giving them a reason to stay together.

The recommended method of establishing a link between PCs by means of Passion Attributes is communal character creation, where all players are present when everybody else's character is being created, and where everybody may make suggestions and throw out ideas.

While this is the best method of establishing a strong link that does not appear contrived, communal character creation will unfortunately not always be possible. If it isn't, it can be substituted by leaving one of the four Passion Attribute slots of every participating PC undefined.

This free slot should be filled during the first session with a Passion making the PCs collaborators of convenience and tying them together into the semblance of a group.

Drama is the great wild card of all the Passion Attributes, and much of what has been said above does not apply to it. Every PC has it, it can never be exchanged for another Passion Attribute, and it does not represent a facet of his personality.

But it is rather a mechanical representation, an extra bit of heroic capability, and sometimes even luck.

It is the player's means to influence game events directly, above and beyond his character's actions, and it can be used in several ways:

Lucky Break

A point of Drama can be spent to effect some specific change in the game world, usually one that is beneficent to the character for which the Drama is expended. Examples:

One of the jailers of the dungeon into which the PC is thrown turns out to be a buddy of the PC from his mercenary days.

The kennel master has this evening forgotten to turn loose the guardian lions roaming the compound the PC is breaking into at night.

The daughter of the chieftain of the barbarian tribe whose aid the PC needs takes a romantic interest in the PC.

The lucky break can be quite substantial; it should not however solve some problem for the PC outright. Instead, it should provide an excellent opening for the PC to solve the

problem himself.

The specifics of the lucky break are up to the player expending the Drama, but the referee need not accept any wish of the player's.

The referee is encouraged to go with the flow and allow the lucky break the player desires, even if it should be immensely advantageous, but he is not required to do so.

Especially if he finds that a certain lucky break would defuse the entire adventure, he can refuse it.

Scene Request

A point of Drama can be spent to request a certain scene from the referee. For details about this see Chapter Five.

Have a Success

A point of drama can be spent in a non-combat situation to achieve a considerable success on a Check without the need to roll the dice. Instead of rolling the dice, the player just expends a point of Drama. The result is treated as if the following number of dice out of his pool had turned up as successes:

1-4 dice	all successful
5-7 dice	all but 1 successful
8-10 dice	all but 2 successful
11-13 dice	all but 3 successful
14+ dice	all but 4 successful

The choice to forego a Check and spend Drama must however be made before the dice are resorted to. Once a Check has been rolled, its result stands.

Stealing the Limelight

A point of Drama can be spent to change a combat's Order of Limelights. For details about this see Chapter Four.

Optional Drama Use: Melee Survival

If the group so desires, it can allow a point of Drama to be spent to reduce the effects of a wound that would either kill the PC outright or incapacitate him to die soon after. Such Drama expenditure invariably incapacitates the PC but also ensures his survival; the referee may not rule that the incapacitated PC is dispatched of by his victorious enemies.

The referee is however encouraged to come up with some other nasty consequence for the character. What this is depends entirely on the situation. He may be captured by his victorious enemies, or his body may be looted of some important possession, or he may receive a nasty and lasting scar. The referee should be creative, but should avoid imposing something on the PC that ruins the player's continued fun.

The injury suffered is only assigned a definite Wound Level once the PC comes out of his unconsciousness. This should usually be a Level 4, but can be Level 3 instead.

Drama Use by NPCs

NPCs, even the most important ones, without exception never have Passion Attributes, including Drama. There is however a way by which a referee can enjoy the equivalent of spending a point of Drama for one of his NPCs.

When he wants an NC to have a Lucky Break, Have a Success, or Melee Survival (if this optional rule is being used)), he may announce this and offer a single point of Drama to the player of any PC involved in the current scene. If the player accepts, he gets the Drama point, and the NPC gets the benefit, but if he refuses, the referee may ask any other player whose character is involved in the scene, and so on, until a player either accepts the deal or all have declined it.

The order in which the referee asks the players is entirely up to him. A savvy referee will of course use this discretion to best effect to get his desired Drama use. After all, the instinct of the player asked first might be to decline, but then he can't be sure that one asked later will not accept anyway, in which case he will have foregone a point of Drama for nothing…

In any case, the referee can resort to this mechanic no more often than once per scene – in total, not once per scene per NPC.

Drama is not raise like the other Passion Attributes, but may be gained in the way outlined above, or through any of the following three ways.

First, anytime you make the whole group laugh or impress them with an outstandingly fine plan, idea, or dramatic piece of role-playing you can immediately gain one point.

Second, if a player has achieved some spectacular and unexpected success on any Check through the course of one session gains one point at the close of that session. If several players qualify, the point goes to the one with the most impressive success, as decided by the group.

Third, any player who has rolled a spectacularly poor Check during the session gets a "consolation point" at this session's end. If several players qualify, the point is again awarded the player decided upon by the group.

No more than 3 Drama points may be gained by any player in any one session.

Finally, one can also transfer points to (but not from) the Drama Attribute. At the very end of a session and at the very beginning of one, all players have the opportunity to exchange any number of points from any of their Passion Attributes to points in the Drama Attribute (maximum of 5), at a rate of one point for one point.

2. Spending Passion Points

Chapter One outlined a number of ways to use your Passion Attributes. Using Passion Attribute points does not deplete them in any way; they can be applied as bonus dice again and again.

Spending Passion Attribute points is different. All other traits increase by permanently spending Passion Attribute Points. These points, once spent, are lost—and may only be regained through play (as described above). When spending these points they may come in any quantity from any combination of Passion Attributes.

3. Karma

Another aspect of spending Passion Attribute points is Karma. One point of Karma is gained every time you spend one Passion Attribute point. These points come into play after your character dies or leaves the game, allowing you to build a stronger new character.

When you are creating a new character (whether the last one died or was simply "retired"), the player may spend any number of his Karma points for better Picks on the Talent table, as per Table 3.2.

Higher Karma grants additional "priorities" (see Chapter Two) for character creation. Thus instead of one Priority A, B, C, and so on you

may begin with one Priority A, two Priority B's, one C, D, and so on.

Karma is not so much earned and amassed by the *character*, as earned and amassed by the player through his *character*.

It is the player's to spend or hoard over several characters. If the player's current character dies or retires permanently and the player creates another character, even for a different campaign, he can spend part or all of his Karma to create a new and better character.

Karma that the player does not spend is retained by him and noted on the appropriate space of the new character's sheet.

Karma is even earned by the ref, and most likely in greater quantity than any other player in his group.

Every single session, the ref receives Karma points equal to the player who earned the most Karma during the session.

These points are not so much rewards for being the ref, but rather a safeguard against the ref being left behind should he one day become a player himself.

He can then use his amassed Karma to create a stronger character for himself, just as his former players did, who earned Karma while he was directing the game.

TABLE 3.2 KARMA REWARDS

KARMA	BONUS PRIORITIES
11-30	E
31-50	D
51-70	C
71-90	B
91-110	A
111-130	A, C
131-150	A, B
151-170	A, A
171-190	A, A, C
191-210	A, A, B
211 +	A, A, A

4. BASIC ATTRIBUTES

Any Attribute may be raised by spending Passion Attribute points according to Table 3.3, below. Raising a character's "Focus" Attribute costs 1 point less than stated on the table. No Attribute may be increased by more than one point per session.

5. PROFICIENCIES

These are easier to raise than Attributes, but require that a character either spend some time training or use the Proficiency in the course of play. Not much training is needed, assuming the character has an hour or so a day to spend practicing.

To raise Proficiency by one level, simply spend a number of Passion Attribute points equal to twice the current Proficiency level.

Hence the cost to raise the Greatsword Proficiency from 4 to 5 would be 8 Passion Attribute Points. As with Attributes only one level increase per Proficiency is allowed during any one game session.

TABLE 3.3 Raising Attributes

Current Attribute	Cost to raise Attribute to next level
1	3
2	6
3	9
4	12
5	15
6	18
7	21
8	24
9	

Acquiring a new Proficiency requires either that the Proficiency has been used during the course of play, or that a teacher with Proficiency level 3 or better was consulted, and costs a mere 1 Passion point.

Thus buying Cut & Thrust would cost 1 point to begin at level 1, but if already proficient in Greatsword (which defaults to Cut & Thrust at −3) you could buy the new Proficiency as if you were already at the same level as Greatsword −3.

6. Assets

Some Assets may be bought or bought off during the game, provided that this development seems plausible to the group. Acquiring an entirely new Good Asset or buying off a Poor Asset acquired from the Culture Priority Pick costs 20 Passion. Buying off a Poor Asset not derived from the Culture Priority Pick or acquiring the Good aspect of an Asset of which the character does already have the Poor aspect costs only 15 Passion.

7. Skills

Skills are easy to develop. To raise a Skill by one level, simply spend a number of Passion Attribute points equal to the current Skill level. Entirely new Skills may be purchased for 1 Passion Attribute point, and begin at level 1. Keep in mind that when purchasing a new Skill at a level lower than the rating the PC has in that Skill's most applicable Attribute (as listed in the Skill's description), it will cost 1 point less than the Attribute's rating, though always at least 1 point.

Finally, improving one's skill rating in either the Ancient Languages or Foreign Language Skill costs one less Passion point than would otherwise be charged, though again a minimum of 1 point must be spent. Furthermore, the initial Passion point expended towards the acquisition of an entirely new Foreign Language (though not Ancient Language) Skill immediately buys an initial rating level of 2, not 1.

8. Loot

Fafhrd the Northerner was dreaming of a great mound of gold. The Gray Mouser the Southerner, ever cleverer in his forever competitive fashion, was dreaming of a heap of diamonds.

Fritz Leiber, The Bait

The Loot rating measures a character's wealth. Every point in it represents an abstract amount of affluence; in more concrete terms, every point of Loot represents roughly ten times the wealth of the level immediately below it.

This encompasses a character's total wealth in both money and movable and immovable goods.

0: Dead broke. Just the shabby or torn and thus worthless clothes on your back.

1: Poor. A set of clothes, some coin, a few items.

2: Average. The normal amount of wealth for a commoner.

3: Rich.

4: Filthy Rich.

5: Fantastically Rich.

If a character wants to buy something, the referee judges whether his Loot score suggests that he should be able to afford it or not. If the purchase seems clearly within the character's means, he can buy it, if it's judged to be well beyond it, he can't.

If the issue seems questionable, the character's Cunning pool is typically rolled against either a Challenging or Difficult task. If the Check is successful, the character can make the purchase, but he can't afford to make any other purchase that would require a roll for the remainder of the session.

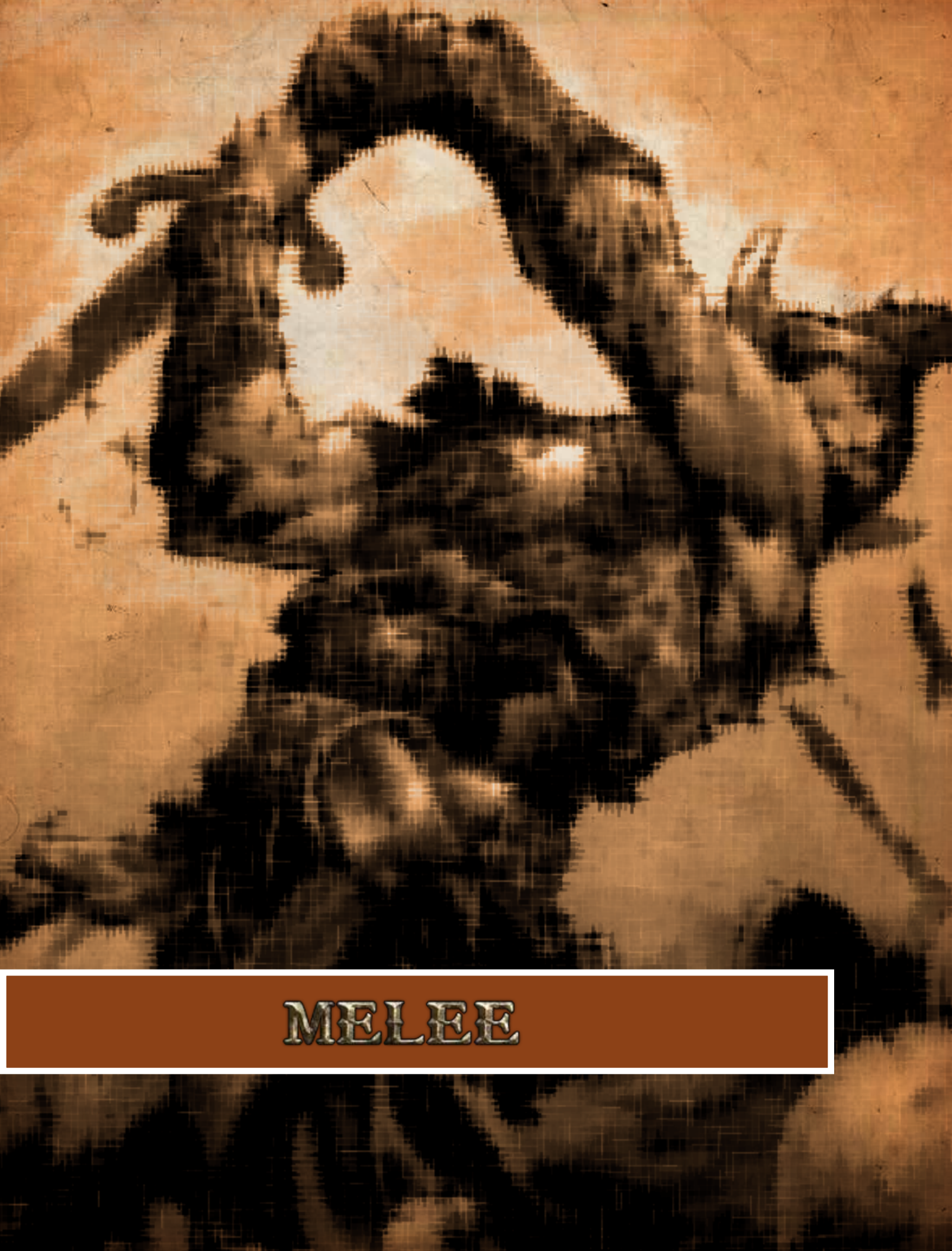
When a character acquires money or valuables of a magnitude that suggests an increase to his current Loot his rating is simply increased automatically, provided the wealth gained is judged to clearly be many times greater than the character's current means. If it is merely deemed to be considerably greater, the character should make a Cunning Check with his possible new Loot rating as the Challenge Level; if he passes the test, his Loot rating increases.

Sword & Sorcery protagonists are notoriously bad at hanging on to money, either because they spend fistfuls of it on drink, wenching, gambling and other forms of hard carousing, or because they simply don't seem to care a lot about keeping their accounts balanced.

Therefore, a character's Loot rating is decreased by 1 between game sessions, provided that considerable game time has passed since the last session.

The player can avoid having his Loot deteriorate if he passes a Check of his character's CG with a Challenge Level of (5 – current Loot). PAs don't apply to this roll, but Drama can be spent in the usual manner. What constitutes a sufficient span of time for Loot to decrease due to spending depends on the circumstances this time is passed in; in a city, a week is definitely sufficient, but in a remote monastery or some such, several months should pass before a roll becomes necessary.

This concludes Chapter Three


MELEE

Conan did not underrate his dominance of the crew. But he had not gained the right, through battle and foray, to challenge the captain to a duel to the death. In these empty seas there had been no opportunity for him to prove himself according to Freebooter law. The crew would stand solidly against him if he attacked the chieftain openly. But he knew that if he killed Zaporavo without their knowledge, the leaderless crew would not be likely to be swayed by loyalty to a dead man. In such wolf-packs only the living counted.

So he followed Zaporavo with sword in hand and eagerness in his heart, until he came out onto a level summit, circled with tall trees, between whose trunks he saw the green vistas of the slopes melting into the blue distance. In the midst of the glade Zaporavo, sensing pursuit, turned, hand on hilt.

The buccaneer swore.

"Dog, why do you follow me?"

"Are you mad, to ask?" laughed Conan, coming swiftly toward his erstwhile chief. His lips smiled, and in his blue eyes danced a wild gleam.

Zaporavo ripped out his sword with a black curse, and steel clashed against steel as the Barachan came in recklessly and wide open, his blade singing a wheel of blue flame about his head.

- Robert E Howard - The Pool Of The Black One

Chapter Four
Melee

"Behold these warriors, each with a soul of steel forged in a thousand battles and of a fearless cunning honed in our age of misery – my flawed tools of mayhem. Defy them and despair, for they be my blades and none shall stand against them."

Noggrond Namebreaker, the Magnificent Shield of Lamu, High Priest of Yot-Kamoth

I. Melee Combat Overview

The world of **Blade** is a dangerous one. Though fierce monsters and abominations inhabit the far corners of the world, adventurers must also be on the lookout for thugs, cutpurses, assassins, mercenaries and anybody else who would kill them for their silver.

And the most deadly foes care nothing for treasure, and instead want a hero's corpse for darker purposes…

As characters adventure throughout the world, they will encounter those who stand in their way. Unfortunately, not all villains will launch themselves at the characters with sword in hand.

The more dangerous ones use their snake tongues, devious minds, or sorcery to bring the heroes to ruin. Good referees will throw all types of foes against characters – those who fight with tooth and claw, cowards who would sooner run than battle, and those who seek to undermine adventurers with a labyrinth of plans and deception.

Sometimes, battle is inevitable. Though the warriors of **Blade** are well trained and deadly, even the most inexperienced knave can thrust a

pitchfork into the throat of a battle-hardened king. Players should always keep in mind that more people walk into battle than walk from it…

1. Limelight and the Combat Round

The basic temporal unit any *Combat Scene* in **Blade** is the *Combat Round*. During the Combat Round, every combatant has dice to spend on action equal to his Melee Pool.

Players will have to be judicious about what activities they spend their MP dice on, and all associated costs to their MP pool. A subdivision of the Combat Round is the Exchange, with every Combat Round consisting of two.

The Exchange is thus the shortest temporal division of a Combat Scene, which ultimately consists of any number of Combat Rounds, each made up of a pair of Exchanges.

In **Blade**, combat is never handled by going around the table from player to player in order every single Round, let alone Exchange. Instead, every player goes through a number of Rounds before it is the next player's turn. This collection of unbroken Combat Rounds is called the "Limelight".

Limelight harks back to the way swashbuckling fights were once portrayed in movies, when the camera focused on one combatant and his enemies for an intense set of actions and then, at a suitably dramatic moment, cut to another exciting moment within the scene.

This cut to another moment sometimes pulled the viewer back in time, if the scene's new focus took place prior to the moment cut from. This tried and true dramatic way of portraying fights is reborn in **Blade**.

There are no firm rules how many Combat Rounds a

Limelight has, only guidelines as to when to end it and "cut" to another player's Limelight.

Generally speaking, a Limelight is terminated at the end of its first Combat Round in which something *significant* happens. We call this a "Cliff-hanger"! A Cliff-hanger can be a wound being inflicted, a combatant being killed, a weapon being lost or knocked away, a change in how the fight is being waged, for instance when the opponents switch from Melee combat to a grappling match, or any other noticeable change in the flow of the fight.

Once something like this happens, the ref calls an end to one Limelight and switches to another player's new Limelight.

The order in which players go through their Limelight's is largely determined at the outset of the fight and then remains fixed, unless changed by player action; see below.

Under some circumstances, for instance when one PC out of several is under surprise attack, it's obvious whose Limelight is handled first, but in most cases it isn't. If circumstances don't dictate the order of Limelight's, the ref taps players in ascending order of their PCs' CG; low CGs go first and high CGs last, with ties broken by Reflex, or by the highest Melee Proficiency, if still tied.

However, any player whose character's CG is higher than the CG of the PC being called up by the ref may opt to step in before the round begins and have his PC's Limelight resolved earlier. Thus characters with high CG have control of the initial Limelight order.

Once every player at the table has had a Limelight, what's called a Round of Limelights, the order of Limelights is established, and this order remains unchanged for the entire combat – unless players step in to change this sequence.

Before this is explained a word must be said about time.

Neither Exchanges nor Combat Rounds take a fixed amount of time. Depending on circumstances, a Round may easily be as little as 1 second and as much as 5 seconds, or even more; as long as a PC is going through his Limelight, there is no telling how much time has actually passed.

However, once a Round of Limelights has been completed, time snaps back, and the PCs *all realign to the same point in time*. Thus the player who has in his Limelight played through five Combat Rounds is at the same point in time as the player who played through just two.

At any time between one player's Limelight completion, but before the next player's Limelight commences, any player who has not yet had his Limelight moment within the round may step in and "Steal the Limelight", thus having his Limelight conducted immediately.

Doing so requires the payment of 1 Drama point, and the sole caution that the player who Steals the Limelight must not yet have had his Limelight moment during the current Round of Limelights.

By Stealing the Limelight, the sequence of Limelights is changed – and remains changed.

The player who has spent the Drama point has thereby elevated himself from his old place in the sequence to the new one, and the order of Limelights created by this act of Stealing the Limelight becomes the new order of Limelights for the remainder of the combat – or until someone else Steals the Limelight yet again.

Stealing the Limelight can be advantageous in many situations, and is often done to enable one PC to rush to another character's aid.

Example: *Three characters, Rufo, Karg, and Otho, are each fighting an enemy in this order during the current round of Limelights.*

When the second Round of Limelights begins, all three are engaged in melee combat. Having his Limelight first, Rufo is wounded during it, an appropriate point for the ref to cut to Karg's Limelight.

Sometime into Karg's Limelight, he and his opponent go from melee into a grappling ground fight, again a useful juncture to cut to Otho, who during his Limelight despatches his opponent, thereby ending his own Limelight.

A new Round of Limelights begins, with Rufo going first – but as Rufo has just been wounded, there is a danger of him being killed by his opponent's coup de grace, so Otho's player decides to spend 1 Drama point to Steal the Limelight. Otho, now going first and being unengaged, has by Stealing the Limelight, gained a chance to rush to injured Rufo's side and save him.

In quite a few fights, not all PCs will actually be Melee combatants, or combatants at all, and their Limelights conversely work a bit differently. While their place in the sequence of Limelights is determined normally, instead of fighting, they use their Limelight to do one relevant thing.

Doing something relevant - this truly is the heart of the matter: Not *preparing* for something relevant, but *doing* it, all the way.

This relevant action could be a lot of things. Often, it will be firing a missile (and yes, even cocking a heavy crossbow, loading and then discharging it are accomplished within the space of a single Limelight) or casting a spell, but it might be picking a lock, breaking down a door, lighting a fire, untethering the group's horses – anything really.

The sole constraint is that the action should be one that could conceivably be accomplished within the space of 30 seconds.

NPCs, even the most important ones, do not have a Limelight of their own. An NPC's opportunity to act arrives when the PC with whom he is locked in some kind of struggle or other interaction has his own Limelight. If he PC moves to a new place within the Order of Limelights, the NPC moves with him.

In those cases where NPCs not currently in some form of contest with a PC try to accomplish something entirely on

their own and unopposed by a PC (e.g. breaking down a door), the referee should adjucate this action with common sense and just announce its progress or completion as seems right.

In those very rare and exceptional cases when timing should be more important, such an NPC can be given a place within the Order of Limelights of his own.

This is however only possible for as long as this NPC does not interact with a PC; the moment he starts interacting with a PC (e.g. having broken down the door, the NPC charges the PC), he loses his own place within the Order of Limelights and commences acting on the PC's Limelight.

All NPCs must be assigned to a given PC's Limelight right at the beginning of that Limelight, with all players being informed of any NPC attached to his character's current Limelight, whether the character would be aware of the presence of the NPC or not.

An NPC who was not assigned to a PC's Limelight cannot interact with that PC during this Limelight.

In addition, an NPC can only be assigned to one PC's Limelight during any given Round of Limelights; should he fail to act on this Limelight, he cannot be reassigned to another Limelight later taking place during the current Round of Limelights.

2. The Order of a Combat Round

A Combat Round is fought in the following sequence:

- All stances are declared.
- Aggressor and defender is established (initiative). Melee Pool fills/refreshes, with all Modifiers.
- During the first half of the Exchange the aggressor attacks and defender defends.

- Damage is resolved and/or new attitude determined (aggressor or defender).
- During the second half of the Exchange the aggressor attacks and defender defends. These roles may have been reversed since the first Exchange.
- All damage is resolved and/or new attitude determined (aggressor or defender).

Steps 2-6 continue to repeat until the end of the Combat Round, or until the flow of combat is interrupted (a pause).

At the beginning of each new Melee conflict (or following a pause) begin at step 1, then repeat 2-6 as normal.

3. Steps 1 & 2: Stances, Initiative, and Surprise

If time is not pressing, both parties may have the opportunity to declare a stance—these should be clearly announced at the table.

Stances potentially provide for a stronger attack or defence, though perhaps adding some rigidity to a combatant's action.

Though every school speaks with confidence on the superiority of its teaching, three stances are universal; Aggressive, Defensive, and Neutral stances.

Aggressive stances provide an attack bonus at the cost of making one's defense more difficult. Such stances add 2 MP dice for an attack but increase activation costs for any Defensive Maneuver by 2 MP.

Defensive stances grant a defensive bonus while making attack execution more difficult. Such stances add 2 MP dice when Defending but increase the activation costs for any Offensive Maneuver by 2 MP.

Neutral stances are the favorite of many. In a Neutral stance one's weapon is positioned to allow for either quick attack or defensive response. Neutral stances provide no bonus to either attack or defense.

> **Note:** *Stances are only in effect until the first blow or movement – once a character's weapon moves, the stance is gone. Once melee is joined the stances of both attacker and defender are treated as neutral, with no bonus conveyed to either. A stance cannot be taken (or regained) until the combatants separate for a full pause.*

Initiative is determined after any stances are declared (if there's time), when each combatant announces their intent to either attack or defend.

If a player fails to declare his intent, then his character is considered to have hesitated and may only defend for one full Combat Round – if even that (see Surprise).

The attacker, **now having the initiative**, declares how many dice from his Melee Pool are being spent on the attack, where the attack is aimed, and what Maneuver, if any, is being used.

The defender in response to the attacker declares how many dice from his Melee Pool are going towards defense, what defense is being used, and what Maneuver, if any, is being executed. If both combatants declare as aggressors, Offensive Maneuvers and assigned dice are announced before the Reflex Check to see who goes fractionally first. The combatant with the higher Reflex may choose whether to declare first or second; tied Reflex scores are broken by the higher CG score, and tied CG scores by the higher Proficiency.

An Opposed Reflex Check (with the combatants' own ATNs for Target Numbers—see the Appendix for weapon ATNs) then determines whose strike lands first. **Note that no defense is possible in the middle of an attack**, so the loser of this Check will likely be killed. In the Exchange that follows, the winner of this Exchange now assumes the role of aggressor and his opponent that of defender. Should the Opposed Reflex Check be tied, both combatants strike at exactly the same time.

Stealing Initiative is only possible immediately before the first blows of any bout are traded and is usually done in one of two circumstances:

The first is when two combatants declare as aggressors and attack simultaneously.

If one combatant turns out to be fractionally slower than the other, he may attempt to Steal Initiative, but if both combatants attack at exactly the same time, the combatant with the higher Reflex score is the one entitled first to attempt to Steal Initiative; tied Reflex scores are broken by the higher CG score, and tied CG scores by the higher Proficiency. Should he decline to try Stealing Initiative, the other combatant may opt to attempt to.

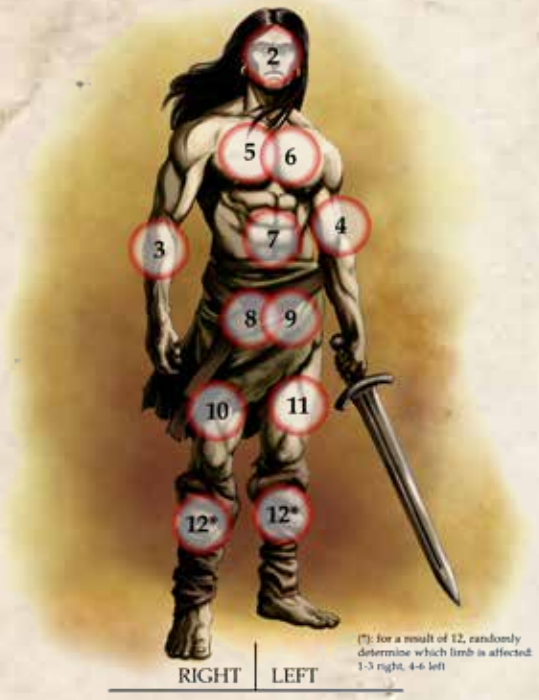
This contest is further modified by differences in the Reach of the weapons used; for every step difference, the wielder of the longer weapon receives a 1 die bonus on his Check while the wielder of the shorter weapon must incur a 1 die penalty.

When the combatants are fighting at the Reach of the shorter of the weapons involved, the above modifiers are reversed: Shorter weapons garner a 1 die bonus per Reach increment difference, and longer weapons a 1 die penalty per increment difference.

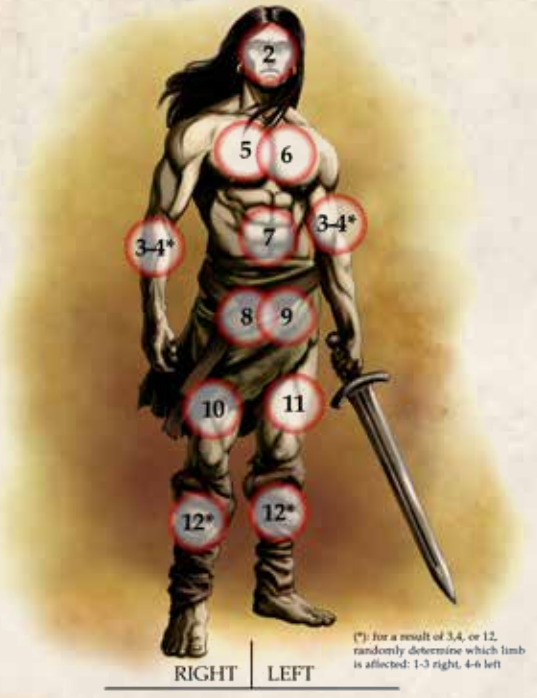
Finally, the initiator of the attempt, and only he, may buy bonus dice for his Check by spending dice from his MP on a one-to-one basis, up to the value of his DG rating.

TABLE 4.1 TARGET ZONES

MISSILE
(roll 2d6)



RANGED
(roll 2d6)



PAs do not modify to this check, as PAs are added to one's MP pool at the beginning of the combat scene, and are thus already accounted.

The winner of the Opposed Check strikes first, and the loser, should he still be able to continue after his opponent's attack, second. In a tie, both combatants strike simultaneously, which might well result in the death of both. In any case, a combatant who had the Initiative stolen from him may immediately try to steal it back. Such attempts to Steal Initiative or steal it back may theoretically continue until one party depletes his MP.

The second situation where one may wish to Steal Initiative can occur when a character who has previously declared defense wishes to switch over and instead attack. The process is identical to that described above.

Surprise can occur at any time, even when you suspect that danger is near. When a Surprise Check is called for, the player checks Reflex against a TN based on how alert the character or NPC was. Table 4.2 provides guidelines. Failure indicates no action can be taken until the next Combat Round.

A single success or better means that the target may defend themselves (or attempt to Steal Initiative).

TABLE 4.2
SURPRISE TARGET NUMBERS

4 - Target is on high alert – waiting for an attack.
9 - Target is uneasy or suspicious, attack comes from unexpected source, or player hesitated.
11 - Target caught completely off-guard.
12 - Target completely off-guard plus attacked from rear or side, sleeping.

4. STEPS 3 & 5: THE EXCHANGE

Again, each Combat Round consists of two Exchanges. During an Exchange each of the participants may perform but one action, usually

TABLE 4.1 CONTINUED

attacking or defending by use of a single one of either the Offensive or Defensive Maneuvers.

Someone who is in the role of defender may utilize nothing but Defensive Maneuvers, while one in the role of aggressor may utilize both Offensive and Defensive Maneuvers, though will of course usually not choose one of the latter.

All attacks must be aimed at a specific locale; those numbered 1-14 (see Table 4.1). Arrows indicating swing target zones, while diamonds mark target zones for thrusting or missile attacks.

While a player need not declare a specific number, he must describe the attack in terms that may be easily understood, i.e., Thrust to the face, Slash to the right foot, etc.), as random attacks are not a part of **BLADE** melee. Maneuvers and chosen target zones may increase or decrease TNs for both attacker and defender alike, and may also require an additional Activation Cost: *Optionally*, all melee thrusts to head and limbs (target zones 8, 9, 13, and 14) require an additional 1 point Activation Cost to execute.

Both participants now roll the allotted Dice from their Melee Pool (See Step 2), with all modifiers totaled from all Maneuvers, stances, or other situations factors.

This is a normal Opposed Check, where the loser's successes are subtracted from the winner's, leaving the winner with a net Quality of Success.

All Target Numbers for this Check come from the ATN (Attack Target Number, used when attacking) or DTN (Defense Target Number, used when defending) listed with each weapon (see the Appendix).

After all damage is resolved, the winner maintains his role as aggressor, unless he declines it, or cannot continue because of depleted MP, while conversely his opponent still retains uncommitted MP dice.

With a successful defence, the defender may now take on the role of aggressor.

Ties, even with no damage inflicted, mean that the attacker still retains the role of aggressor.

For the defender, a tied defence simply denotes that the defender has only barely avoided a hit but is still hard pressed by the aggressor.

Some Defensive Maneuvers may on a case-by-case basis allow a successful defender to either assume the role of aggressor upon a tie, or upon paying an additional Activation Cost, or perhaps under no circumstances at all. Any such special mechanics are explained within their respective Maneuvers.

Finally, should a defender enter a new Exchange and wishes to execute an Offensive Maneuver and attack, regardless of the consequences, he may declare an Offensive Maneuver like the aggressor, announcing both his Maneuver for the Exchange and the number of dice allocated to it.

This declaration of an Offensive Maneuver carries an Activation Cost equal to the aggressor's DG, above and beyond any normal Activation Cost for the Offensive Maneuver.

In such circumstances, the aggressor resolves his Maneuver first and only then does the defender resolve his Offensive Maneuver, should he still have the required dice in his MP to do so.

Providing the aggressor has hit the defender at all, regardless of whether the strike has caused a wound or not, the role of aggressor and defender remain unchanged.

Sneaking in an attack does not turn the previous defender into the aggressor; he still begins the next Exchange as the defender, and his opponent the aggressor.

However, should the defender not be hit by the aggressor's strike while himself hitting the aggressor, he now assumes the role of aggressor.

Visibility has a profound effect on combat. In dim lighting (for example, dusk) deduct 1 die from all Melee Pools. During hours of darkness (moonlight) reduce all Melee Pools by 1/4. In pitch black conditions drop all Melee Pools to half value.

Weapon Reach plays an enormous role in any combat. Weapon Reach is in six distinct Steps:

1. Hand: Fists, daggers, knee-strikes, grappling, etc.
2. Short: Long daggers, shortswords, maces, etc.
3. Medium: Arming swords, ball-and-chains, sabers, short spears, etc.
4. Long: Hand-and-a-half swords, rapiers, spears, short pole-arms, etc.
5. Very Long: Greatswords, long pole-arms, etc.
6. Extremely Long: Lances, pikes, etc.

Attacks against a longer weapon are made at -1 MP for each "Step" (i.e.: Short to Medium, or Medium to Long) the attacker wishes to close; attacking a pikeman with a dagger would cost 5MP!

This penalty holds until the shorter weapon makes a damaging strike, after which the penalty transfers to the longer weapon until he scores a damaging blow, when again the penalty goes to the shorter weapon. When the shorter weapon is out of range this penalty applies only to attacks; when the longer weapon is penalized, it applies to both offense and defense.

Often the best course of action for long weapons is to use a full evasion in the event of sudden close combat, or to drop weapons and wrestle!

Certain maneuvers (such as the Half-sword) are particularly effective in such situations.

Likewise, many weapons—such as spears and other two-handed weapons—may shorten their reach.

Botching in combat happens when any attack or defence roll comes up with 0 Successes, and

works differently from botches in other situations. It causes the botching character's weapon to either break, or else fly from his grasp.

In addition, the MP for either the remainder of this Combat Round (if applicable) or the following Combat Round are reduced by half the number of dice used in the botched roll.

5. Steps 4 & 6: Damage

Should an attacker have one or more successes over his opponent then the attack has landed (see Steps 3 & 5), and a D6 is rolled to determine specific location within the targeted zone (i.e. 1-14, as seen on Table 4.2). Normally a lower roll means a lower hit, higher rolls mean higher hits.

A character can exert some control over exactly where this blow lands by paying an additional activation cost before launching his attack. Spending 1 additional die from his MP allows him to modify the d6 roll for the exact hit location within target zone by +/– 1; an additional 2 dice (i.e. a total of 3) purchases a modifier of up to +/– 2, and further 3 dice, for a maximum of 6 dice achieves a modifier of up to +/– 3. Note that a player need not use his full modifier, but may use it in part or none at all.

Damage is calculated by adding the Quality of Success from the attack roll, (after defence successes have been subtracted), to the Damage Rating (DR) of the weapon used.

The DRs for the various types of attacks possible with a weapon are found in the Weapon Tables in the Appendix and will often fall in a range of –2 to +3.

To this value, half the attacker's BN (rounded up for .50 or higher) is then added. This represents on the one hand muscle power put behind the attack, and second, the overall toughness and muscle mass protecting the body from serious injury (with a bit of good fortune). This creates a subtotal, or **Impact Rating**.

From this Impact Rating, half the defender's BN (again, .50 or higher rounds up) is subtracted, representing a mixture of grit, health, and muscle mass protecting the vitals.

Last, if the defender is wearing armor at the location hit, its Armor Value (AV) is subtracted from the Impact Rating to arrive at a final damage number.

This damage number is the **Wound Level**.

For every wound's location and severity, there will be a corresponding entry rendering a few words describing the wound accompanied by several numeric values.

Wound Levels are rated from 1 to 6. A level 1 wound is usually a bruise, scratch or minor cut with no notable adverse effects. Wounds of level 2 and 3 are worse, but hardly debilitating, while a level 4 wound is quite a serious matter that will, more likely than not, decide the fight against the wounded person.

While level 4 wounds are very debilitating, those of level 5 and 6 are lethal either immediately, because of massive blood loss, or with other consequences, eventually fatal.

Otho's weapon has a Damage Rating of 2, and the wound that Otho inflicted on Olaf has a sub-total (or Impact Rating) of 11. Rolling the location on a D6, we reference a direct hit by Otho to Olaf's unprotected neck!

Having no armor at this location, Olaf may only subtract half his BN (5) from the Impact Rating... 11 - 3 (2.5 rounded up) = 8.

This value of 8 defaults down to a level 6 wound, a Wound Level which indicates the complete decapitation of Olaf's head!

Location always makes a difference with wounds – a stab to an offhand will be much less damaging than the same level stab wound to the belly, and a well-placed cut to the throat can be deadly at even low Wound Levels.

Wound Levels are not cumulative, even from multiple wounds to the exact same location.

Each wound and all consequences from the wound description are recorded separately, and while the consequences of wounds may add up (see below), many small wounds do not combine into one larger wound. To kill somebody, a solid injury is needed, not many very minor ones.

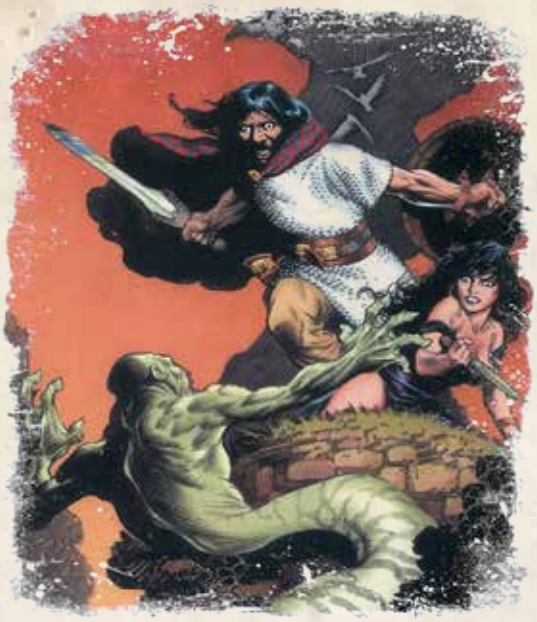
Of course, a number of minor wounds may well – and often will – accumulate and thus handicap a fighter so that his enemy is likely to drive home that one telling hit needed to dispatch him.

Barring more esoteric forms of damage such as sorcery, the most common are listed below.

Melee and missile weapons deal one of three wound types: Cleaving, Piercing, or Blunt wounds.

Cleaving wounds are the most common form of wound delivered in a fight.

Piercing wounds, wounds caused by spear and sword thrusts, incoming arrows, and the like, do their work internally, and are in many ways deadlier that sword cuts. They normally use the thrust Target Zones (11-14) on Table 4.2.



Bleeding from Piercing wounds is usually much harder to control as such wounds are typically located deep within the victim's body.

Blunt wounds, those caused by maces, clubs, quarterstaffs, pommels and the like, including bare fists, can be deadly. The impact of such strikes can cause large amounts of Shock (see below), which often necessitates difficult Knockdown Checks.

Blunt attacks are effective against many types of armor, as much of a blow's force will transmit through armour without the need to penetrate, causing the wearer substantial blunt trauma.

Blunt attacks are usually swung (areas 1 – 7), but some, including those delivered from fists, may be executed with a straight thrust (areas 8-14).

For all other forms of damage there is a "Generic Damage Table" (see Appendix).

Shock and **Pain** are both metrics that measure how badly any wound affects a combatant's ability to carry on and continue to fight.

Each wound descriptor contains an individual rating for both. Shock deducts dice from **all three dice pools** (Melee, Archery, and Sorcery) the moment the character is struck by the blow.

Shock is only applied once for each wound.

If the received Shock exceeds a character's total current MP for his very next action, the remaining of the Shock penalty is instead added to the aggressor's MP for the next Combat Round, or Exchange, if the current Exchange is the ongoing Combat Round's first one. Such bonus dice are of course only usable against the "Shocked" opponent.

Pain is deducted from one's MP (and AP and SP) at the beginning of each Combat Round, starting with the one following the Combat Round in which Shock from the wound was applied. While Shock is fixed number, Pain is reduced by one's TY. For the purposes of wound healing, where Pain is important, record the unreduced Pain rating of every wound, but apply only Pain in excess of the character's TY as penalty to his pools.

TY is thus applied in full to Pain with every single wound; it is not correct to total up Pain from several wounds and only then apply TY, but rather to apply TY to every single wound and then add up the reduced Pain ratings to determine the penalty to dice pools.

In addition to the die penalty to one's applicable pool from Blood Loss, described next, a Pain component is also added to a roll when tasked with a Skill or Attribute Check for any activity requiring fast, controlled movement, such as riding at a gallop, running, climbing, jumping, or other similar athletics.

Such residual Pain is mechanically expressed as one additional Success needed for every 3 points of dice pool penalty from Pain. If the Check does not yield the required additional net successes, the attempted Skill or Attribute Check has failed.

Of course, if the character is, after TY has been applied to every wound, currently carrying less than 3 cumulative points of Pain, no additional successes are required and the normal needed amount of Successes will suffice.

Example: Otho is at Pain 3 while plodding along the King's Highway on horseback. Brigands suddenly burst howling onto the roadway behind him in hot pursuit and Otho kicks his mount into a Gallup!

The ref asks Otho's player to make a Riding Skill Check yielding at least 1 additional Success in order to both cope with his Pain, and stay in the saddle. He rolls 2 Successes and therefore is able to keep his seat when his horse explodes into a Gallup, gritting his teeth against the pain.

Pain is also important in figuring out healing times, as described in Chapter Five.

Shock and pain are cumulative as long as they are applied to different zones. Should one attack the same area multiple times, the highest shock penalty—new or old—is applied (or re-applied) to the wounded party.

It can thus be beneficial to attack a well-wounded area over and over, even with weak attacks—the original shock penalty will keep on returning to haunt the wounded!

When recording wounds on your character sheet, make a note of where the exact wound is and what effects it may have, such as Shock, Pain, or Blood Loss (BL).

Such shorthand as "Wound Level 3, cut, 6/4 left," meaning "A level three Cleaving wound at zone 6, section 4(from the d6 roll), on the left side, can be useful when recording wounds on your character sheet.

Make sure to record each individual Wound's Pain rating as well.

Blood Loss (BL) covers the deterioration of one's body due to bleeding, the most dangerous of which is the internal kind. Some wounds, especially of the Piercing and Cleaving type, carry a BL value along with any Shock and Pain ratings.

The BL ratings of all wounds sustained are cumulative – as long as they come from different parts of the body, with each limb, the entire torso and the head each counting as one large location.

If such a body part already sports a wound with an attendant BL, and is wounded again in a way to indicate BL, only the higher of the two BL ratings is in effect.

At the very end of the Limelight in which the character first acquired BL, and on the end of each subsequent Limelight, he must check BN. This Check must yield Successes equal to or surpassing the current BL number.

If it doesn't, the character suffers a penalty of 2 dice on his MP, AP and SP, and a penalty of 1 die on all Checks involving just one Attribute, Skill or other rating (but not the BN check against further BL itself).

These penalties represent dizziness or weakness from loss of blood, and accumulate from failed BN Check to failed BN Check.

If the lesser of the two penalties, the one effecting rolls made with just one rating, equals or exceeds the character's BN, the character passes out from blood loss and will likely die without quick medical attention.

Thereafter, a BL Check is made for the unconscious character at the end of each subsequent Round of Limelights, and if any Check fails, the character has bled to death.

Please note that BL Checks made while the bleeding character is at rest (no more strenuous activity than walking very slowly) require one less Success than indicated by the current BL rating to be successful. This includes characters unconscious from BL.

BL ratings, unless from internal damage, are quite easily removed by the most elemental use of first aid; for details, see Chapter Five.

However, even if a character's BL rating is reduced to 0; those penalties accrued due to blood loss will not diminish immediately.

Such penalties are reduced by 2 for MP, AP and SP and 1 for single ratings for each passing day spent resting with proper nourishment and low activity.

Knockdown (KD) can be the result of some wounds, especially but not exclusively those to the legs.

With such wounds, the wound description will include a KD number, denoting the number of Successes needed on a Check of the Knockdown Attribute to avoid falling prone.

A KD Check is also necessitated each time a character's remaining MP for the Round is reduced to 0 or less from a wound received. The Challenge Rating of this Check will be set at Challenging if the character's MP is reduced to below –5, or simply Average in other cases.

If the wound which caused the initial Shock reduced MP to 0 or below, and calls for a Check by itself, only the more difficult of the two Checks need be made, but the Challenge Rating of the Check is increased by 1.

Optionally, if a group wants an additional layer of realism, every hit to the knee or below that fails to cause a wound instead generates a KD Check. The Challenge Level of this Check is Average if the hit was from a thrust-based attack or one-handed swing, Challenging if from a two-handed swing or a one-handed swing with a mass weapon, and Difficult if from a two-handed swing with a mass weapon or pole-arm.

However, the required number of Successes may never be greater than the Quality of Success on the attack roll; light blows to the legs don't stagger many, even if from very massive weapons.

Equally optional, any hit at the elbow or below to the weapon arm of somebody wielding a weapon in one hand also necessitates a KD of the same Challenge Level as above, failure resulting in the weapon being dropped.

A knocked down character is at half MP while fighting from the ground. To get back on his feet while fighting an opponent, he has to win a defense Check in a way that would otherwise enable him to assume the role of aggressor. He may in this case choose between either remaining the defender but getting back to his feet, or becoming the aggressor but remaining on the ground.

Knockout (KO) can be a consequence of blows to the head. If the description of a wound contains a KO number, this is the Challenge Level the wounded character needs to pass on an immediate Check of his Knockout Attribute.

Failure on this check indicates unconsciousness. Optionally, any blow to the head that fails to cause a wound will still call for a KO Check nonetheless, unless the hit was received from a thrust Piercing or thrust Cleaving attack.

The Challenge Level of this Check is Average if a swung Piercing attack, Challenging if a swung Cleaving or thrusting Blunt attack, and Difficult if a swung Blunt attack, but may be under no circumstances higher than half the attack's Quality of Success.

6. Terrain Checks

Terrain Checks in **Blade** take place within the abstracted combat environment.

During a melee, it is not only common but actually necessary that combatants twist and turn about, advance and step back, so that once a combat begins, all fighters will by default move significantly from the spot they occupied at its outset.

Even a single Combat Round might easily shift the combatants as much as five meters in an unforeseen direction, and frequently more; that's the nature of footwork.

Once a combat with multiple fighters has been underway for even one Round, it is nigh impossible to determine where anyone is in respect to anyone else – except as it relates to one's own immediate opponents.

Their own footwork, the press of enemies, and wheeling manoeuvres will have carried every pair of fighters

in a largely random direction, where allies who started out fighting side by side will by necessity find themselves separated very quickly.

In short, as long a Limelight is underway, it is impossible to tell where anyone is in respect to anyone else.

Locations are roughly re-established once a Limelight ends, and with certainty when a Round of Limelights completes. Positions are determined by the ref's common sense, based on what has happened during the previous Round of Limelights.

As a player vividly describes his combat actions, the ref is encouraged to take note and visualize the PCs end location within the combat environment. It can thus happen that a player finds his PC in a location where he doesn't want him to be, which is only a concern if the PC is desperately needed elsewhere.

If the character wants to engage somebody who is quite distance away, or get to any other location in the combat environment, this is not handled by measuring movement, but by a Terrain Check.

A Terrain Check is made with dice from the character's MP – any number of dice, player's choice. The ref sets the Difficulty of the Check by how far and over what difficult terrain the character will have to move, but it will rarely, if ever, be greater than a Difficult Challenge Rating.

If the Check is passed, the character then arrives at the point he wanted to reach "in time", whatever that may mean (usually to engage somebody in melee with the dice remaining in his MP), and if not, he arrives there "late"; a Botch results in a Complication, as normal.

Example: *Returning to where we abandoned Otho in the previous example, right after spending a point of Drama to have his Limelight out of the usual order to rush to Rufo's aid, the ref tells Otho's player that 2 Successes on the Terrain Check are necessary to get to Rufo's side in time.*

Playing it safe, Otho's player opts to spend 6 dice, and achieves 3 successes. Rushing at Rufo's enemy, Otho attacks with the remaining dice in his MP, just in time to save his companion.

Failing this kind of Terrain Check should only rarely, if at all, be interpreted as the player having wasted his Limelight on a failed attempt. Instead, the ref should give him something else to do, or a new unexpected challenge.

A failure might for example be interpreted as the character being intercepted by new enemy, if applicable.

The use of Terrain Checks are not limited to simply getting somewhere on time. A Terrain Check may also be needed to navigate an area with poor footing.

Normal footing like broken ground, light snow, mud, or deep sand do not necessitate a Check, but truly poor areas such as steep, slippery slopes, scree fields, stairs, narrow ledges, ice, deep snow, or water and the like, do.

If all combatants of a particular Melee are on this kind of difficult ground, 2 dice are deducted from everyone's MP and the need for a Check simply done away with. If only one combatant is on poor ground, a Terrain Check must be made for that character.

If he achieves even a single Success with the dice he sets aside for this purpose, he can act and move normally, but if not, he slips, stumbles, or falls down.

It is thus clearly advantageous to fight on level ground while forcing one's opponent into a position of poor footing. Provided there is poor ground nearby, Terrain Checks can also be used to force an opponent onto such bad footing, and keep him there, or to get out of it oneself.

Such attempts are handled through an Opposed Terrain Check.

The initiator of the attempt announces a number of dice from his MP to be used, after which his opponent sets aside a number of dice from his MP as well, then both roll. To win the contest, the initiator needs a Quality of Success of 1 if he

is currently the aggressor, or 2 if the defender – it is easier to force somebody somewhere than to lure him.

This can even be used to force somebody over a nearby drop, but only if initiated by the aggressor. As people are remarkably reluctant to fall from heights, success on such an attempt does not simply require a Quality of Success of 1, but now at least 3, provided that the drop is of a kind likely to injure the falling person.

In many cases, somebody on bad footing facing an enemy on level ground need not force his opponent back so that he can get firm footing himself, but may well opt to simply step back up a pace or two, enticing the opponent to follow him onto the disadvantageous ground and thus evening the odds.

This need merely be announced and requires just a normal Terrain Check to avoid slippage on the poor surface, no opposed roll needed; if the opponent declines to follow, the bout ends.

However, it is not always feasible to entice the opponent to follow; sometimes one will want to, and have to, fight one's way onto the opponent's better ground.

If the opponent is for example holding the head of a stairway or the top of a steep slope against all comers, no normal amount of enticement will force him down to his opponent.

While these cases assume at least some room for lateral movement on the holding character's part, there may be other scenarios, where he cannot move anywhere at all, such as when defending a doorway.

While such positions are advantageous in terms of limiting the number of possible attackers, they interdict footwork and thus cramp combat performance.

An attempt to remain firmly in one spot requires but one Success on a Terrain Check – if unopposed. If an enemy is actively trying to dislodge one from a position he is holding, the Terrain Check becomes Opposed.

The initiator of the attempt, the aggressor, declares the number of dice committed, after which his enemy does the same, then both roll.

To dislodge the holding person, a victory with a Quality of Success of at least 2 is needed; otherwise, the opponent remains firmly in place.

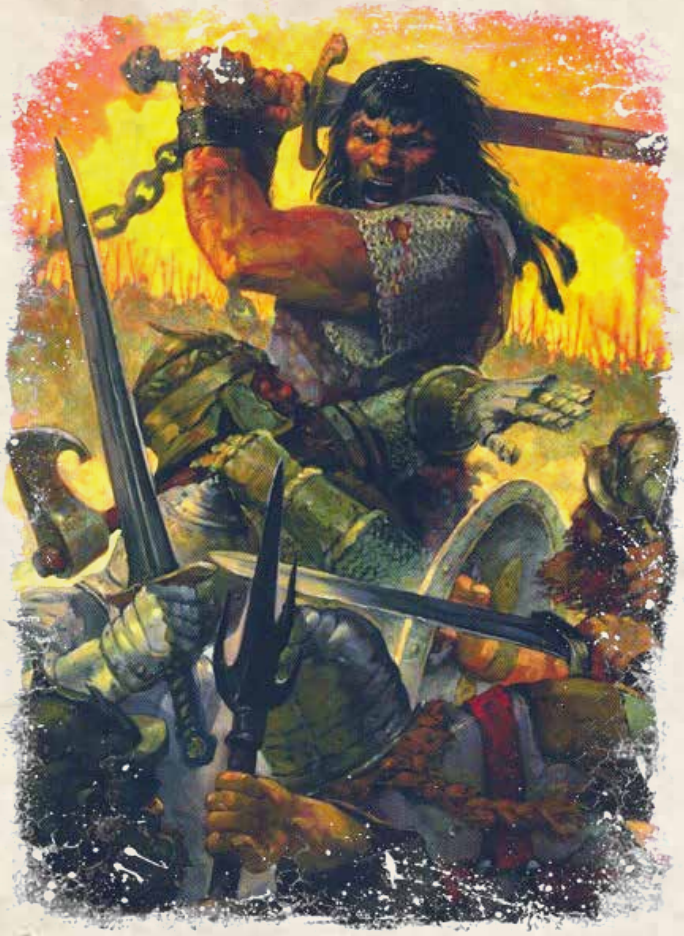
Higher footing (as provided by stairs or horses) adds 2 MP at the beginning of the Round (Step 2). This also affects attack zone targeting for all involved combatants according to common sense.

Finally, Terrain Checks can be used by a player with multiple opponents to avoid facing several at once. By moving so that his opponents foul each other's attacks, and by exploiting the environment, the combatant tries to limit the number of opponents he fights this Combat Round. If these opponents are important NPCs, the Terrain Check is an Opposed one.

Dice are set aside and declared against the first opponent (player's choice) to be avoided, which the opponent then opposes with any number of dice from his MP. A Quality of Success of 1 suffices to attain the player's objective.

If the first opponent is thus avoided, the next opponent is treated in the same fashion. There are no additional Checks needed, as it is physically impossible for more than three persons to beset the same opponent at the same time.

If the enemies aren't important NPCs, the Terrain Check is unopposed. If the PC is trying to avoid one of his two opponents, he simply needs 2 successes. If he is facing three opponents, a Quality of Success of 4 is required to avoid two opponents, while a QoS of 2 avoids one. There are a few further uses for Terrain Checks, which are discussed in the section on ranged combat.



7. Fatigue in the Combat Scene

Fatigue is an optional rule used only in combat situations. No one enters a Combat Scene fatigued – if he might be considered fatigued from previous strenuous activity, the rush of adrenaline at the onset of a new combat can be considered to have temporarily drowned out any previous exhaustion.

At the end of every Limelight, a character who engaged in highly strenuous activity like fighting needs to check BN, the Challenge Level of this Check being equal to one's Encumbrance level (meaning that the optional Fatigue mechanic can only be used when the equally optional Encumbrance mechanic is utilized).

If this Check is failed, the character accrues a penalty of 2 dice on his MP, AP and SP pools, and a penalty of 1 die on all Checks involving just one Attribute, Skill or other rating. These penalties are cumulative with every subsequent Limelight of exhausting activity.

All Fatigue is reduced to 0 by spending but a single Limelight resting and catching one's breath (no more strenuous activity than walking slowly). If a character spends a Limelight in light activity (nothing more strenuous than a slow jog), his Fatigue penalty is reduced by 2 for MP, AP and SP pools, and 1 for single ratings.

II. Defense

Defense focuses squarely on a warrior's efforts to avoid being struck by an opponent.

1. Evasion

Evasion can be done by everybody, and used with every Proficiency. It doesn't carry an activation cost, unless the character is encumbered. In that case, there is an activation cost equal to the Encumbrance level.

Table 4.3 provides TNs for the three common forms of evasion.

Both Full Evasion and Duck and Weave are notable:

Full Evasion brings all Melee to a halt as the fighters separate and attempt to re-establish initiative.

Duck and Weave gives the evading warrior a great opportunity as both the defenders shield protection and weapon Reach bonus is lost, allowing the evading character an attack that may only be parried or evaded.

Stances have no effect with "Duck and Weave" but work normally with Full Evasion and Partial Evasion.

If no successes at all are achieved on an Evasion roll, the roll is considered to be a Botch and that means that the character slipped and fell – in addition to being probably hit as well by the now virtually unopposed attack.

Evasion can also be used to defend against missile attacks, provided the defending person is **aware** of them. The TN for this is 8 (Partial Evasion) for thrown weapons, and 10 ("Duck and Weave") for arrows and crossbow bolts.

TABLE 4.3 Evasion Target Numbers

5 - Full Evasion or retreat. No attack possible for either party on the next Exchange. This pause in combat calls for a new initiative. Evasion may not be attempted on an Exchange immediately following one's own attack.
8 - Partial Evasion. May take initiative as the Aggressor on the next Exchange by paying 2 MP dice, or automatically if opponent Botches.
10 - "Duck and Weave." May attack on the next Exchange as if opponent had botched his attack (he will be at a MP disadvantage).

If the defending person is both aware that a bow or crossbow is being aimed at him, and has the opportunity to start evasive movement before the missile is fired, the Evasion TN is now merely 8 (Partial Evasion). This represents weaving around in an highly unpredictable way and cannot be combined with other actions requiring precise body control, like melee combat.

Evading missile attacks as outlined above is also possible when a character is not in a melee situation. In this case, he may use dice equal to half his best MP, even if he may not currently have the equipment necessary for fighting with that Proficiency at hand. Applicable PAs figure normally in this halved MP, i.e. they are added before dividing the pool in two.

When a character does during an Exchange use Duck & Weave as a defense against either a melee or a missile attack, the result of this single Duck & Weave is applied against all missile attacks aimed at him during this Exchange. Equally, if a character not currently in a melee is fired upon uses Evasion to defend against one missile attack, the result of this one roll is applied against all missile attacks upon him within this Combat Round.

Should he be targeted by both thrown and launched weapons, requiring different TNs to defend against (8 and 10), a single roll is still used to defend against all of them, but this roll will still cover two different QoSs, one against TN 8 and one against TN 10.

Example: *Otho evades both a javelin and a crossbow. He is not aware of the crossbowman and does not use erratic movement, so his DTN against the javelin is 8 and against the crossbow bolt 10. His MP is 13, but a she is currently not in a melee, he rolls half his MP, i.e. 7 dice. The dice come up 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12 – he has 3 successes against the javelin (8, 10, 12) and 2 against the crossbow (10, 12).*

If somebody fires into a melee combat, the missile attack is always resolved on Exchange 1.

2. Defensive Actions

The bedrock of all Defensive Maneuvers discussed in Chapter Three is the Block, the Parry, and the before mentioned Evasion. Most defensive Maneuvers are directly tied to these basics.

Parrying is the preferred defense of warriors everywhere. Most warriors grasp the basic idea of turning the attack of an opponent's weapon with their own. Any amount of MP dice may be devoted to parrying while defending. The challenge of deflecting another's weapon is reflected by the defending weapon's Defense Target Number (DTN).

Some weapon schools, for instance those of the Cut & Thrust Proficiency, teach using a secondary parrying weapon, usually a dagger, in the off hand, allowing the person thus armed to potentially parry twice in a single Exchange or to perform such Maneuvers as Simultaneous Block/Strike.

However, though parrying does not involve great manual dexterity, a person's secondary arm is still handicapped. The DTN of any parry conducted with the offhand is therefore increased by +1.

Blocking is the action of interposing an object, usually a shield, between oneself and the attack, perhaps in a rather unsophisticated way, but also by skilfully angling a shield, or using it offensively to beat aside an attacking weapon.

In this use it is not dissimilar to parrying. Every blocking object is assigned a TN for defending with it, this TN being dependent on the size of the object, and how quickly and gracefully it can be moved.

It is thus almost identical to a weapon's DTN, but with one important difference: Shields (and only shields, not improvised blocking objects like chairs and the like) are designed to be used in the offhand and therefore suffer no penalty for being used with the "wrong" hand.

Shields are divided into three types, depending on size; Large, small, and bucklers.

A **large shield** is just that – a very large shield, measuring over one meter in length if an oblong shape, or having a diameter of not much less than one meter if more squarish or round. It offers superior protection but is unwieldy to carry about and very awkward to use on

horseback as one's horse constantly gets in the way of the shield. On the positive side, most large shields are big enough to completely hunker down behind, removing its owner, provided he remains static, completely from the danger of missile attacks.

A **small shield** is anything clearly larger than a buckler and smaller than a large shield. It is very versatile and of equal use on foot or horseback.

Finally, a **buckler** is a very small, but agile shield, never strapped to the arm, but always carried in a fist grip. It is rarely any larger than 0.3 meters in diameter.

All types of shields have variable DTNs against different forms of attack such as melee, missile attacks with thrown weapons such as javelins or hatchets, or against "fired" projectiles like arrows, crossbow bolts, and sling stones – though fired objects are often so fast (causing the defender to roll vs. a high DTN) as to often rule out blocking as a viable defence against fired missiles.

The applicable Defensive Target Number depends on both the type of shield, and the attack being resisted. See Table 4.4.

3. Armor Overview

The function of armor is to reduce or outright prevent injury to somebody being hit in armoured spot. It does so by reducing the Wound Level of any hit to an armoured location by the Armor Value (AV) of that armor. If the Wound Level is thus reduced to 0 or less, no wound is inflicted.

But armor in **Blade** does not equally apply to all locations of the armoured person, but to each location only to the extent that armor is worn in exactly the spot being struck.

Somebody wearing a short tunic of sturdy leather and an iron helmet will thus have a different AV to the crown of his head than to his guts or shins. It is therefore essential to record which spot is armoured to what degree, and the **Blade** character sheet provides space for such notation.

TABLE 4.4 Shield DTN Values

Shield Type	DTN vs. Melee	DTN vs. Thrown	DTN vs. Projectile
Large	5	6	7
Small	6	7	9
Buckler	7	8	11

Armor doesn't provide the same AV against all types of damage; a thickly padded gambeson will for example provide decent protection against Blunt damage, but much less so against Piercing.

Each and every armor has three AVs, one against Piercing, one against Blunt, and one vs. Cleaving. These AVs can be found in Table 4.5.

Not all armors have an AV against Cleaving damage. Metal armors are virtually impossible to actually cut through with any weapon driven by human strength; the most that can be achieved is a dent or a very small rip, a far cry from a serious wound.

But that doesn't mean that the wearer of such armor is immune against Cleaving weapons – even if a blade does not actually cut such armor, the impact will still transfer Blunt trauma through the armor, possibly breaking bones, or perhaps even killing, all without greatly damaging the armor.

For this reason, all weapon stats in the Appendix include Blunt DRs, even those that traditionally in RPG games haven't caused Blunt damage, such as swords.

Armor lacking a Cleaving AV uses Blunt AV against Cleaving attacks, while attacking weapons calculate damage inflicted against such armor not with Cleaving, but with Blunt DR.

4. Armor Types

Gambeson: Pliable textile armor made of a number of layers of quilted cloth and stuffed with cotton, animal hair or other padding.

Many other types of armor require the wearing of a gambeson underneath to function properly, which is why the gambeson is also called an arming doublet.

TABLE 4.5 ARMOR VALUES VS. WEAPON TYPE

PROTECTION TYPE	AV VS. PIERCING	AV VS. BLUNT	AV VS. CLEAVING
Gambeson	1	2	2
Leather	2	1	2
Leather with Metal	2	1	3
Hardened Leather	3	2	2
Leather/Horn Scale/ Lamellar*	3	3	3
Metal Scale/Lamellar*	4	4	N/A
Brigandine*	4	4	N/A
Maille*	4	3	N/A
Brigandine over Maille*	5	3	N/A
Plate*	6/7	4/5	N/A

**Requires the wearing of a gambeson to be functional. If such armor is worn without gambeson, all AVs are halved.*

Leather: Tough, yet pliable, cured hide.

Leather with Metal: Pliable leather with short metal strips or rings sewn in strategic places to guard against cuts.

Hardened Leather: Cured hide boiled and then dried to make it harder, at the cost of most of its pliability. It can be fashioned into segments large enough to serve as helmets and greaves, but not for workable breastplates.

Leather/Horn Scale/Lamellar: Armor fashioned from strips of either hardened leather or animal bone.

For scale armor, the strips are sewn onto a backing of soft leather or heavy canvas, and then overlapped like roofing tiles.

For lamellar armor, each strip has holes fashioned into its edges and are then bound together and overlapped by two neighbouring pieces while yet again overlapping others.

Lamellar is therefore quite rigid, while scale is minimally pliable. Still, neither can be used to protect a joint, and both require the wearing of a gambeson underneath.

Brigandine: Armor made of palm- to hand-sized metal plates, each sandwiched between two layers of heavy canvas or soft leather and riveted together to stay in place, also known as Coat of Plates.

Brigandine is quite rigid and cannot be used to protect joints, and requires the wearing of a gambeson underneath. Brigandine AVs can also be used for Imperial Roman legionaries' segmented armor.

Maille: Also known as chainmail, this armor consists of a mesh of small metal rings, each interlinked with neighbouring rings. It is supremely pliable and can therefore be used to protect joints, but it, too, is dependent on a gambeson being worn underneath.

Brigandine over Maille: A special blend of layering armors, this was common during the transitional period from maille to plate, and consists of maille with additional brigandine worn over it to protect the torso from shoulder to hip.

Plate: Metal plates shaped to encase the body, including helmets. Two AVs are provided for it.

The lesser value is to be used for all plate armor pieces until the arrival of full articulated suits of plate.

Once such suits become available, the second, higher value is used to reflect the thicker plate now protecting the head and torso, and the lesser value is now reserved for the lighter plate protecting the limbs.

Plate armor requires the wearing of a gambeson, which along with an articulated suit of plate may also have insets of maille.

III. Ranged Combat

In **Blade**, ranged combat can include attacks from a thrown rock to a steel-pronged crossbow, and every conceivable thrown or launched missile in between.

Attacks may sometimes occur as a single, sniper-like attack with no chance for the target to react, but more frequently the attack will be launched into a scene of melee, or will perhaps lead to a melee situation. Such attacks are rolled with dice from the character's Archery Pool (AP), consisting of Aim + Missile Proficiency.

For the latter case, ranged combat must be integrated with melee combat, in order to give archers and the like a place in the Order of Limelights. This spot in the Limelight sequence is determined exactly as if the archer was a melee combatant, with the same principles hold true for both participants.

That is to say that sometimes, when it is clear who is going first (for example when an encounter is initiated by a crossbow bolt from an ambush), the ref will establish the Order of Limelights by calling up players in their logical order.

But, in those cases where the sequence is more random, players will be called up to play out their characters' Limelights in ascending order of SY, as described in greater detail on page 74.

During his Limelight, a character intending to launch a missile attack can do so, provided he has the weapon at hand.

There is no preparation, loading, or aiming times, as a Limelight is considered a span of time sufficient to accomplish a significant task – and this certainly includes firing a weapon, not merely preparing to fire it.

As melee combatants move about during their own Limelights, it will usually not be readily apparent at exactly what distance they are from a missile combatant during the missile combatant's Limelight, and also not whether there is a free line of sight between the two.

The ref is thus called upon to decide these things based upon common sense, the players' description of their characters' actions, and also the scene's dramatic requirements.

If the player of a missile combatant is not happy with the ref's judgement, he can have his character move into a more advantageous firing position.

Such movement to get an unobstructed line of sight, or merely closer to the target is accomplished via a Terrain Check made with dice from the character's AP.

The ref first announces the Challenge Level to get to closer range, or to achieve a free line of sight (rarely harder than Difficult, if even that), and the player then attempts to pass the Check using dice out of his AP, rolling any amount of dice desired.

Success does of course mean that the character achieves his objective, while failure signifies that he either must make the shot at longer range or has to contend with some cover obscuring the target, perhaps both – it never means that a shot is outright impossible.

A Terrain Check can also be used when a missile combatant is charged by an enemy and must shoot him down before being engaged in melee combat.

In such cases, the ref decides the Challenge Level based on how close the charging party currently is, and how ready the missile combatant is to fire.

Casting a spear that is ready in hand before one is engaged will almost never be harder than Average, while spanning and discharging a heavy crossbow may be as difficult as Legendary, provided the attacker isn't very far off.

If, in the situation described in the preceding paragraph, both opponents are important PCs or NPCs, the Terrain Check is an Opposed one.

The charging combatant first declares how many dice out of his MP he is going to spend so to engage before he can be fired at, and the missile combatant then declares the number of dice from his AP he is going to spend.

Depending on the ref's appraisal of the situation (closeness of opponent vs. readiness of the missile weapon), one opponent will likely need a Quality of Success of just 1 to be successful, whereas the other may well need a higher QoS.

Whether the situation is handled by an Opposed Check or not, victory on the part of the missile combatant will mean that he gets a shot in at practically point blank range. Failure does however signify that he will be engaged before he can fire and that the Combat Round immediately commences, with the missile combatant's initial MP reduced by a number of dice equalling those spent from his AP on the Terrain Check.

If he was trying to throw a spear or similar weapon useful in close combat, he may opt to

retain it in his hand, combat-ready, otherwise he is assumed to have realized in time that his attempt to shoot his opponent would not pan out, has dropped his missile weapon and barely managed to whip out a melee weapon – if he has one.

Range, like many aspects of **Blade** combat, is handled in a slightly abstract way. It depends first and foremost on the principle that the ultimate limitation to all range is human vision - it doesn't matter one whit that a heavy crossbow may well be able to launch a bolt over 300 yards when one can't clearly discern the target at such range.

Even missile weapons with theoretical maximum ranges as long as some bows and crossbows have realistic practical ranges that are only a fraction of that maximum. Extreme ranges are for wide-shooting contests and battlefield area-fire, not for taking down individual targets.

Practical ranges vary from 2-100 meters, and are divided into Range Bands from Point Blank to Extreme.

What actual distance each Range Band signifies is different for each type of ranged weapon.

Weapons that are **thrown** in such a way that they tumble while in the air (knifes and hatchets) have the least range, while those that are cast to fly straight (spears and javelins) middling range, and finally those that are launched (arrows, bolts and sling stones) the greatest.

Each Range Band determines how difficult or easy it is to aim for a specific body part by governing how many dice from the AP must be spent for a single +/-1 modifier on Table 4.7.

The Target Zone of a ranged attack is determined randomly by rolling 2D6 on Table 4.7. A missile combatant does however have some degree of control over the exact target zone by spending dice from his AP before rolling for the attack.

TABLE 4.6 RANGE BAND MODIFIERS

RANGES TYPES	RANGE IN METERS FOR THROWN WEAPONS	RANGE IN METERS FOR CAST WEAPONS	RANGE IN METERS FOR LAUNCHED MISSILES	AP COST FOR +/-1 MOVE ON TABLE 4.7
Point Blank	2	4	6	free +/-2
Near	4	8	12	1 die
Medium	8	16	24	2 dice
Far	15	30	50	3 dice
Extreme	30*	60*	100*	4 dice

** Only hatchets and javelins can be thrown at Extreme range, spears and daggers are limited to Far range. Shortbows, unlike other launched missile weapons, are also limited to Far range.*

The number of dice needed to be spent for a single +/-1 move on Table 4.7 is listed in each range band found in Table 4.6. Also note that at Point Blank range, the missile combatant receives a free modifier of +/-2; if your target is right in front of you, it is impossible not to aim either high or low. Apart from this free +/- 2, the cost for further desired modifiers is the same as Near range. This modifier does not have to be spent in full on Table 4.7; it can also be spent in part or not at, depending on the player's wishes.

Cover can complicate a ranged attack, and while some obstacles can be avoided by means of a Terrain Check, this is not possible in all cases – no maneuvering in the world will do away with the cover given by a breastwork to defenders manning a wall.

Soft cover that merely obstructs vision but does not completely block it, like foliage or a moving crowd of people, does impart a negative modifier to the AP.

Depending on the ref's judgement of how much the target is obstructed from clear view by soft cover, this modifier can range from –1 to –3 per line on Table 4.6. The possible modifiers are therefore for example –1, –2, or –3 at Point Blank range (line one on Table 4.6), and –3, –6, and –9 at Medium range. It can range from a mild –1 for a target at Point Blank range past a single person moving through the line of sight, to a whopping –15 for a target at Extreme range that is made almost invisible by the densest of foliage.

The rules for soft cover also apply if one wants to fire into an on-going melee and hit one combatant while avoiding the other, which is of course difficult due to the unpredictable movements of both.

In such a case, the minimum penalty for soft cover (i.e. –1 per line on table 4.6, effectively –1 to –5) is used – and a Botch on the attack roll should usually mean a hit on a person the missile combatant does not wish to hit.

If that happens, the attack roll is repeated. The original penalty dice for firing into a melee still apply for this roll, but neither penalty dice for soft cover, nor any dice possibly set aside for buying modifiers on Table 4.7 do. Any such penalty dice on the original roll are added to the new attack roll, and any hit resulting from this second roll applied to the new target. The exact attack location on the new target is determined randomly on Table 4.7, with no modifiers to this roll.

Example: *Otho is throwing his dagger at Far range to aid his friend Galen in his melee against two opponents. Otho has an AP of 13, from which 4 dice are subtracted for firing into a melee at Far range, and a further 3 dice for buying a +/–1 modifier on Table 4.7.*

TABLE 4.7 RANGED ATTACK ZONES

ROLL	LOCATION
2	Head (Area 13)
3	Arm (Area 14, choose randomly)
4	Arm (Area 14, choose randomly)
5	Torso (Area 12)
6	Torso (Area 12)
7	Torso (Area 11)
8	Torso (Area 10)
9	Torso (Area 10)
10	Upper Legs (Area 9, choose randomly)
11	Upper Legs (Area 9, choose randomly)
12	Lower Legs (Area 8, choose randomly)

Otho Botches the attack roll with his remaining 6 dice, and has to reroll his attack, now with Galen as target. The 4 dice penalty for firing into a melee still applies, but the 3 dice traded in for a +/–1 modifier don't; his AP is therefore 10.

Should the attack hit, the damage location will be determined randomly on Table 4.7, without the +/–1 modifier Otho had purchased for his original attack.

Hard cover that cannot be fired through represents a more extreme problem for a missile combatant. If it can't be circumvented to get a clear shot, the attacker will just have to take his chances by investing heavily into modifiers on Table 4.7 and hope that this modifier is sufficient to hit a location that is not covered.

Defending against missile attacks is of course only possible against attacks that one is aware of. It is preferably done with a large shield, or alternatively be evading. Details on that process and its associated TNs can be found in the section on defending above.

IV. Mounted Combat

In **Blade** the value of a mount extends far beyond being just a means of transportation. In a game where bloody, brutal and action oriented combat is held in such high regard, it seemed only natural that mounted combat should be equally as exhilarating.

During mounted combat, a character receives the following benefits/penalties:

- +2MP per round bonus for height advantage vs. opponents on foot.
- Riding Skill Checks may be used in lieu of MP based Terrain Checks unless mount is Heavily Encumbered.
- Attacks are performed using the characters MP, not the mounts, unless the mount is riderless and battling alone.
- All MP penalties in mounted combat use the mount's Encumbrance Level instead of the characters.

1. Rideby Melee Attacks

During combat vs. opponents on foot, canny horsemen will use their mount's speed to shield both themselves and their steed from harm.

Attacks can be made at the gallop or canter, and again, require either a successful Terrain Check using the rider's MP pool, or Riding Skill if it is desirous that MP be conserved.

If this Check is successful, then the Combat Round is limited to but a single Exchange. If the Check is failed then the Combat Round reverts back to its normal two Exchange structure before horse and rider sweep past their opponent.

In this context, a Botched Check indicates that the rider has taken a tumble from his mount.

In the event both combatants are mounted, two melee Exchanges are conducted unless each mount is moving in a different direction, in which case the Combat Round is limited to one Exchange.

Target Zones: To speed up play, referees are encouraged to use common sense to best determine target zones. Bear in mind the following:

- A mounted attacker can never deliver an attack to an opponent located directly in front of his steed, unless using a weapon of Extreme Reach.
- Attacks may only made on foes to the side or rear of his horse, with maneuvering to strike at targets to the rear of the mount quite difficult. Rear attacks as such, incur a 4 MP Activation cost per attack.
- Cleaving attacks delivered to opponents on foot are normally restricted to areas 3-5, and 7. Thrust attacks may be made to any area above the target's belly.
- Referees should use their best judgment in regards to any questions concerning the available target areas of non-human opponents.
- Defending oneself while mounted is difficult, but the task of defending a mount is nigh impossible when

the mount itself is targeted for attack. While it is possible for a mounted character to use Partial Evasion to back his mount away from an attack, he may not use Duck & Weave, nor any form of Block, Parry, or Counter when defending his mount, though Full Evade may still be used by the rider himself when vaulting from his mount to avoid personal attack.

- Attacking a mounted foe can be difficult for opponents on foot, who may never attack a rider directly to the mount's front or rear, unless a weapon of Extreme Reach is employed for the task. From either side however, both rider and mount may be targeted normally. The referee must arbitrate which target areas of a rider (or his mount) are exposed to attack. Be mindful that many swing attacks that miss the rider are still likely to strike his mount.

2. Jousting

A jousting combat pass consists of three components:

The Charge: Each participant must make an Opposed Riding skill Check to determine the power and accuracy of their charge. The attacker with the losing QoS receives the winner's QoS as an MP penalty for the next step, the Clash.

The Clash: When the jousting opponents Clash, each splits his net MP pool into attack and defense pools.

Each then makes an Opposed Check for his attack vs. his opponent's Block, with both combatants simultaneously attempting to strike and unseat their opponent while keeping their own seat.

The Check: If either attacker is struck, he must pass a Ride Check with a Challenge Level equal to his opponent's attack QoS. Failure indicates he has been struck from his horse.

Tourney lances are fashioned to easily shatter on impact, thus while no actual damage is incurred, falling damage is treated as if the unseated horseman has taken a 10 foot fall and administered as per the falling rules.

See Chapter Five for information concerning damage from falls.

If both participants are knocked from their steeds, one must either yield or both shall remount and make further passes, until the contest reaches a decisive conclusion. If both participants agree, an inconclusive joust that unseats both may also be decided by melee combat.

3. Mounted Archery

Firing any type of missile, not just arrows, from a horse moving at speed is a tricky thing. Any character attempting to do so and lacking Riding Skill is at half his Missile Priority when calculating AP for the attack. Should he know Riding, his Proficiency is not halved, but he can use it at a rating no higher than he has in the Skill Riding, that is, to a theoretical maximum of 9. Should the character know Riding at a rating of less than half the relevant Missile Proficiency, he can of course opt to just use half the Proficiency to calculate his AP.

Speeding chariots are a slightly more stable archery platform than galloping horses. The same rules apply as for firing missiles from horseback (using Charioteering instead of Riding, of course), but the thresholds are increased by 1 point. Firing missiles from a chariot is thus done at either (half Proficiency) +1, or at Proficiency of up to Charioteering+1.

In any case, missile weapons that require both hands to use may never be fired by the driver of the chariot himself, but only by a passenger. The passenger's applicable Missile Proficiency is also limited exactly as outlined above.

4. Barding

Barding is armor for horses, granting them some measure of protection in battle.

The **Criniere** is a set of lamellar, scale, maille, or segmented plates that protects the horse's neck.

The **Chamfron** protects the horse's face. It is made of plate, lamellar, or scale and often includes cheek plates.

The **Peytral** hangs down from the Chanfron and protects the chest of the horse down to the top of its front legs. It may be had in either leather (with or without metal), scale, lamellar, maille or plate.

The **Croupiere** protects the horse's hind quarters. It can be made of leather (with or without metal), scale, lamellar, maille, or plate.

The **Saddle** sits on the back of the horse and is what the rider sits on. It has a high cantle and pommel to prevent the rider from being unseated, and is built on a wooden frame that supports more weight from a rider with armor and weapons. Saddles are made of thick and tough leather and protect part of the mount's back like hardened leather armor.

The **Flanchard** is armor attached to the side of the saddle, then around the front or rear of the horse and back to the saddle again, protecting both sides and back of the mount. These are either metal plates riveted to leather (protecting like brigandine), or else scale, lamellar, or maille. The use of such armor requires that a Saddle, Croupiere and Peytral also be used, as the Flanchard is attached to those items.

The **Cuissart** and **Grevíere** covers the upper and lower legs of a horse, respectively. They come in sets of four and must be carefully attached to the horse's leg. Very thin metal plating is used, and neither of the two guards the knee or hoof.

The AV provided by barding is identical to the AV of the corresponding armor pieces for humans, found in table 4.5. The sole exceptions are Cuissarts and Grevíeres, which using only very thin plate, protect with only AV 5 against Piercing and AV 3 against Blunt damage.

Damage type — meaning Cleaving, Piercing, or Blunt— affect this TY Check as well. To heal a Blunt wound, the basic TN is (Pain -1), and to heal a Piercing wound (Pain +1). Cleaving injuries heal with no modifier to the basic TN.

V. Animals in Combat

In **Blade**, common animals of the wild are, after men, the second most common combat adversaries of PCs, and much more common opponents than monsters or supernatural critters. Referees are therefore advised to somewhat ignore the actual behaviour of real-world animals.

The latter have learned to fear man and usually only attack him under exceptional circumstances, and then as a last resort. The world of Sword & Sorcery being the ferocious place that it is, it is therefore absolutely appropriate to reduce this natural fear. Here, man may very well not be simply prey of the very last resort for packs of wolves, bears, tigers, and other predators, but may actually be well within their normal range of prey.

Still, while wild animals of the Sword & Sorcery genre are often more aggressive, they should not be portrayed as universally rabid. In most cases they should not be portrayed as fighting to the death.

A single level 3 wound should be enough to drive off most animals, unless they are for some reason truly desperate.

In targeting animals with attacks, the human target zone template will usually not be appropriate. In many cases, common sense may better serve instead of a template – hits to birds and snakes can for example be allocated quite easily. For quadrupeds of all sizes, a separate target location template is however provided.

No separate Wound Tables for animals are provided. Instead, just use the human ones and interpret the results with a bit of common sense.

Knockdown against quadrupeds is the one wound result that usually needs modification. As long as all four legs of a quadruped are functioning without great impairment (i.e. no wound greater than level 3 to any leg), Knockdown

success requirements for any wound received is reduced by 2.

If one leg is already impaired, Knockdown is applied normally, and if two legs should already be impaired, and the animal is still aggressive, Knockdown successes are increased by 2.

Large Animals and Wounds

Wounds to animals are calculated exactly like wounds against humans, but for large animals that are much more massive, this may yield odd results. For those animals, final Wound Levels suffered after subtraction of half BN and AV should be *halved*.

For example: The wound result of a large Grizzly bear's level 5 wound would be further reduced to a level 3 wound (5 divided by 2 = 2.5 which then rounds up to 3).

As a rule of the thumb, this applies to wounds to the torso (not head and limbs) to all animals larger than a pony, and for all wounds (including both head and limbs) to any animal the size of a rhinoceros or larger.

As an **optional rule** for those who want added realism (and added complication), all Piercing damage that would simply be halved due to a target animal's large size is increased by +1 before being halved.

Huge Animals

Even though such creatures are rarely encountered in Sword & Sorcery, some refs might want to utilize truly huge creatures as opponents for their PCs. A creature that is at the very least as big as a rhinoceros may engage more than one PC at once, provided its build does logically allow for this. A giant octopus creature might for example engage several PCs simultaneously, as might a tyrannosaur, biting one and kicking another opponent, but a giant wolf, lacking multiple modes of attack, might not.

A creature able to engage more than one PC at once can within one and the same Round of Limelights act upon more than just one PC's Limelight. During how many PCs' Limelight it could act, and how many PCs it could thus engage, will have to be adjucated by the ref on basis of the creature's size and physical shape.

The creature need not spit its MP between the Limelights, but gets its full MP against every PC. However, the MP is reduced by 2 dice for every PC after the first the creature engages. This penalty does not become bigger by 2 for every additional PC's Limelight during which the creature acts, but is applied to its MP for all Limelights equally.

Example: *Otho and Rufo are fighting a gargantuan crab-demon huge enough to act on both the PCs' Limelights, attacking each of them with one of its pincers. The demon's MP is 15, but this is reduced by 2 for fighting a second PC; its effective MP against both Otho and Rufo is 13.*

Fighting Animals

Animals do not use the normal Offensive and Defensive Maneuvers of humans, but their own take on some of them, or Maneuvers entirely exclusive to them. By and large, animals that enter combat at all fight very aggressively, using the better part of their MP for offence. The single defensive action they have at their disposal is Evasion, though they do tend to make quite liberal use of the Evasive Attack Offensive Maneuver.

Animal Maneuvers

Bash: Most kicks by hooved animals are handled by the Bash Maneuver, but it may also be used for powerful tail swipes or for example for a hit by an elephant's trunk.

The Bash may also be used by horned animals to butt opponents with their horns, for either Blunt, or, more rarely, Piercing damage, depending on the beast in question. This type of attack carries an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (i.e. 1, or 2 in case of an attack causing +1 damage). Note that the option of spending 1 MP to increase the attack's DR by +1 is not available if the attack causes Piercing damage.

Bite: A simple bite, with most damage being Cleaving. Metal armor offers very good protection against bites.

Claw: A swipe with claws usually inflicts Blunt damage with some additional Blood loss, but may with some rare animal's long talons inflict Cleaving damage instead. Metal armor protects very well against animal clawing attacks.

Constricting: Some animals kill their prey through constricting them. Prime examples are of course the many forms of large snakes, but this form of attack may, at the referee's discretion, also be available to bears, if he desires to include the (in)famous bear hug attack in his game.

The use the Constricting Maneuver the beast must first have made a successful grapple attack on an opponent, though a bite attack may be substituted for animals like snakes that can establish the initial hold by biting.

Once the hold is established by the use of the Grapple (or Bite) Maneuver, the animal may attack by use of a Constricting Maneuver each Round, free of Activation Cost. MP dice are assigned for the attack, and the constricted opponent assigns any number of MP dice for the defense (remember that a grappled opponent must use his Wrestling Proficiency to calculate his MP). Both parties roll against TN 7.

If the defender is victorious, he breaks free of the constriction and normal melee combat resumes at Reach Hand, with the victorious defender now having initiative as aggressor.

If the attacker ties or is victorious, he inflicts Blunt damage on his opponent. The amount of damage inflicted is calculated without use of QoS or AV simply by subtracting half the defender's BN from half the attacker's BN, with cumulative +1 added for every subsequent Round of constriction. The Wound Level inflicted may however not surpass the constrictor's QoS.

The location of this Blunt damage depends on the circumstances. With snakes, it will usually be to the lower abdomen or the legs, with a bear hug to the chest.

Evasive Attack: This Offensive Maneuver is used quite extensively by animals. It functions exactly as for humans, i.e. the animal spends 2 dice basic Activation Cost, and additional dice as desired. The enemy's TN on his next attack is increased by the number of additional dice thus spent, whereas the animal's own ATN is only increased by half the number of the additional dice.

Grapple: Animals do use the Grapple Offensive Maneuver, but what they do with a grappled opponent is different from what humans may choose to do.

A beast may not choose to immobilize a grappled opponent, but it may attempt to throw him to the ground or to break the grappled limb. In addition, certain types of animal have other options as well: Snakes may attempt to crush the opponent to death, felines may rake him with their hind claws, and canines may worry him with their powerful jaws. Details can be found under the respective Maneuvers.

Beasts that can either use the Constricting, Raking, Pouncing, or Worrying Maneuver may use a successful bite attack to enter a clinch. They can do this by attacking normally with the Bite

Maneuver and simply declaring after a successful hit, even one causing no wound, that they won't let go. This immediately establishes a clinch, though one in which the animal does not receive the establishing attack's QoS as bonus dice on its subsequent MP, as would be the case with a clinch entered by use of the Grapple Maneuver.

Pounce: Some animals such as tigers are quite proficient at surprising a victim by leaping down upon them, using their considerable mass coupled with speed of impact to stun their prey. This gives the pouncing animal a decided advantage in the Bite Maneuver that inevitably follows. All dice assigned to the Pouncing Maneuver are checked against TN 8 and can be defended against by only by Evasion (target must first pass a Surprise Check to thus be aware of the Pouncing animal and evade against it).

If the Pouncing attacker ties or is victorious, he inflicts Blunt damage on his opponent. The amount of damage inflicted is calculated without use of QoS or AV simply by subtracting half the defender's BN from half the attacker's BN. Should the attacker be considerably heavier than the defender (more than twice as heavy), +1 is added to this damage; is the attacker considerably lighter (less than half as massive), -1 is subtracted. The Wound Level inflicted may however not surpass the Pouncing animal's QoS.

The location of this Blunt damage depends on the circumstances. With tigers for example, it will usually be to the Shoulders, Chest, Ribs, or Abs areas.

A successful Pounce attack also requires the opponent to pass a Knockdown Check with a Challenge Level equal to the Pouncing attacker's QoS. If the Pounce is successfully defended against (i.e. evaded) in such a way that initiative passes to the defender, the melee continues with Reach now set at Hand, and the defender as the new aggressor.

Raking: Felines are especially fond of this Offensive Maneuver, one that can be considered an option of the Grapple Maneuver available to them.

Any time the animal is in a clinch with its opponent, whether this clinch was established by use of the Grapple or the Bit Maneuver, it may pay an Activation Cost of 1 MP and attack with its hind claws. Such an attack does not in itself break the clinch.

Stampede: Certain animals (such as bulls) are able to attack opponents by charging and running right over them. This requires a run up and the expenditure of 1 MP Activation Cost and can only be defended against by Evasion.

The attack is rolled against TN 7, and inflicts Blunt damage with DR 0, or DR +1 if the beast has substantial horns. Knockdown from this attack is increased by +1 to a minimum of 1, and the Check to avoid Knockdown is not made against the standard TN 7, but against 6 + QoS on the attack roll.

If the stampede is successfully defended against (i.e. evaded) in such a way that initiative

passes to the defender, the follow-up attack of the new aggressor is made at +1 ATN. This is due to the stampeding animal's speed carrying it quickly out of range of any attack.

Swooping: Swooping is the favourite attack of birds and other, sometimes larger, airborne attackers. Essentially, it's a fly-by claw attack.

To initiate the Maneuver, the avian aggressor sets aside any number of MP for a Terrain Check. This Terrain Check can be made into an Opposed Check if the defender is aware of the imminent attack and chooses to set aside dice for this purpose. If the avian aggressor wins this Opposed Check, or achieves even a single Success on an unopposed one, the contact between the combatants lasts for only a single Exchange. If the bird is unsuccessful on an unopposed Check or does not win the Opposed one, the contact lasts for an entire Round, two Exchanges, affording the defender an opportunity to retaliate.

Whether the avian is successful or victorious on the Terrain Check or not, it has initiative as aggressor at its optimum engagement Reach of Hand, though a defender conscious of the attack may of course attempt to buy initiative or forgo defence in favour of attacking as well, though of course after suffering the swooping attack.

Take Down: Some animals are especially adept at bringing an opponent down to their level, either by launching their mass at him, or by attacking his legs, or by cunningly unbalancing him. The dice assigned to the Take Down Maneuver are checked against TN 8 and can be defended against by Blocking or Evasion, but not by Parrying.

A successful Take Down attack causes no damage, but requires the opponent to pass a Knockdown Check with a Challenge Level equal to the Take Down's QoS.

Animal that are used to working as a team, like packs of canines, may combine forces to Take Down an opponent. Knockdown Checks must be made against every individual Take Down, but for every previous such Knockdown Check passed in one and the same Exchange, the Challenge Level of the Knockdown Checks against Take Down is increased by +1.

Worrying: Certain beasts, particularly canines and certain large felines, have extremely strong jaws. Once such an animal has made a successful bite attack on an opponent, it may choose to hold on, thereby entering a clinch, and to "Worry" the attack (meaning that it locks its teeth and shakes its head).

On the exchange following a successful bite attack, the animal may assign any number of dice to the Worrying Maneuver. The opponent may assign dice from his MP, but as he is now in a clinch, his MP is based upon his Wrestling Proficiency. Should the bitten opponent wish to

go on attacking the animal, he is allowed to use his weapon MP instead, but in this case may not assign more dice to resisting the Worrying than the value of his Reflex score (plus applicable PAs).

Both opponents roll against TN 7. If the worrying animal is victorious, the wound inflicted by the previous bite becomes aggravated by one Wound Level, with all attending penalties, including Pain, Blood loss, and Knockdown, but excluding Shock and Knockout. The animal may choose to hold on and continue with the Worrying Maneuver, or it may let go.

If the Check is tied, the wound does not become worse, but the animal may choose to let go or hold on as above.

If the defender is victorious, he breaks free and the melee continues with Reach now set at *Hand*, and with him as the new aggressor.

The victim of a Worrying Maneuver may attempt to attack the animal with the part of the MP he does not set aside for resisting the worrying. Such an attack is made at Reach Hand and carries an additional Activation Cost equal to half the animal's Successes on the Worrying Check (the *total* of those Successes, not those remaining after defense Successes are subtracted). If this Activation Cost reduces his MP to 0 or below, he may not attack.

While holding on to the prey, the worrying animal can defend only by use of Duck & Weave. Whether it is hit or not, the animal will retain initiative as aggressor and will not be forced to let go, though may of course choose to do so. Apart from possibly killing the beast or wounding it seriously enough to drive it off, the use of attacking and wounding a worrying beast lies in the dice it will lose from it MP for the next Worrying attack.

Pack Tactics

Many animals naturally tend to form communities. Very strong ties are often formed especially in the case of canines (including wolves, hyenas, jackals and the like) and some wild cats (tigers and leopards, especially). Such animals are highly effective at working together to bring down foes.

If a pack or team of animals is fought, and the number of combatants on both sides are roughly equal, the combat is handled as usual, but if the animals clearly outnumber their opponents, the rules below should be used. In such cases, predators, who are very cunning at evaluating prey, will always concentrate their surplus number on the weakest victim, while more dangerous ones will simply be kept in check by a single animal each. These single beasts will not expose themselves by fighting offensively, but will merely attempt to stall their opponent until their comrades bring down the weaker prey.

Swarming: Animals fighting in packs are extremely good at surrounding an opponent, and attacking him from different sides at the same time. Up to four medium sized animals (such as wolves) may attack an opponent, rather than the usual limit of three.

Baiting: This is a form of feint used by a group of animals working together closely.

The beast using the Baiting Maneuver pays an Activation Cost of 1 die, but declares another Offensive Maneuver. Once the defender has assigned dice to the defence, the Baiting Maneuver is revealed for what it is. The baiting beast may now add any number of dice to the attack, at an additional Activation Cost equal to half the number of dice added. The initially declared Offensive Maneuver is then rolled and defended against as usual.

If the defender wins the Opposed Check, he takes initiative as normal. If the aggressor ties or wins, no damage is dealt, as the entire attack was only a ruse to draw out the defender. Instead, the defender loses dice equal to the aggressor's QoS from his MP for either the following Exchange, or the following Round if the current Exchange was this Round's last one.

VI. An Example of Melee Combat

Skold Skullsplitter, the Danish reaver, has just plundered some foul deity's sacred jewel from its shrine among the Orkneys. Trying to make his way back to his ship, two pursuing Pictish savages catch up with him on the rocky beach and rush him.

Skold Skullsplitter:

BN 7, DG 6, CG 5.

Ref 6, Pole-arms Proficiency 10, MP 16.

Sleeveless metal scale shirt down to (and including) groin (Piercing AV 4).

Metal helmet for top of head only (Piercing AV 6).

Long-hafted axe, used two-handed (Reach M: ATN 7, DR +2, DTN 7; Reach L: ATN 8, DR +3, DTN 8; DR +1 against armor, Shock +1)

Pictish savages:

BN 5, DG 5, TY 5, CG 5.

Ref 5, Kdown 5, Spear & Shield Proficiency 5, MP 10.

Short-sleeved leather jerkin down to (and including) groin (Cleaving AV 2).

Hardened leather helmet for top of head only (Cleaving AV 2).

Short spear, used one-handed (Reach M, ATN 8, DR +1, DTN 7).

Small shield (DTN 6).

As the Picts rush at Skold, the ref informs the player that the combat will take place on particularly bad footing – the wet rocks of the beach – necessitating a deduction of 2 dice from all combatants' MPs, bringing them down to 14 and 8 respectively.

At the outset of Round 1, the player announces that Skold is going to move in such a way that one Pict is between himself and the other, preventing the second Pict from attacking him right away. This requires an (Unopposed) Terrain Check, with 2 successes required. The player commits 5 dice and rolls, achieving 4 successes (1, 10, 10, 11, 11), for now easily avoiding the second Pict among the rocks and boulders.

As this is a running engagement, the ref informs the player that there is no time to assume stances. Instead of declaring stances, both player and ref move to declaring intent to attack or defend; both Skjold and the Pict are going to attack.

As both combatants declare as aggressors, an Opposed Reflex Check will determine who attacks fractionally first, but Maneuvers and dice have in this case to be assigned before this Check. The player announces a Cut from diagonally above at the Pict's head and shoulders (Target Zone 4) for all 14 dice, executed at Long Reach. The ref declares a Thrust at the groin (Target Zone 10) for all 8 dice.

Both combatants' Reflex is then Checked, with a TN equal to their weapon's ATN; as the Pict's spear has Reach M and Skjold's axe Reach L, Skjold receives a +1 die bonus and the Pict a corresponding 1 die penalty. Skold rolls 7 dice (Ref 6 +1) against TN 7, achieving but 1 success (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 6, and 9). The Pict rolls 4 dice (Ref 5 –1) against TN 8, achieving 4 successes (8, 11, 12, 12) – the Pict goes first!

The player decides to have Skold attempt Stealing Initiative. He pays the Activation Cost of 4 dice (opponent's SY), and after his previous bad luck decides to play it safe and purchase 2 bonus dice for the Check, for a total Activation Cost of 6 dice, bringing his available MP down to 8. The Pict checks DG, with a penalty of 1 for having the shorter weapon, and Skjold CG, with a bonus of 1 for having the longer weapon, and the two purchased bonus dice. Skjold rolls 8 dice (CG 5 +1 +2) against TN 7, achieving 4 successes (2, 2, 5, 5, 7, 7, 9, 11). The Pict rolls 4 dice (DG 5 –1) against TN 7, achieving 2 successes (3, 4, 10, 11) – just as the Pict thrusts with his spear, Skold's axe comes down hard.

Skold attacks with the remaining MP dice committed, rolling 8 dice against ATN 8 and achieving 4 successes (1, 1, 3, 3, 8, 9, 11, 11). The Pict cannot defend, so the attack QoS is 4. The player rolls d6 on the Cleaving Damage Tables to determine exact hit location, achieving a 3 for a result of a cross-cut across the Pict's chest, which is protected by his leather jerkin.

The Impact Rating is determined by taking the QoS (4), adding half BN (4), and adding DR (3 +1 for striking armor), for a total of 12. From this Impact Rating is subtracted half the Pict's BN (3) and his chest AV (2), for a total of 7, corresponding to the maximum Wound Level of 6. Checking the Cleaving Table shows that the Pict is killed instantly, before getting his thrust in.

As Skold has neither MP nor opponent remaining, there is no second Exchange to this Combat Round, and the second Combat Round commences with the remaining Pict charging Skjold across the rocky beach. The ref decrees that all fighters still have to deduct 2 dice from their MP for treacherous footing, and that there is once again no time for assuming stances.

Combat Round two starts with the declaration of attack or defence. The Pict declares as aggressor, and Skold as defender. Next, the aggressor declares Maneuver and assigned dice – he declares a Thrust with 6 dice at Skold's crotch (Target Zone 10). Smiling evilly, Skold's player declares a Counter, paying the Activation Cost of 4 dice and assigning 8 of his remaining 10 MP dice to it.

The Pict rolls his assigned 6 dice against ATN 8, with a penalty of 1 for having a weapon one Reach increment shorter than Skold, for a total of 5 dice, and achieves 3 successes (1, 4, 9, 10, and 11). Skold's player rolls the assigned 8 dice against the axe's DTN of 8, as per the Counter rules, achieving 4 successes (4, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 9, 10). With a defense QoS of 1, a sweep of the axe knocks aside the thrusting spear harmlessly and the attacker now on Exchange two assumes the role of defender (with Counter, even a defense QoS of 0 would compel him to do so).

Exchange two commences with Skold assuming the role of aggressor. The Pict has 2 remaining MP dice, and so does Skold, but as per the Counter rules, Skold receives dice equal to the dice in the countered attack as bonus dice for his follow-up attack; as the Pict attacked with 5 dice, so Skold now receives 5 bonus dice, for an MP of 7.

The Exchange begins with the declaration of attack, with the player declaring an attack with 7 dice, randomly as per the rules for the follow-up on a Counter. A d12 is rolled on Counter Table 3.1 to determine the exact nature of Skold's attack, yields a result of 2, a cross-cut at thigh height. The Pict declares a Block with his remaining 2 dice as his defense.

The player rolls the assigned 7 dice against ATN 8, achieving 4 successes (2, 6, 7, 8, 8, 8, 11). The Pict rolls 2 dice against his shield's DTN 6, achieving 1 success (2, 8), for an attack QoS of 3. The player rolls d6 on the Cleaving Tables to determine exact hit location, achieving a 4 for a cut to the thigh, which is unarmoured.

The Impact Rating is determined by taking the attack QoS (3), adding half BN (4) and weapon DR (3), for a total of 10. From the Impact Rating is subtracted half the defender's BN (3), once again for a net total of 7, corresponding to Wound Level 6. Looking up the result on the Cleaving Table, that's Blood Loss 6, Shock 14 (15 for the axe's bonus Shock), Pain 12, and Knockdown 4. As the wound penalties decreasing the Pict's MP to below would necessitate a Knockdown Check anyway, this means that the necessary Knockdown Check is now made harder by one increment, for an effective Knockdown 5. Rolling his Knockdown Attribute (5) against TN 7, the Pict achieves 3 successes (2, 5, 7, 9, 11), 2 short of the mark, and thus falls down hard.

This ends Exchange two of Combat Round two.

Exchange one of Combat Round three begins with the referee announcing that the 2 dice penalty for bad footing does not apply to the prone Pict, but that Skjold is still on bad footing; as he is the only combatant standing, he does not simply subtract 2 dice, but rather must simply pass a Terrain Check to avoid falling. The Pict is prone and thus at half MP, for an MP of 5. To this, the last Exchange's Shock of 15 is being applied; Thus bringing the Pict's MP to 0, and the remaining 10 dice added as bonus dice to Skjold's MP against the Pict, raising his MP for the Combat Round to 26.

However, as the Pict's effective Pain from the wound, applied consistently from the next Combat Round, is 7 (12 – TY), his MP even while not prone will be at only 3, and his Blood Loss at 6, the referee decrees that the leg was severed cleanly at the thigh and that the Pict is out of the combat and will bleed to death in under half a minute. Skold turns around and walks down to the sea.

Two Picts charged Skold Skullsplitter. He wheeled, getting one between himself and the other. Skold then brought his axe down a mere blink of an eye before his Pictish opponent's spear thrust hit home, cleaving the savage's chest to the spine and knocking him to the ground dead. He then wheeled to receive the second Pict, coolly swept aside his opponent's spear thrust with his axe, and in the same fluid motion brought the weapon around in a narrow arc, dipping under the shield's rim to sever the Pict's leg just below the crotch. With the fallen Pict screaming on the ground and spurting out his life in but a few heartbeats, Skold leaves the scene of carnage.

This concludes Chapter Four

TRAVEL AND HEALTH

Endowed with all the barbarian's ferocious love of life and instinct to live, Conan the Cimmerian yet knew that he had reached the end of his trail. He had not come to the limits of his endurance, but he knew another day under the merciless sun in those waterless wastes would bring him down. As for the girl, she had suffered enough. Better a quick painless sword-stroke than the lingering agony that faced him.

Her thirst was temporarily quenched; it was a false mercy to let her suffer until delirium and death brought relief. Slowly he slid the saber from its sheath.

He halted suddenly, stiffening. Far out on the desert to the south, something glimmered through the heat waves.

At first he thought it was a phantom, one of the mirages which had mocked and maddened him in that accursed desert. Shading his sun-dazzled eyes, he made out spires and minarets, and gleaming walls. He watched it grimly, waiting for it to fade and vanish.

Natala had ceased to sob; she struggled to her knees and followed his gaze.

"Is it a city, Conan?" she whispered, too fearful to hope. "Or is it but a shadow?"

The Cimmerian did not reply for a space. He closed and opened his eyes several times; he looked away, then back. The city remained where he had first seen it.

"The devil knows," he grunted. "It's worth a try, though."

He thrust the saber back in its sheath. Stooping, he lifted Natala in his mighty arms as though she had been an infant. She resisted weakly.

The chance for life had lent fresh vigor and resilience to the Cimmerian's steely thews. He strode out across the sandy waste as if he had just begun the journey. A barbarian of barbarians, the vitality and endurance of the wild were his, granting him survival where civilized men would have perished.

- Robert E Howard - The Slithering Shadow

Chapter Five
Travel and Health

"Crossing the trackless wastes of this land I have learned harshly the small truths of armor in cowardice, and the vile deceit of secrecy in weakness… alas, only honest steel grants victory or death!"

Goran Karr of Khazistan, Warlord of the Barren Reaches

I. Travel, Scene Framing, and Scene Requests

From our point of view, travel in **Blade**, whether by land or sea, should normally be abstracted by the referee to a large degree, and thus there is no movement rates listed in **Blade** for such activity. This snipping out of mundane elements of travel falls under the collective tent of **Scene Framing**.

With Scene Framing, the referee carefully prunes out much of the typical flow of descriptions of what happens to the characters, and instead focuses his energy on scenes that are directly linked to the player's PAs, and thus their interests.

Bear in mind that even with Scene Framing none of the game is actually being skipped. Instead, arbitrary events are simply not played out center-stage within the group's **Blade** story.

While seemingly counter-intuitive, we urge referees to embrace this by largely refraining from the lengthy setting descriptions that are typically employed to increase a setting's immersion factor.

This of course will involve having a dialogue with your gaming group to best determine how much setting descriptors they want for their **Blade** experience.

We respect the fact that some groups truly do enjoy much of the detail of a well envisioned setting, and for those groups we suggest the use of **Transitional Scenes**, which play out like short film clips, and whose single purpose is to move the characters from one scene to the next.

For example if the characters are traveling by ship, the ref could take a few minutes to describe the terrific storm that batters the ship, the 15 meter high waves that break over the vessel's bow, and the sodden miserable attempts of the characters to grab but a few precious hours of sleep.

Taking a few moments to describe such a scene, as well as giving the players a chance to roleplay their characters shouting a few choice epithets at the heavens, can simultaneously serve both the color of a setting and the advancement of the story.

This brings us to the Drama Attribute, which is a great tool for Scene Framing, whose use should be encouraged for players (with the approval of their teammates!) as a powerful tool for moving a scene forward (much like the Fast Forward button on a DVD player!).

To advance a scene, the simple expenditure of one Drama point should be an ample fee. The referee can then bring the current scene to a close as soon as practicable, and move on to the next.

Another flexible use for the Drama Attribute is for **Scene Requests**.

Like ordering room service at a hotel, by way of the simple expenditure of 1 point of Drama (along with conveying their wishes to the referee), the player may make a request to the referee for a future scene, one featuring content that's of particular interest to the player.

Perhaps a player would like his character to begin a romance with the daughter of the Jarl, or force a showdown with a hated rival. The possibilities are endless!

Such requests do not compel the referee to dive headlong into the requested scene, but does oblige the referee to begin the creative process so that the requested scene comes up as soon as possible for the character.

As long as he is honestly working to fulfill the spirit of the player's request, the details of how the scene is framed, and exactly when it occurs, is left to the referee's discretion.

II. Encumbrance (Optional)

A character's Terrain Check modifier is partially determined by how much gear he is carrying, or how much he is encumbered. In the strictest sense, this should be determined by adding up the weight of all the gear a character is carrying.

Realistically, no one keeps track of such things during a game. However, players should make sure that their character is carrying a reasonable amount of equipment and that all of that equipment fits somewhere on the character or in a pack.

Worn items, such as cloaks, jewelry, backpacks, etc., do not themselves count as items for encumbrance purposes. Carried sacks full of stuff count as an oversized item. For example, a bag containing 1000 coins, a haunch of beef, and two bottles of wine, counts as one oversized item. To determine a character's encumbrance level, simply consult Table 5.1.

For mounts, do the same using Table 5.2:

Finally, total your points and check the result against Table 5.3:

That's it, you're done!

TABLE 5.1 Character Encumbrance

Character wearing bulky robes or similar leg-obstructing clothes 1 Point
Character wearing chain armor 1 Point
Character wearing plate armor 2 Points
Character is carrying 6 or more different items* overall 1 Point
Character is carrying 11 or more different items* overall 1 Point
Character is carrying 16 or more different items* overall 1 Point
Character is carrying 21 or more different items* overall 1 Point
Character is carrying an oversized item +1 Point per Item

** Multiple small items of the same type (bolts, arrows, etc.) count as one item for this purpose. Worn clothing/armor/jewelry does not count for this encumbrance calculation. All weapons count as separate items. Very small single items do not count for encumbrance purposes. Oversized items are counted separately.*

Oversized items include two handed weapons, any item that requires two hands to carry or is as tall as the carrying character.

TABLE 5.2 Mount Encumbrance

For every person riding the animal 1 Point
If the rider is Heavily Encumbered or greater 1 Point
Animal is wearing barding 1 Point
Animal is pulling a vehicle 1 Point per Axle
A teamster has packed the animal's load -1 Point
Per 15 Items the animal is carrying 1 Point

TABLE 5.3 Encumbrance Terrain Modifiers

Encumbrance Points	Encumbrance Level	Additional Activation Costs for Terrain Checks
0-1	Unencumbered	0
2	Lightly Encumbered	1
3	Heavily Encumbered	2
4	Severely Encumbered	3
5+	Over Encumbered	4

III. Health

1. Healing and Wounds

In **Blade**, even a slight Wound is no laughing matter. For the healing process to begin in earnest, there are some mandates:

First, you must be in a state of rest.

Second, at least for the more serious wounds, you need some form of treatment. Wounds can be tended to by anyone possessing the Healing Skill. Note that each wound must be treated individually. A successful Healing Skill Check reduces Blood Loss by 3 per success. A failed Healing Check increases BL by 1, while a Botched Healing Check **doubles t**he wounds BL.

As introduced in chapter four, at the very end of the Limelight in which the character first acquired BL, and on the end of each subsequent Limelight, he must check BN. This Check must yield Successes equal to or surpassing the current BL number.

With that in mind, any Limelight BL Check made while the subject is at rest (or at most, moving or walking very slowly), requires one less Success than indicated by the current BL rating to be successful. This includes characters unconscious from BL.

However, even if a character's BL rating is reduced to 0, the penalties accrued due to blood loss will not diminish immediately.

Such penalties are reduced by 2 for MP, AP and SP and 1 for single ratings for each passing day spent resting with proper nourishment and low activity.

Any Wound Level beyond 2 calls for a chirurgeon (someone with the Healing Skill at level 3 or higher).

At the end of each week make a TY Check vs. the Pain rating of each individual wound. Each Success lowers that wound's Pain value by 1. This Check is modified by three things: Rest, medical care, and damage type.

During convalescence, moderate activity with no more than one or two instances of strenuous activity is assumed. If a character spends a week completely at rest, with no more than occasional light activity, the TY Check for each injury is made against a TN of (Pain -1). On the other hand, if he doesn't take it easy, this TN is (Pain +1).

A caregiver character using the Healing Skill and being available throughout much of the week of healing time may make a Skill Check before the patient rolls. Each success in this Check lowers the difficulty of all patient healing Checks for this week by 1. Failure adds nothing, but if not a single Success is achieved on the Skill Check, all the patient's healing Checks for the week are made at +2 TN.

2. Falling Damage

Falling is defined as the free descent by force of gravity. All damage derived from falling is a result of both the distance fallen and the surface landed upon. See Table 5.4.

All damage caused by the fall is considered to be Blunt damage. Every individual point of damage is randomly assigned to some location on the recipient's body, as assigned by Table 5.5.

Damage to any area rolled more than once is cumulative and applied with one D6 roll on the Target Zone Charts (See Appendices).

Example: *Otho is knocked from his horse. He falls 6'from the saddle to the hard ground. Consulting Table 5.4, we see that's a Hard fall. He then rolls 3, 4, and 7 on a D12. Consulting Table 5.5 we note that Otho takes a level two Blunt Wound to his upper leg (area 2 – though he still must roll 1D6 to determine the exact location of the injury) and a level one Wound to his head.*

3. Generic Damage

Any damage from fire, cold, electricity, sorcery, the elements, or not specifically covered by rules uses the "Generic Damage" chart in the Appendix. Such damage is calculated like damage from any other attack described in chapter four. Such damage is applied randomly using Table 5.5, unless impacting a specific area (such as someone with a flaming arrow, in which case any fire damage is simply applied to the area struck).

4. Poison

When a character is poisoned, he must pass frequent Checks to avoid advancing along the six levels of the Poison Track, which, much like the six Wound Levels of melee combat, are progressive in their severity. Should he advance to Poison Level 6, he dies.

The frequency of such "Progression" Checks (using the Knockout Attribute) depends on how fast the poison acts.

TABLE 5.4 Falling Damage

Landing Surface	Damage Rating
Soft - A large pile of hay, a featherbed, water (with a successful Swimming Check)	1 per 3m fallen
Mixed (crowd of people, falling not diving—into shallow water, muddy banks)	1 per 2m fallen
Hard - ground, stone, armored people falling from horses, water (with a failed Swimming Check)	1 per 1m fallen

TABLE 5.5 Allocation of Falling Damage

D 12 roll	Area Location
1-2	1
3-4	2
5	3
6	4
7-8	5
9-10	6
11-12	7

Such can either be:

- A Limelight
- A Few minutes
- A Half an hour
- A Few hours

Ingested poisons generally have a progression rate of one half hour to several hours, unless sorcerous by nature, in which case they may have a progression time of only a few minutes.

Injected poisons generally have a progression rate of a few minutes to one half hour, but if injected to the head, neck or torso, become faster by one "step". In such cases, a progression rate of but a single Limelight is possible. To successfully inject a poison, no Wound Levels need be inflicted. For as long as the poison attack's Impact Rating surpasses the victim's AV, the poison is successfully injected, even if BN soaks up all actual damage.

To avoid advancing along the Poison Track, a Progression Check must be passed. This Check's required amount of successes is dependent on

TABLE 5.6 Poison Progression Chart

Poison Level	Effect	TN
1	Soreness and itching; slight nausea if ingested. Pain 1	9
2	Sweating and rapid breathing. Pain 3	8
3	Hyperventilating. Pain 5	8
4	Stops hyperventilating, but has trouble breathing. Pain 7, +1 Success required on all Checks for any activity. Pass Knockout Check (Challenge Level 1) to not pass out.	7
5	Heart murmurs/ palpitations. Pain 9, +2 Successes required on all Checks for any activity. Pass Knockout Check (Challenge Level 2) to not pass out.	7
6	Coma followed by death within about half the progression time.	6

the strength of the poison being resisted.

Such Checks typically must yield either QoS 2 or 3. Poisons requiring QoS 1 certainly exist and are indeed much more common than the more virulent ones, but their progression is hardly dramatic enough to bother with at all.

Conversely, poisons necessitating QoS 4 or greater are possible, but so sublimely deadly that referees are strongly advised to have them appear more as a threat of something to avoid at all costs, rather than something to actually afflict on the PCs.

Medical aid can be provided to the afflicted by any character with either the Apothecary or the Healing Skill. A successful Apothecary Check with a Challenge Level equalling the virulence of the poison (i.e. the QoS required by the Knockout Check to avoid further progression on the Poison Track) will lower the TN of further Progression Checks by 1.

A Check using the Healing Skill brings the same benefit, but instead must meet a Challenge Level equal to twice the poison's virulence.

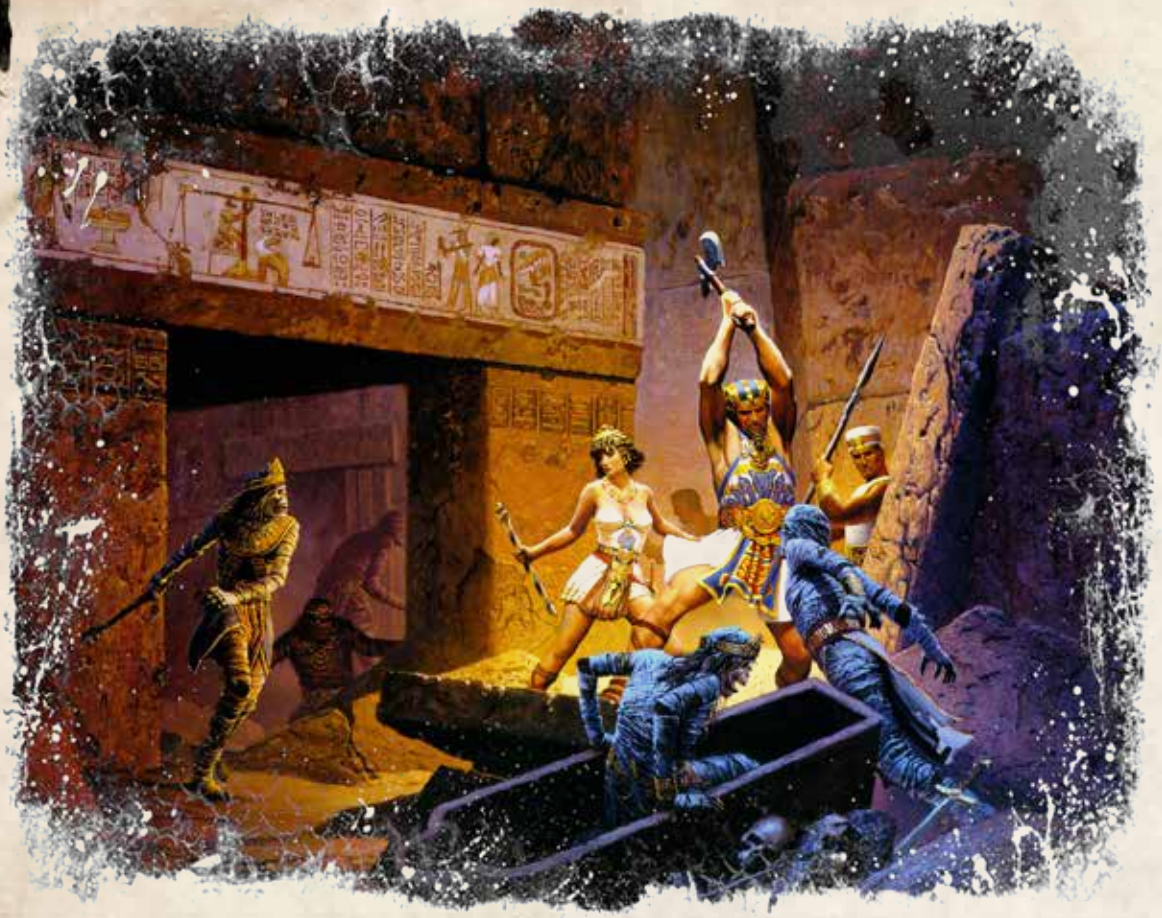
Once a character has passed three successive poison Progression Checks, further advancement on the Poison Track is arrested and the character has "ridden out" the poisoning. From this point on he must pass a Knockout Check every few hours at TN 7, with the poison recovery Challenge Level equal to the poison's current virulence.

Successfully meeting this Check signifies one step back along the poison progression chart (see Table 5.6) and a commensurate reduction to the poison's recovery Challenge Level. This downward spiral of Checks continues until the effects of the poisoning fade completely and the subject is hale once more.

5. Pain - It's just a scratch! (Optional)

The protagonists of Sword & Sorcery tales are notoriously tough. Whether because of an indomitable force of will or just sheer machismo, they often shrug off hurt that would lay low lesser men. The same is true for PCs and named NPCs in **Blade**.

As soon as the action in a scene in which the character has received a wound subsides, the higher of either BN or TY may be Checked for the character; (NOTE: PAs are not applied to this Check!). Once Checked, an amount



of Pain equaling the QoS of the successful Check may be subtracted from any newly inflicted wounds. The player then decides how this QoS bonus is applied against those wounds, distributing Pain relief to any fresh wound as desired.

Example: Otho has 3 cuts received during the fight he just emerged from as victor:

- A Pain 1 cut to his hand
- A Pain 1 cut to his jaw
- A Pain 2 cut to his side

Rolling a TN7 Check vs. Tenacity (His TY is higher than his BN) he scores 3 successes and opts to reduce the Pain 2 cut to his side down to zero, and to also get rid of the Pain 1 cut to his hand. The cut to his jaw he opts to leave as a dueling scar for the ladies to admire!

This concludes Chapter Five.

SORCERY

Another figure stood at the head of the stair. His robe, too, was black, but of richly embroidered velvet, and there was a velvet cap on his head. His face was calm, and not unhandsome.

"Who the devil are you?" demanded Conan, staring up at him, knife in hand.

"I am the Master of Yimsha!" His voice was like the chime of a temple bell, but a note of cruel mirth ran through it.

"Where is Yasmina?" demanded Kerim Shah.

The Master laughed down at him.

"What is that to you, dead man? Have you so quickly forgotten my strength, once lent to you, that you come armed against me, you poor fool? I think I will take your heart, Kerim Shah!"

He held out his hand as if to receive something, and the Turanian cried out sharply like a man in mortal agony. He reeled drunkenly, and then, with a splintering of bones, a rending of flesh and muscle and a snapping of mail-links, his breast burst outward with a shower of blood, and through the ghastly aperture something red and dripping shot through the air into the Master's outstretched hand, as a bit of steel leaps to the magnet. The Turanian slumped to the floor and lay motionless, and the Master laughed and hurled the object to fall before Conan's feet--a still-quivering human heart.

With a roar and a curse Conan charged the stair. From Khemsa's girdle he felt strength and deathless hate flow into him to combat the terrible emanation of power that met him on the steps. The air filled with a shimmering steely haze through which he plunged like a swimmer, head lowered, left arm bent about his face, knife gripped low in his right hand. His half-blinded eyes, glaring over the crook of his elbow, made out the hated shape of the Seer before and above him, the outline wavering as a reflection wavers in disturbed water. He was racked and torn by forces beyond his comprehension, but he felt a driving power outside and beyond his own lifting him inexorably upward and onward, despite the wizard's strength and his own agony.

Now he had reached the head of the stairs, and the Master's face floated in the steely haze before him, and a strange fear shadowed the inscrutable eyes. Conan waded through the mist as through a surf, and his knife lunged upward like a live thing. The keen point ripped the Master's robe as he sprang back with a low cry. Then before Conan's gaze, the wizard vanished--simply disappeared like a burst bubble, and something long and undulating darted up one of the smaller stairs that led up to left and right from the landing.

- Robert E Howard – The People of the Black Circle

Chapter Six
Sorcery

"I offer you the wisdom of snakes, eldritch knowledge older than this mountain you scaled for my council: There is no knowledge that is not power, and no power that is not fleeting. Be wary therein, lest questions you would slake draw you beyond the precipice."

The Teachings of Myr'vaan the Jealous

I. Sorcery Overview

"Wits and swords are as straws against the wisdom of the Darkness."

Robert E. Howard, The Phoenix on the Sword

Sorcery is not an academic, scholarly pursuit.

Its practitioners do not theorize, do not engage in complicated convoluted experiments, do not conduct research into sorcery's underlying principles, or how to apply them to novel uses.

The actual inner workings of sorcery are unknowable, and even the greatest sorcerers can no more than dimly guess at just why and how their invocations work.

Sorcerers in **Blade** may or may not be erudite, bookish types, they are therefore no scientists. Sorcery is, after all, not science, but a strange, unknowable force of uncertain origin, an origin that is usually somehow transmundane; it is never just another natural force like gravity or magnetism. Instead, a degree of "outsideness" is always inherent to it.

Sorcerers certainly have ideas where the sorcerous power they are manipulating derives from, but they can never be certain.

In one setting, it may be a dark power out of the void between the stars, in another, power channelled from some eldritch and alien deity, or many other things. It is however never a beneficent or wholesome power, and it is never entirely impersonal.

Those beings that impart and grant sorcerous power, always have an agenda of their own; an agenda that will often be unfathomable, especially if such eldritch power is not derived from contact with supernatural, godlike beings.

This agenda is at best totally alien and entirely indifferent to human beings and their plight, and at worst inimical to humanity. The former might be true in cases where sorcery is perceived as just a strange power from beyond the limits of this universe, the latter in cases where it is channelled from some sinister deity.

In the very common instances where a given setting's sorcery is derived from dealings with demonic gods, sorcerers are usually to some degree worshippers or cultists of such deities or have formed pacts with them. This does not mean that such sorcerers do actually have to be devout – for many, it will be like a deal, where they further a demonic being's agenda in return for receiving occult powers.

This brings us to the topic of whence sorcery is learned.

The fantasy trope of the apprenticeship to a sorcerer is also alive in **Blade**, but it is not the sole, and in some settings perhaps not the most common, way of acquiring sorcerous knowledge.

Alongside it always exists the possibility of approaching a sorcerous deity – provided such exists in the setting – and forging a pact with it to receive sorcerous knowledge in return for whatever such an unfathomable, but never wholesome, being may require of a mere human.

As only the most driven and determined of men will head down such a path, it is usually strength of will and intensity of personality that characterise a sorcerer in **Blade**, not intelligence and erudition.

Ultimately, sorcery means always dealing with strange, alien, and inimical powers, whether personal, or detached. As it is no science, it hardly attracts practitioners who are in it for the intellectual challenge or insight offered, though it sometimes attracts curious practitioners of a philosophical bent.

Overwhelmingly, it attracts practitioners who are in it for sheer power.

Much more often than scientists, sorcerers will be priests, fanatical, sacrificial dagger wielding cultists of a god of darkness, or coolly calculating schemers trying to get the maximum out of their sinister patron for a minimum of their own involvement, perhaps even playing the dangerous game of playing one patron against another.

But whatever they are, they are never detached, ivory-tower scholars in pointy hats.

Sorcery in **Blade** is therefore the manipulation of ultramundane powers that are at best alien and at worst downright hostile towards humanity. In working sorcery, one exposes one's body and soul to these inimical powers. The wise sorcerer will refrain from overreaching himself and take good care not to open his soul's portals too far to the influences from beyond, lest he become tainted with them.

Mechanically, sorcery rests on three legs. First, there are the six Lesser Mysteries, of which the occasional hedge wizard, shaman, or cultist may know one or two. Then there are the two Greater Mysteries, powerful magics that are the sole domain of dedicated sorcerers. Finally there are the Arcane Secrets, mythical feats of great magic, the stuff of sorcerous legends, known to only the very greatest of sorcerers.

How Arcane Secrets are learned is a special case explained later, but Lesser and Greater Mysteries are learned in a fashion similar to weapon Proficiencies. At character creation, ratings in Mysteries are bought with points from the Proficiency priority. As with Attributes and Skills, the maximum rating that can be attained in any Mystery is 8, with a rating of 9 allowed in a single Mystery.

1. The Sorcery Pool

The Mystery score is only one half of the Sorcery Pool, hereafter SP. The other half is Power, the sorcerer's innate ability to create magic.

Power = (SY + TY + BN + Bonus) / 3

The Bonus is equal the number of Mysteries the sorcerer is proficient in, but never higher than the rating of the Mystery he is most proficient in.

The SP available for any sorcerous action is thus Power + Mystery. SP dice are split into two parts, with a minimum of 1 die in each. The first of these parts is to work the sorcery, to make the Casting Check, and the second to contain the eldritch powers invoked, to make the Containment Check.

The base TNs of these Checks vary with the Sorcery Priority the character is built upon:

Dabbler (C) TN 8

Sorcerer (B) TN 7

Mysteriarch (A) TN 6

First, the Mystery, to achieve the effect, is checked against the appropriate TN. Depending on the sorcery, this Casting Check may be an Opposed one; for specifics, see the various Mysteries and Arcane Secrets. One success will usually be sufficient to achieve some kind of effect, but more may be required for the desired magnitude of effect; details on this can also be found within the description of the various Mysteries and Arcane Secrets.

Once the Check for the effect is made, the second half of the SP must be Checked immediately to contain the effect. This Containment Check is made against TN 7, and at least as many successes as on the Casting Check are required to fully contain the sorcerous energies; for every success short, the sorcerer accumulates one point of Taint.

If the Containment Check does not yield at least half as many successes as the Casting Check, the effect is uncontained. In such cases, the sorcery takes effect as intended but also turns against the sorcerer himself. This takes the form of a Complication to be effected by the ref at the earliest opportunity. Often, this will be a side or minor effect of the sorcery turning against the sorcerer himself, or against somebody he does not wish ensorcelled, but it can also take the form of entirely mundane unpleasantries arising directly from his sorcery.

Optionally, any uncontained effect (i.e. Containment Check yields less than half the successes of the Casting Check) can additionally cause the sorcerer physical damage from eldritch energies turning against himself. If this rule is used, inflict a level 1 wound from the Generic Damage Table upon the sorcerer every time one of his effects is uncontained, or a level 2 wound if the Containment Check doesn't even yield a single success.

Depending on the setting, this may manifest as withering, bleeding, scorching, or another form of generic damage that cannot be negated by use of the It's Only A Scratch mechanic.

2. Taint

In working magic, the sorcerer opens himself up to alien, transmundane powers, and if he is not careful, these powers will leave their mark on him. This metaphysical stench is called Taint.

Every success on the Casting Check theoretically imparts one point of Taint to the sorcerer, minus one point for each success of the Containment Check, down to an absolute minimum of 0. No Containment Check can reduce the sorcerer's Taint score below what it was before the present sorcery was wrought.

Taint interferes with the working of further sorcery and also imparts an aura of sinister otherworldliness to the character that is disturbing to man and beast alike. Depending on the severity of a character's current Taint, dice are subtracted from his SP, and additional successes are required on all Checks for non-hostile interaction with both beast and men, as per the Taint Effect table 6.1.

TABLE 6.1 TAINT EFFECTS

TAINT	SP PENALTY	INTERACTION
1	1	+0 suc
2-3	2	+1 suc
4-6	3	+2 suc
7-10	4	+3 suc
11-15	5	+4 suc
16-21	6	+5 suc

The additional successes required for successful interaction do not apply to interaction with sorcerous creatures and animals that have a reputation in the setting as being sorcerous themselves (e.g. cats, ravens, toads, etc), but does apply to interaction with other sorcerers.

Taint fades over time. Every 12 hours, at concrete, setting-specific times (e.g. moonrise, sunset, midnight, etc.), Taint is reduced by 1, provided no new Taint was acquired during the last 12 hours. Taint can also be reduced in various ways:

Player characters with a faith-related PA can attempt to reduce their current Taint by praying and offering up a sacrifice at an appropriately consecrated locale. After the sacrifice the faith-related PA is checked against TN 7, with the number of successes deducted from the current Taint rating. No more than one such sacrifice per week is possible.

Alternatively, the sorcerer can conduct a ritual of purification, which might also take the form of some nefarious rite in case of sorcerers invoking some supernatural patron for their power. Such a ritual requires about 12 hours during which nothing else can be done, and will, depending on the setting and the culture, involve chanting, meditation, drug-induced trances and the like. After the ritual is conducted, the sorcerer checks Power against TN 7, with every success reducing his current Taint by 1 point.

Finally, Taint can also reduce itself in a backlash. For this to occur the sorcerer's current Taint must at least be equal to his HT and he must either acquire at least another 3 points of Taint at once or else cast some uncontained sorcery (i.e. Containment successes less than half Casting successes). In such a case, the Taint discharges itself, usually in the guise of a curse (see the Cursing Mystery). This discharge cuts the sorcerer's Taint rating in half (again, round up fractions of 0.50 and above), but the sorcerer becomes victim of a curse with a curse rating equal to the number of Taint points that were lost in the discharge.

In some settings it might be more fitting to have the Taint backlash assume the form of some temporary physical affliction like a twisted limb, a bulging eye, scales instead of skin, or a third eye popping up in some conspicuous area of the body, or anything else that fits the flavour of sorcery in the setting. Such an affliction will have the game effects of requiring 1 or more additional successes on one or more broad types of action (social interaction, physical exertion, mental exercises, etc). Each penalty of 1 thus imparted reduces the curse rating from the Taint backlash by 1. No more than half the original curse rating may be thus converted.

These afflictions last for as long until the curse from the Taint discharge has run its course and then fade. In some settings, it might be desirable to have some very minor and certainly non-debilitating trace of the afflictions remain, like a scar from a wound.

Finally, if the optional rule about insufficient containment causing damage is used, any damage suffered from an uncontained sorcery that also causes a Taint backlash is increased by 1 level (to a theoretical maximum of 3).

3. The Lesser Mysteries

The six Lesser Mysteries are:

- Cursing
- Enslavement
- Mending
- Prophecy
- Scrying
- Witchfire

Cursing - Cursing is the dark art of placing a doom on somebody.

Curses are best placed on somebody in the sorcerer's immediate presence, but if the victim of the curse is not present, the sorcerer must at least know the victim and have either a close personal possession (a piece of well-worn clothing or other item to which the victim is emotionally attached), or a body part or secretion (hair, saliva, fingernails, etc.) of the victim at hand.

In this case, a small ritual of about five minutes is necessary to place the curse. However if the victim is in the sorcerer's immediate presence – no more than a stone's throw – the curse can be placed much more quickly, in but a single combat round, simply by uttering the curse formula, *aloud* and *dramatically pointing out the victim*.

To curse somebody, the sorcerer makes his Casting Check as an Opposed Check against the victim's TY. A targeted sorcerer (A to C Sorcery Priority) may opt instead to use his Power instead of TY to oppose this Mystery, and should he also know the Cursing Mystery himself, receives bonus dice equal to half again his Power (though no more than his rating in the Cursing Mystery) to add to his choice of TY or Power for the Opposed Check. If the victim equals or surpasses the sorcerer's Casting successes, the curse does not take effect, but if the sorcerer is victorious his curse takes hold.

The sorcerer's total successes, not just those surpassing the victim's successes, translate directly into a curse rating, which works much like a Passion Attribute. Whenever the cursed character is making a Check to avoid something bad happening to him, the curse's rating is either subtracted from the number of dice he is entitled to roll, or is added to the dice pool of whoever is opposing him (but not both in the same instance).

Each time the curse rating causes something bad to happen to the cursed character, the rating drops by 2, until it is finally reduced to 0, at which time the curse will have run its course.

Barring that, the only other way to get rid of the curse is to have it lifted.

A sorcerer can also curse a victim with a specific doom. In this case, the curse rating is not equal to the casting successes; if the specific doom is merely unpleasant, the curse rating is 1 point less than the number of Casting successes; if it is something very serious that would be hard to put right again, the curse rating is 2 points less; and if it is something deadly or utterly ruinous the curse rating is 3 points less. Should the resulting curse rating drop below 1, the curse fails to take hold.

The curse rating of this type in any case works very similar to a curse of mere bad fortune, but instead of applying to all Checks to avoid something bad happening, it is subtracted either from all the cursed character's dice pools to avoid the specific doom, or added to all dice pools of people working to bring the doom about (again, not both in the same instance). This type of curse lasts until lifted or until the doom has come to pass.

Lifting a curse requires a Mending spell to be cast upon the cursed character that achieves more successes than the original Casting successes (which can be different from the curse rating).

Alternatively, if the cursed character has a faith-related PA he can, at a suitable locale, make an offering to his deity and ask for remittance of the curse. To do so, the character Checks the relevant PA against TN 7. If he achieves successes at least equal to the curse rating, the rating is reduced to 0 and the curse lifted, fewer successes have no effect at all.

This is all-or-nothing, and it can only be attempted once per curse.

Optional: A dying curse is a mainstay of sorcerers everywhere. Such a curse will be powerful in any case, as the sorcerer need not worry anymore with Containment, but if this rule is in effect, it can be made more powerful still: A dying curse can always be uttered, no matter how instant the manner of the sorcerer's death, and is made with a –2 Casting bonus to TN.

Enslavement - With the Mystery of Enslavement, the sorcerer forces his will on his victims' will, right up to the point where the sorcerer commands his victim's view of reality. It is in essence a kind of very high-powered hypnosis.

This Mystery requires neither formulas nor gestures, just that the sorcerer makes eye contact with his victim. The sorcerer then makes his Casting Check, which the victim can oppose with the better of his TY or SY. A sorcerous victim (A to C Sorcery Priority) may opt to use his Power instead of TY or SY to oppose the Mystery, and should he also know the Enslavement Mystery himself, he gets additional bonus dice equal to half again his Power (though no more than his rating in the Enslavement Mystery) to his choice of TY, SY, or Power. If the sorcerer is victorious, the victim begins gazing into the sorcerer's eyes, forgetting everything else, largely motionless and completely oblivious to everything around him. As long as the sorcerer maintains unbroken eye contact, the victim cannot snap out of his magical trance and would be unable to take action even if his life was in serious danger; he is like the rabbit before the snake.

Any sharp pain will however tear the victim out of the trance – a slap in the face is insufficient for this, a hard punch to the stomach suffices.

Apart from filching a held character's pockets or just slitting his throat, a sorcerer can use Enslavement to achieve one of two effects on the victim:

1) A sorcerer can command his victim to do something – anything, really. The sorcerer tells the victim – in a language the victim can understand – what to do and makes another Casting Check, again Opposed with the better of the victim's SY or TY.

For the attacking sorcerer, while this second Opposed Check must be made with the same base number of dice as the original, additional bonus dice equaling his QoS from the first Check are added, and does not necessitate a new Containment Check.

Sorcerous targets of the Mystery at this stage don't gain any benefits from their own knowledge of the occult in resisting the Enslavement, as their supernatural defences have already been invaded by the previous Opposed Check.

If the victim at least ties the sorcerer, he immediately snaps out of the ensorcelment and is once again his own master. If the sorcerer is victorious, the victim will carry out the command, no matter what. If the command is more than one single, concrete action, like disembowelling oneself or jumping down a cliff or striking at somebody, its fulfilment can take no longer than about one minute per Casting success of the sorcerer (the total successes, not just the surpassing ones).

Such a command must be simple action, a single, concrete thing; it can encompass walking to the locale where the mission can be fulfilled, but it can include neither sub-clauses nor follow-ups. During the pursuit of this mission, the enslaved character will move like in a trance, unable to react to persons and events outside of his command's scope; he won't be even conscious of them. Once the command is carried out, the ensorcelled person will stand inactive for the remainder of the Enslavement's duration, after which he will regain his senses and a hazy memory of what has transpired.

2) In the victim's mind, one thing in his vicinity appears as something completely different. The sorcerer must tell the enslaved person what the thing "really" is ("What a fool you are, to wear a reptile about your waist!"), and the victim will react as if the object actually were what he is told it is, providing any movement or action of the hallucination from his own imagination.

The limit to this suggestive power is that any object can only appear as something of similar shape and size – sword to snake, horse to tiger, man to other man, cup to tarantula, etc.

To thus befuddle somebody, the sorcerer makes a second Casting Check, again Opposed by the better of the victim's SY or TY. The base number of Casting dice must be the same as in the original Casting Check, but with the addition of bonus dice equaling QoS from the initial Check added to the second, and no need for a Containment Check. And again, sorcerous targets receive no special benefits resisting.

If the victim at least ties the sorcerer, he will immediately snap out of the hypnotic trance and again be his own master.

If the sorcerer is victorious, the affected character sees the object as what he is told it is and will act accordingly – as will the hallucination, fuelled by the character's imagination and expectations. If anything hallucinatory happens that would cause the death of the victim, e.g. a bite by a poisonous animal or having the throat torn out by a predator, the victim passes out and must pass a TY Check of Average difficulty to avoid actually dying from the shock.

If nothing of the kind happens, the befuddled state lasts for as many Limelights as the sorcerer had successes on the Casting Check (the total successes, not just the surpassing ones), after which time the victim will regain his senses.

Mending - The Mending Mystery can be used to aid in and greatly speed up the recovery from injuries, though it does not normally heal them immediately.

The Casting Check is made Unopposed, and the resulting number of Successes is divided into two equal halves.

The first (and smaller, if applicable) half is the combined Pain rating that is deducted from all the target character's current wounds. These deductions must be spread among the injuries as evenly as possible. If for instance 3 Pain is deducted from a character's three wounds, 1 Pain would be subtracted from every wound, if from his two wounds, 1 Pain would be subtracted from one and 2 Pain from the other.

The other (and larger, if applicable) half of the Casting Successes speeds up subsequent wound recovery. Under normal circumstances, healing Checks are made every seven days; but if a character has been treated with the Mending Mystery, this interval is halved once for each one of the second half of the Casting Successes.

If for example 6 total Casting Successes are achieved, putting 3 into the second half of the Successes, healing Checks are then made every day (first Success halves interval from 7 to 4 days, second Success halves interval from 4 to 2 days, third Success halves interval from 2 to 1 day).

A character cannot benefit again from the Mending Mystery until all such magically treated wounds have fully healed. New injuries sustained during this time can only be treated with Mending once all previously majicked wounds have healed. Healing Checks for these are made at the normal interval of every seven days.

Mending can also be used to lift a curse (from the Lesser Mystery of this name) from a character. More Casting Successes than were achieved to

with Cursing Mystery are necessary to break the curse.

The Mending Mystery will also aid and speed up recovery from diseases to a comparable degree than from wounds, but as Sword & Sorcery tales do not concern themselves with things as mundane as diseases, no mechanics are provided. Should this aspect of the Mystery be needed for flavour, the effects should be estimated in analogy to its effect on injuries.

The Mystery can also be used maliciously, to inflict pain upon somebody. This can be done to a victim who is either present, or a distant victim of whom the sorcerer owns either a close personal possession (well-worn clothing, item to which the victim is emotionally attached, etc.) or a body part or secretion (hair, nail clippings, blood, etc.). In the latter case, a small ritual of five to ten minute is necessary, whereas the sorcery can in the former case be worked much quicker, merely by dramatically pointing out the victim and intoning a formula aloud.

The sorcerer's Casting Check is resisted by the victim's TY. Targeted sorcerers (A to C Sorcery

Priority) may opt to use their Power instead of TY to oppose; should they also know the Mending Mystery themselves, they receive additional bonus dice equal to half again their Power (though no more than their rating in the Mending Mystery) to their choice of TY or Power. If the sorcerer achieves more Successes than his victim, the victim immediately feels intense stabs of pain, corresponding to a Pain rating equal to three times the sorcerer's total (not just surpassing) Casting Successes. This Pain, from which TY is subtracted as usual, persists for as long as the sorcerer focuses his attention upon the victim, and indeed increases by 3 with every subsequent Limelight. Should the sorcerer be distracted from the victim or chooses to end the effect, Pain drains away at a rate of 3 points every Limelight.

Sorcerers proficient in the Mending Mystery have to decide whether they want to devote themselves to its beneficent or malicious use. The aspect that they opt for as their main use of the Mystery has the usual Casting and Containment TNs, the opposite use Checks against a +2 TN penalty for both Casting and Containment.

Prophecy - Prophecy is the art of either seeing into the future or else divining something that is not readily apparent. The kind of questions that can be answered by Prophecy fall into two categories, the broader "Will I succeed?" or "Should I go ahead?" type of questions, and the much more specific "Who is?" or "Where is?" type.

To answer either, the sorcerer needs to utilize a Prophecy ritual specific to the setting and his own preferences: It might be prophetic dreams, stargazing, the casting of bones, questioning the tarot, reading entrails of sacrificial animals, and much more.

For the broad type of question, the player first states whether he'd rather like a negative or positive answer to the question and then makes his Casting Check. If the answer is obvious to the referee, he simply decides upon "yes" or "no", but if it isn't, he rolls a d12, subtracting one third the sorcerer's Casting successes if the player wished for a positive answer or adding this number if the player wished for a negative one.

A result of 1-5 yields a "yes", 6-7 is indifferent, and 8-12 is "no". But however the answer was determined, it translates into an Omen rating of 1, which functions like a Passion Attribute. The Omen rating is added to all Checks to bring about a result in accordance with the answer and subtracted from all Checks to bring about a result contrary to the answer.

The more specific type of question after things like something's or somebody's location or identity is not as easily cast into rules.

A correct answer will require any number of successes deemed appropriate by the referee, with 1 sufficient only for so trivial questions like the location of a misplaced item, while divining the identity of an unseen mastermind behind some hardly grasped intrigue would for instance require at least 6 successes, possibly more. If insufficient successes are achieved, the Prophecy is inconclusive, but if the Casting Check is a Botch, the resultant Complication is an answer that is either dangerously ambiguous or outright maliciously misleading.

Scrying - The Mystery of Scrying is the practice of sending one's consciousness, or maybe one's spirit, astral body, or soul, away from one's physical self and having it travel quickly to distant places to spy out what is happening there. To do so, the sorcerer enters a deep trance, usually one aided by certain drugs. Depending on the specifics of the setting, certain paraphernalia, like mirrors or crystals to gaze into, might also be necessary.

While his body is resting senseless, his consciousness rises out of it, able to pass unseen and unfelt through all matter and to travel at vast speeds. This immaterial embodiment, maybe an astral body or maybe the soul, of the sorcerer is unable to affect the physical world, but it may observe and listen in on what is taking place in it.

Once the sorcerer's magical trance is sufficiently deep, which may take anywhere from ten minutes to over an hour, he makes a Casting Check. For every Success, he can, depending on the setting or the sorcerous tradition employed, either stay out of his body for five minutes while traveling at about 600 km an hour, or for half an hour while travelling at 200 km an hour. The more Successes he achieves, the longer his consciousness can stay away from his body, and the more distant the places his consciousness may visit. At the end of this timespan, the consciousness will snap back into the physical self and the sorcerer will awaken, usually disoriented, fatigued or hung over.

He can elect to have his consciousness return before the maximum time is up, but he is entirely unconscious of what is happening around and to his body while his sorcerous vision is travelling to distant places. Wounds, danger or discomfort will come to his attention only when he comes out of his magical trance. Should his body die while it is in trance, so does the embodiment of his consciousness, and the soul then goes to whatever place souls do go after death.

The presence of a scrying consciousness cannot be noticed by humans, save those with the Detect Sorcery Skill, who can make a Check to sense a presence, and to other sorcerers who know the Mystery of Scrying and who will detect the presence of a scryer's sorcerous vision on even a single Success on an Unopposed SY Check, and even clearly see such a presence as a kind of astral body on two Successes on this Check.

Disembodied spirits can detect a sorcerer's disembodied consciousness automatically, as can many supernatural beings like demons or ghosts. Many such beings may even be able to interact with the spiritual body and possibly even harm it as if it were physical. Should the astral body be killed by such an attack, the sorcerer's physical body dies as well.

Witchfire - The Witchfire Mystery sorcerously unleashes energies to damage or outright destroy inanimate and animate things. Despite the Mystery's name, those energies need not manifest as fire, but can take any number of forms, depending on both the setting and the sorcerous tradition employed. It can be beams of searing light from the sorcerer's eyes, bolts of fire leaping from his fingertips, a spectral vortex of slavering demonic shapes, lightning or pillars of fire from the sky, a dagger appearing in the sorcerer's hands and launched by him, and a thousand more things. It can even be innocuous and take the form of a handy object striking the target, like masonry collapsing on it or a horse kicking it.

In game terms, Witchfire manifests as a ranged weapon of the launched type (see Table 4.6), without the capability to attack at Extreme Range and with an AP cost for every +/– 1 on table 4.7, taken from one Range band worse than the actual attack (i.e. Near to Extreme); Witchfire is notoriously hard to aim precisely.

The sorcerer utilizing Witchfire makes Casting and Containment Checks as normal. Any Casting Successes double as both the Witchfire's eventual Damage Rating, and as Proficiency dice for the Archery Pool, which is Aim + Successes.

Defense against Witchfire is possible by Blocking and Evasion, exactly as against launched missiles like arrows and bolts.

Weapon	Point B. TN	Near TN	Med. TN	Far TN	DR
Witchfire	5	7	9	11	Ca. Successes

However, to be able to defend against it, the target must realize in time what is coming his way.

Most targets will thus need to pass a Surprise Check TN 12 even if they are watching the sorcerer intently. Any previous experience with Witchfire will make this Check one degree easier, as will previous experience with Witchfire from the same sorcerer, and already having been attacked by Witchfire in the same Scene, for a minimum TN 4 if all three apply (Surprise TNs are 12, 11, 9, and 4, as per Table 4.1).

A successful Precognition Skill Check does away with the need for a Surprise Check, as does any degree of the Occultism Skill, unless the target is in a situation where he would have to Check for Surprise even for a mundane attack.

If the Witchfire strike is successful, hit location is determined as with any other missile weapon, i.e. by rolling on Table 4.7 and then the on the table for the corresponding Target Zone.

The hit's Impact Rating is calculated by adding the original Casting Successes to the QoS of the attack Roll (QoS + Casting Successes). Both BN and AV protect against Witchfire as normal. The Damage Table and AVs used are the ones most closely corresponding to the manifestation of Witchfire, or Cleaving if none seems to fit outright.

The eldritch nature of sorcerers offers them additional protection against Witchfire. Any sorcerous character (A through C Sorcery Priority) can use half his Power Attribute as additional AV against Witchfire strikes, or their full Power if they know the Witchfire Mystery themselves.

Characters built with the E or F Sorcery Priorities are particularly vulnerable against Witchfire and may not use their BN ratings in soaking up damage from it.

4. Greater Mysteries

Not for naught had he gained access into darksome cults, had harkened to the grisly whispers of the votaries of Skelos under midnight trees, and read the forbidden iron-bound books of Vathelos the Blind.

Robert E. Howard, Black Colossus

The two Greater Mysteries are:

- Goety
- Necromancy

Goety - One of the two greater Mysteries, this is the sorcery of conjuration, command, and banishment of supernatural creatures from beyond the boundaries of the world, those commonly called demons. From where these creatures originate is specific to the setting – they may be from out of the dark between the stars, from other dimensions, from alien planets light years away, or some other unfathomably strange place. The attitude of these demons towards humanity and the sorcerer also varies with the setting – it may be anything from annoyed irritation to haughty expectations of worship to all-consuming hatred. Whatever it is, it is never friendly. The Occultism Skill provides knowledge on the outlook of demons, or at least what their outlook is perceived to be. What general type ritual the conjuration of such a demon requires will depend again on the flavor of the setting. The three necessary components of conjuration in all settings are purification of the sorcerer (which might take anywhere from under an hour to over a day, depending on the setting), a ritual taking from under ten minutes to over an hour, and a blood sacrifice.

The minimum sacrifice that is acceptable again depends on the setting and might for example be a large mammal, a human being, or a virgin.

To conjure the demon, the sorcerer makes his Casting Check. His SP pool for this Casting Check is modified by the result of a Difficult Occultism check; every success the Occultism Check is short of the required 3 penalizes the SP pool by –1, while every success over 3 adds +1 to it. The second modifier is the extent of the sacrifice.

The minimum sacrifice required adds nothing, but every 'step up' from this base (mammal to man and man to virgin) adds +1 die, as does every time the minimum is multiplied by 10. If the minimum acceptable sacrifice is for example a human being and the sorcerer offers up 10 virgins he receives +2 to his SP.

For the practiced sorcerer, piercing the divides to the realms where demons dwell isn't difficult, but finding the one demon he wants to conjure may well be, and the search for the right one takes time, during which the sorcerer's consciousness is in close contact with a very alien realm, exposing him to massive degrees of Taint. To successfully conjure a demon into his presence, the sorcerer needs to achieve but 1 success on his Casting Check. However, for the summoned demon to be exactly the right one, 5 Casting successes are necessary.

If the wrong demon is called forth, its exact type depends on the ref's approach of demon's. Some refs might enjoy statting out long catalogues of demons, from which the sorcerer may choose one to conjure; if that is the case, the ref chooses another demon from the catalogue, its difference in stats and powers to the desired one the greater the shorter the Casting successes fell of 5. Other refs may allow players to stat out their own demons; in that case, the ref changes the Attribute total of the arriving demon by 2 points per Casting success short of 5, or adds or subtracts one special power per Casting success short of it. Please note that all the changes should either make the demon more or less powerful – which one should be determined randomly. Whatever the approach, the sorcerer has to state what demon he wants to conjure before the dice are resorted to, either by choosing one from a list or by statting it out.

Should the sorcerer achieve more than 5 Casting successes, the extra successes carry over as bonus dice to his SP for the next stage of the summoning, the Coercion Check. This Check

represents the sorcerer bargaining with the demon, or intimidating it into compliance and is a second Casting Check, with a SP already impacted by any Taint the sorcerer may have picked up during the summoning itself. The demon Opposes this Casting Check with his worst Attribute, with +1 die added for every special power it possesses.

Tying this Opposed Check yields an inconclusive outcome, with the demon departing or being pulled back to whence it came. If the demon is victorious, it is unshackled from the sorcerous constraints that held it during the Coercion Check and is free to either attack the summoner, depart, or stray into the world to cause havoc. How long such an unbound demon may roam the world depends on the setting – it might be a day or a year per initial Casting success, or possibly for as long as the sorcerer lives, or anything else. Should the demon choose to attack the sorcerer and mange to incapacitate him (immobilize him through grappling, knock him out, reduce his pools to 0 through Pain, etc.), he may and probably will carry him off to his place of origin, never to be heard of again.

For the remainder of the scene in which the sorcerer failed his Opposed Coercion Check against the demon, he is at +1 TN all his actions directed against this demon. In addition, and cumulative with that +1 TN, he is +2 TN to use Goety against this demon for as long as it remains free in the world.

If the sorcerer is victorious in the Coercion Check, he may demand a number of tasks from the demon equal to his QoS. A task is defined as a simple, straightforward service, for instance attempting to kill a single person. If fulfillment of this task requires travel over a greater distance than a few hundred meters, this counts as a separate task, as does returning to the sorcerer (should the sorcerer demand this). If the place where the demon is to travel to is ill defined or entirely undefined, for instance when slaying a person whose current exact location is unknown to the sorcerer, determining the locale also counts as a separate task.

Similarly, if a task can only be accomplished in stages, each stage also counts as a task of its own. Finally, if a task requires more than an hour of the demon's time, every doubling of this initial span of time also counts as a task all of its own. The exception to this is when the task is to merely guard a stationary person or item, or a locale; in this case, with no travelling required of the demon, the initial span of time for the task is a day, not an hour.

Please note that demons travel virtually instantaneously as long as they are not carrying living beings; if they are to take along a living being their travel times are determined by their mode and speed of locomotion.
Examples:

"Fetch me the sceptre of King Yezdigerd." – 4 tasks (1 base + 1 travel to location + 1 location ill-defined + 1 return to sorcerer).

"Kill Conan." – 3 tasks (1 base + 1 travel to location + 1 location undefined).

"Carry me to the top of Mount Yimsha." – 2 tasks (1 base + 1 time), assuming a travel time of over one but no more than two hours.

"Fetch me the Heart of Ahriman from the vaults of the temple of Mitra." – 6 tasks (1 base + 1 travel to location + 1 location ill-defined + 1 overcoming magical wards + 1 defeating guardian of the Heart + 1 return to sorcerer), and a hefty chance of failing with ward and guardian.

If the scope of such service is clear at the moment of the Coercion attempt, any shortage of the required number of successes results in the demon declaring that the sorcerer is asking too much and returning from whence he came, but if the scope is variable, as in killing an unspecified number of persons or guarding something for as long as possible, the demon will, provided that the sorcerer was successful at all, at least begin the task, but will abandon it as soon as the sorcerer's successes are 'spent.'

Sometimes, a sorcerer will want to banish a demon. This is relatively straightforward in case of a demon he himself conjured, as he is already familiar with the demon and its attributes, but it is more difficult if the demon was conjured by somebody else. In this latter case, the sorcerer has to make an Occultism Check at Legendary difficulty; for every success short of 5, his sorcery pool to banish the demon is penalized by 1.

The banishing ritual itself takes anywhere from half a minute to several minutes, and again is setting-specific. Once the ritual has been begun, the demon cannot leave the immediate surroundings of the sorcerer, but must remain both within earshot and sight. He may not attack the sorcerer, who is protected by the ritual he has invoked, but is otherwise free to do as he pleases, including trying

to kill the sorcerer's companions and causing havoc to distract the sorcerer or even harm him indirectly, for example by setting ablaze the sorcerer's immediate surroundings.

The sorcerer's Casting Check is opposed by the demon's worst attribute, with +1 die bonus per special power it possesses. To banish a demon successfully, the sorcerer has to emerge victorious from the contest; a tie or a defeat for the sorcerer allows the demon to remain. If a sorcerer does successfully banish a demon he did not himself conjure in the first place, he accrues only one third the normal Taint (after the Containment Check is made), unless the Containment Check results in a Taint discharge, in which case he accumulates the ordinary amount of taint.

A few quick guidelines to the power of demons:

Demons do never have HT scores, not even the succubus-like ones. CG is used instead, where necessary.

Demons should not have Attribute scores much higher than 12, and their lowest Attribute should not normally be less than a quarter its highest. Their Proficiency scores in all their modes of attack should be identical to Reflexes, or very close to it, or to Aim in case of ranged attacks. Their DR with special forms of attack like fire breathing should be very close to the DR of more mundane forms of attack like bites. If the demon knows any Mysteries (which would have to be purchased as a special power), his rating in it should be identical, or very close to, its TY.

Demons may have additional traits that are in line with their physical appearance – a winged demon should for example be able to fly, or a very shaggy demon have some kind of AV. Only traits that are not reflected by their appearance or that go clearly beyond anything a mundane animal might exhibit should be regarded as 'special powers' in the sense referred to repeatedly above. This includes special forms of attack like hypnosis or acid spitting, any armor beyond AV 2 or not reflected by the demon's appearance, useful special abilities like fast regeneration or ultramundane modes of movement like shifting through walls, and anything else along these lines.

Special powers do to some degree also include bulk, and the accompanying reduction of damage, as for large and huge animals. A demon should receive one of these traits for free only if he is very clearly bulky enough for it – the trait 'large' should for example only be applied for free if the demon is of a bulk where one would otherwise already consider assigning the trait 'huge'; otherwise, the trait needs to be purchased as a special power. If a demon who would not even receive the trait 'large' for free is to be 'huge', this counts as two special powers.

Size and bulk also extend to the special trait of some large creatures to fully engage several opponents at the same time, acting on their respective Limelights. Being able to engage a second opponent should only be assigned for free if the demon is both huge and of a bodily configuration to suggest this; otherwise, it has to be purchased as a special power, as do the ability to engage every single further opponent.

Both players and ref should realize that Goety is very powerful and versatile, and that every summoning requires two Casting Checks (Conjuration and Coercion) and thus two Checks to contain Taint. Trafficking with entities from beyond the human domain is a sure way to amass Taint quickly.

Necromancy - Necromancy deals with calling up the dead from the beyond, but not to revive them as undead – even though the art of Necromancy can also open the door to this unholy pursuit – but rather to question the shades of the deceased and thereby learn secrets beyond human ken. Where Goety allows the sorcerer to exert power in the world, Necromancy enables him to learn things about the world.

At the core of necromancy is the calling up the spirit of a particular deceased person. How exactly this spirit manifests itself, whether as a traditional ghost, or a disembodied voice from the grave, or maybe a vision in a mirror, is specific to the setting, but in any case, the spirit thus summoned is unable to affect the physical world, save maybe with a Complication on the Containment Check.

To summon a spirit from the underworld, the sorcerer must at least know the deceased's name; if the name is unknown, it cannot be summoned at all. The SP for the Necromancy Mystery is modified as follows:

In addition to knowing the name, at least one of the following three things must also apply for the summoning to be possible at all. If two of them apply, the sorcerer receives +1 to his SP, and +2 if all three apply:

- +spec. if the sorcerer is in the presence of the person's mortal remains
- +spec. if the sorcerer has one or more items at hand that were of great personal importance to the person while alive
- +spec. if the sorcerer is in the place where the person died

Further SP modifiers:

- +1 if the sorcerer knew the person in life
- +1 if the sorcerer knows extensive and correct biographic details of the person (equivalent of at least twenty pages of writing)
- +1 if the sorcerer is a direct descendant of the person
- -1 if the person has been dead for longer than a month
- -1 if the person has been dead for longer than a year (cumulative with above)
- -1 if the person has been dead for longer than 10 years (cumulative with above)
- -1 if the person has been dead for longer than 100 years (cumulative with above)
- -1 if the person has been dead for longer than 1000 years (cumulative with above)

The sorcerer makes his Casting Check, which is opposed by the spirit's TY modified cumulatively as follows:

- +1 spirit was a powerful person (sorcerer, nobleman, wealthy merchant, ranking priest)
- +1 spirit was an independent ruler or head of a cult
- +1 spirit knew one or more Lesser sorcerous Mysteries
- +1 spirit knew one or two Greater sorcerous Mysteries
- +1 spirit knew Necromancy (cumulative with above; sorcerers knowing just Goety get +1, those knowing Necromancy or both Necromancy and Goety gain +2)

If the spirit is victorious or ties the sorcerer, the spirit does not appear and the sorcerer cannot attempt to summon this spirit again for a number of months equal to the spirit's total number of successes (not just the surpassing ones), unless he achieves a change in summoning circumstances in his favour, i.e. attains better summoning modifiers than his last attempt.

If the sorcerer is victorious, the spirit must answer one question per success of the sorcerer (total successes, not just surpassing ones) to his best ability. Asking a question the spirit cannot answer uses up one of the sorcerer's questions.

Spirits know first and foremost details from their own life, but they seem to also learn from other spirits and therefore know much about things that have come to pass after their death, but know nothing that is only known to persons still alive.

They also seem to keep track less of more recent events than earlier ones, or maybe they have had too little time to learn about more recent events. To see whether a spirit knows the answer to any given question, the spirit's TY (not SY) is Checked, with the following numbers of successes required:

- 0 if it pertains to something from the spirit's own life
- +1 if it pertains to something from the spirit's walk of life that has happened in the geographical area of the spirit's life
- +2 if it pertains to either something from the spirit's walk of life that has happened outside his geographical area of life or to something outside the spirit's walk of life that has

happened in his geographical area of life

- +3 if it pertains to something both outside the spirit's walk of life and outside his geographical area of life
- +1 if it pertains to something that has happened either closer to the present time than the spirit's time of death (e.g. within the last 10 years if the spirit died 20 years ago) or that has happened a longer time before his birth than he is dead (e.g. more than 20 years before his birth if the spirit died 20 years ago). This is cumulative with all modifiers above.
- +1 if it pertains to something that has happened either within the recent 10% of time since the spirit's time of death (e.g. within the last 2 years if the spirit died 20 years ago) or that has happened more than five times as long as he is dead before the time of his birth (e.g. more than 100 years before his birth if the spirit died 20 years ago). This is cumulative with all modifiers above.
- +1 if it pertains to something that has happened either within the recent 1% of time since the spirit's time of death (e.g. within the last 0.2 years if the spirit died 20 years ago) or that has happened more than twenty times as long as he is dead before the time of his birth (e.g. more than 400 years before his birth if the spirit died 20 years ago). This is cumulative with all modifiers above.

Spirits will not or cannot answer questions pertaining to the afterlife itself, including questions as to whether they are well or unwell in the afterlife or if they are acquainted to a certain person's spirit. Any such question is a wasted one.

Spirits can only report about things that were known to a person – any person, really – in life, provided this person is by now dead. If something is only known to living persons, no spirit can know it.

5. Arcane Secrets

The final layer of magic is the Arcane Secrets of ancient sages, single, incredible acts of sorcery transcending the limits of any single Mystery. Arcane Secrets are just that – secret, only whispered in occult circles, legends about what this or that famous sorcerer was able to accomplish.

Not even the most powerful sorcerer of yore knew all of them, and most of these legendary masters of eldritch power probably knew only a handful. Still, this was enough to make them the stuff of legend.

With sorcery being no science, no Arcane Secret can ever be researched, and no new one can be discovered, not if a thousand lifetimes were spent on this pursuit. Sorcerers desiring to learn one of these legendary acts of sorcery have to track down a source where it might be obtained.

One possible source is the most powerful living sorcerers, who might, just might, know a few of them – though getting them to impart this knowledge is a different matter.

Another source is demonic beings of immense power, which also might be prevailed upon to share their knowledge – or perhaps not. The innermost circles of some cults or secret societies, usually of the more unwholesome variety, might also guard knowledge of one or two Arcane Secrets.

Another possible source are the shades of dead legendary sorcerers rumoured to have possessed such knowledge, though their deceased consciousness will often be too fractured to give anything more but telling hints – if they can be summoned at all.

The most uncommon and rarest source are written ones, often not so much in the form of books but rather things like inscriptions in some sanctum of an accursed temple – sorcerers being a jealous lot, most who manage to track down a written source will destroy it to prevent others from ever profiting from it.

Needless to say, tracking down Arcane Secrets opens up an avenue of adventure of sorcerer PCs.

To be able to learn any Arcane Secrets at all, a sorcerer must be proficient in at least one Greater Mystery. There may well be other prerequisites, such as skill in a specific Greater or Lesser Mystery, but practical knowledge of a Greater Mystery is always a prerequisite, even without being noted specifically.

The following is a selection of Arcane Secrets, to give refs a feeling for the scope of what they can accomplish. Refs are encouraged not only to customise the names of these Arcane Secrets, but also to disallow any or all of them, or to create additional ones, as fits his campaign.

The total number of Arcane Secrets existing in any one setting is of course up to the ref, but to us anything under 5 seems miserly and anything over 20 much too lavish.

Abomination

Prerequisite: Goety & Mending

This hours long extended ritual must be conducted, with slight alterations, every week during about the first third of the pregnancy over the body of a woman who is either a willing participant or else powerless to resist. It changes the embryo into some monstrosity, whose eventual birth will almost certainly kill the mother.

When the abomination is born, the sorcerer

Checks his Goety pool to determine how much demonic energy he was able to infuse into the unborn, spending his successes on this unopposed Check to purchase changes in the infant. For every success, he may either:

Increase human minimum, average and maximum value of one Attribute by +2,

Impart one feature like horns, fangs, poison, functional wings, etc., or grant an Asset.

By default, without spending any successes, the abomination will always have –1 SY, –1 HT, and +2 BN, and it will always look decidedly inhuman and bestial.

Actual looks depend on what essence the sorcerer infused into the embryo; the abomination will always have clear visual traits of one species of animal or legendary creature: in some settings, this Arcane Secret may be tied to imparting a specific essence, with all abominations looking similar; for example, a setting-specific Abomination Arcane Secret may be called "Son of the Bull" and always produce minotaur-like creatures.

In any case, the abomination will grow into adulthood at about five times the speed of a human – and it will only be as loyal to its creator as the sorcerer is able to make it by any means at his disposal.

The Acolyte's Claw

Prerequisite: Goety & Mending

This Arcane Secret is no sorcerous spell at all, but rather a supremely deadly martial art harnessing the sorcerer's eldritch power into smooth movements and devastating blows. It is usable only for hand strikes and Maneuvers conducted with the empty hands, and for Evasion hand parries – which are possible without any chance of harm to the arm even against weapons. For all these actions, the Melee Pool consists of Reflex + Brawling + Goety.

Depending on the group's preferences for the setting, the hand strikes take one the following two forms:

1) The hand hits with Blunt DR +1 and causes additional Shock equal to the Wound Level.

2) The hand hits with Piercing DR -1 or Cleaving Swing DR 0, and all AVs protect against it at only quarter value – the sorcerer practically reaches through the armor and into the body.

Animate the Dead

Prerequisite: Necromancy

With this ritual lasting 30 minutes to an hour, the sorcerer can animate a dead body to a semblance of life and thereby create an undead.

This Arcane Secret is intended to work on embalmed mummies and reasonably fresh corpses still physically largely intact, but may in some settings also work on largely decomposed corpses. If this is the case, such animated skeletons do not receive the +1 BN of other animated corpses (see below).

To create a classic shambling corpse or skeleton: Such undead are almost mindless (equivalent of SY 1) and without memory or personality, but very loyal to their creator, whose commands they are unable to resist. They have the same attributes as when alive, but both their HT and TY are limited by their SY score, thus usually being 1 (in any case, HT is only applicable to animated corpses that are not obviously dead). Animated dead receive –1 Move and +1 BN and are completely immune against Blood Loss, and virtually so against Pain; instead of subtracting TY from Pain, all their Pain is flat out reduced by 10.

To animate the corpse, the sorcerer's Necromancy pool is checked. A single success creates an undead, and the sorcerer may spend his additional successes to purchase:

Limited reasoning capacity for the undead – every success spent grants +1 SY.

Great strength and ferocity – every success spent grants +1 BN and +1 Proficiency.

Skill at arms – every success spent grants 3 Proficiency points (maximum 9).

Increased durability – every success spent increases the life expectancy of the undead by a factor of ten (base is one day).

Multiple undead – a sorcerer can animate any number of corpses at once. He has to expend the successes for the most powerful or durable undead, with every additional undead requiring only 1 success, even though it may be of equal power as the first one. With 6 casting successes, a sorcerer could therefore animate 6 "basic" undead, or 5 undead with BN +1 and Proficiency +1 (2 successes for first one and 1 success for every additional one).

For as long as the corpse is animated, it will not continue to decay.

Bind the Soul

Prerequisite: Necromancy

This Arcane Secret forces a dead person's soul into a body, in the process evicting the owner's soul.

To conduct this hour-long ritual, the sorcerer must first conjure a deceased person's soul, as normal for the Mystery of Necromancy. Instead of questioning the soul, he instead conducts the ritual, anchoring the conjured soul in another's body.

During the ritual, the host body must be conscious and either a willing participant (unlikely) or else restrained.

The sorcerer makes a Casting Check with his Necromancy pool, which both the inserted soul and the body's owner may resist with HT. If either the victim or the soul is victorious or ties the sorcerer, the sorcery fails and the soul returns to whatever place souls inhabit in the afterlife.

If the sorcerer however wins both Opposed Checks, the host body's soul is driven

out and passes irrevocably into the afterlife, as if the body had died, and the inserted soul now inhabits the body, until the body dies and the soul returns, once again, to the afterlife.

If a sorcerer happens also to know Animate the Dead, he can substitute a dead (and thus soulless) animated body for a living one. The animated corpse will then function with the SY of the soul inhabiting it, and will be unable to disobey the sorcerer's direct orders, as is normal for animated corpses.

If the sorcerer uses the conjured soul's own body, the animation of the corpse last indefinitely – the soul from then on inhabits an undead but deathless body, potentially forever.

Forcing a deceased's soul back into a body will most likely result in a deranged version of the original person. The more casting successes the sorcerer achieves, the more likely will the resulting compound of soul and body to be sane. Achieving but a single success signifies total and utter madness, with more successes making the resulting being increasingly normal; 6 successes are required for complete sanity.

Blight

Prerequisite: Goety & Cursing

In a ritual of roughly one hour's duration, the sorcerer curses a land and afflicts it with a terrible blight. A single "unit" of land with either geographical (e.g. a valley or an island) or political (e.g. a county or a city state) boundaries of up to about 3.000 km² can be affected.

The sorcerer makes the Casting Check with the worse of Goety and Cursing. Every success reduces the yield of next harvest by about a quarter, applicable to all agricultural produce either animal or vegetal; 4 successes therefore destroy a harvest utterly. Any successes over 4 extend the duration by doubling the number of harvests destroyed – 7 successes will for example utterly destroy the next eight harvests

Hand of Doom

Prerequisite: Goety & Necromancy

This is a dreadful Arcane Secret that can be easily cast almost instantaneously, definitely in a single Limelight. The sorcerer calls words of power and extends his hand towards a target within no more than 10 meters and invokes certain entities.

He then makes a Casting Check with the worse of his Goety or Necromancy, which the victim can resist with TY.

If the victim is victorious or ties the sorcerer, he feels merely intense pain, the equivalent of Pain equal to the dice in the sorcerer's casting pool; this Pain is halved by every passing Combat Round until it disappears and subsides.

If the sorcerer is however victorious by but a single success, one of the victim's organs (sorcerer's choice) will burst out of the victim's body, ripping through any clothing and armor, and jump into the sorcerer's outstretched hand.

Alternatively, the sorcerer can decide to rip off a limb, including the head. Depending on the organ, death is either instant or follows within seconds from blood loss and system shock.

Master the Beast

Prerequisite: Goety & Enslavement

This short ritual, easily completed within a single Limelight, calls local animals into the sorcerer's presence, enables them to understand his wishes and forces them to his bidding for the duration of the current scene, after which they will disperse again.

Animals begin to arrive in the sorcerer's presence as soon as he finishes the ritual, and continue to arrive in great numbers – greater numbers than could conceivably exist in the sorcerer's vicinity. It is therefore theorized that this Arcane Secret not only calls animals, but actually also brings them into being.

The type of animals is always one specific, locally existing species, and the species that can be called must always be one that has something sinister to it. Scorpions, snakes, spiders, centipedes, crows, vultures, wolves, hyenas, jackals, bats, cats, and crocodiles are possible, but doves, horses and rabbits are not. In some settings, there may be further limitations as to the species that can be invoked.

The Casting Check is made out of the Goety pool, and every success results in about 60 small animals like scorpions and snakes answering the call, or about 40 mid-sized animals, or about 20 large animals.

Mould the Flesh

Prerequisite: Goety & Necromancy

This Arcane Secret imparts knowledge of a surprisingly short ritual, easily completed in but a single Limelight that allows the sorcerer to temporarily shift his shape into another creature's, thereby attaining all this creature's physical characteristics.

Mechanically, the worse of the sorcerer's Goety or Necromancy pool is checked, with every success allowing the sorcerer to retain the changed shape for up to 15 minutes; he can however

end the sorcery and shift back at any anterior time.

Exactly what animal shape can be assumed will vary from campaign to campaign but as a guideline should be one between one twentieth and twice the sorcerer's own mass.

Normally, it will have to be a type of animal that has something sinister to it (see Master the Beast), but if the ref waives this requirement he is encouraged to instead limit the power of this Arcane Secret by having it impart only the ability to shift into one specific type of animal and require it to be "rediscovered" for every additional species.

Plague Wind

Prerequisite: Necromancy & Mending

This Arcane Secret imparts knowledge of how to conduct a lengthy ritual requiring several hours to complete that will afflict an area with a very deadly plague. The area where the plague first appears must be one with distinct political or geographical boundaries, exactly as with Blight, but it will spread naturally beyond this area.

For every success in the Casting Check, which is made with the worse of the Mending and Necromancy pool, about 10 % of the people in the boundary at the time of the casting will contract the plague, some immediately, some as much as ten days after the casting.

Of those who contract it 50% + 5% per casting success will die from it. Casting successes also give a gauge of how easy it is for people not originally within the area affected by the Arcane Secret to contract the plague later on: 1 success would mean that actual ingesting of body fluids is necessary to contract it, while 10 successes would mean that just being within a few meters of a plague carrier would suffice.

The severity of the plague deteriorates over time. Every week after the casting, the effective number of casting successes is reduced by 1. Still, a very successful application of this Arcane Secret might practically depopulate a country.

Shake the Bones of the Earth

Prerequisite: Goety

With this rituals duration of about an hour or two, the sorcerer creates a violent earthquake.

The effect is slightly setting-specific, as its mechanics orient themselves after the sturdiest building technique and materials available in the campaign.

For every success of the Casting Check made with the Goety pool about 5% of the buildings of this top durability are completely destroyed by the earthquake and another 10% heavily damaged. Less sturdy buildings are of course affected to a greater degree.

The area affected at full strength has a diameter of about half a kilometre, with areas farther out being struck by less violent tremors. The epicentre of the full strength is surrounded by concentric rings of about half a kilometre each, with each being affected with a severity of 1 less success.

Whisper My Name in Fear

Prerequisite: Prophecy, Scrying

Once a sorcerer learns this Secret, he will know from that moment on whenever his name is spoken anywhere in the world. If somebody utters the sorcerer's name, the sorcerer immediately and unfailingly learns this person's name, location, identity (e.g. farmer, nobleman, soldier, etc.), in what context his name was spoken (e.g. hostile, reverential, in awe, plotting, etc.), and also the names and identities of this person's interlocutors.

There is no Check involved. In short, the sorcerer cannot be spoken of anymore without him becoming aware of it.

The one chance to avoid drawing the sorcerer's attention is not using his name but referring to him obliquely. Speaking about the sorcerer in that way requires an Amazing CG Check for it

not to be noticed. If this is additionally done in either hushed tones or a completely enclosed space, the Challenge Level becomes merely Difficult or Challenging if both is the case.

This is however far from common knowledge: While it may well be part of common folk lore that uttering a sorcerer's name is bad luck requiring only a QoS of 1 on an Occultism Check to have heard of, knowing about the effectiveness of whispering would be a Difficult Occultism Check, and about that of enclosed spaces an Amazing one.

Gaining the knowledge of being spoken about does not divert the sorcerer's attention or disrupt his concentration in any way. Even if a thousand people were to speak about him at the same time this would not disrupt the sorcerer's present doings in any way; he just knows, without the knowledge drawing his attention away from anything else.

6. Combining Sorcerous Efforts

In **Blade**, sorcerers are a rare commodity, most especially those knowing more than one or two Lesser Mysteries. Thus, there will seldom be a situation when several sorcerers combine their arcane powers. When they do, despite everything, it is an absolute necessity for the combination of such efforts that the cooperating sorcerers belong to the same cult, coven, or sorcerous order.

Merely practicing sorcery of the same general cultural tradition is not enough; actual membership in some kind of shared sorcerous brotherhood is indispensable. If this prerequisite is met, while it is not necessary that every sorcerer partaking in this pooling of power know the particular Mystery being used, it is beneficial.

The sorcerer with the highest rating in the Mystery being attempted (not the sorcerer with the largest Sorcery Pool), heads the effort, and his pool is the one modified.

Dice from each participating sorcerer are cumulatively added to his SP thusly:

- +1 to the caster's pool if the contributor knows a Lesser Mystery
- +1 to the caster's pool if the contributor knows more than three Lesser Mysteries
- +1 to the caster's pool if the contributor knows a Greater Mystery
- +1 to the caster's pool if the contributor knows two Greater Mysteries
- +1 to the caster's pool if the contributor knows any Arcane Secrets
- - 1 to the caster's pool if a Lesser Mystery is being cast that is unknown to the contributor.
- - 2 to the caster's pool if a Greater Mystery or Arcane Secret are being cast that is unknown to the contributor.

The downside of such combined sorcerous efforts is that its consequences are not merely confined to the primary caster, but afflict every participant in full. This includes both Taint and any other negative effects resulting from insufficiently successful Containment Checks – they afflict every participating sorcerer in their entirety.

7. Duel of Wills

When two sorcerers battle, they don't usually slug it out Mystery against Mystery (though they may of course), but engage in a Duel of Will instead. The Duel of Wills matches SP against SP in a way similar to how melee combat matches MP against MP, and it has a similar structure of Exchanges and Rounds.

First of all, a Duel of Wills requires two willing participants. It is not possible for one sorcerer to engage another in it against his will; thus, there is also no possibility of surprise.

Each sorcerer uses an SP of his choice (usually his best) and announces this choice.

There is no need for the SPs to derive from the same Mystery, and no need to stick to the same Mystery every Round. Penalties from Taint and other sources fully apply to the SPs during the Duel of Wills.

One sorcerer is determined as initial aggressor and one as defender. In some cases these roles might be obvious from the circumstances under which the Duel is entered, in other the participants might be in agreement about who is the initial aggressor. If neither is the case, the roles are assigned as desired by the sorcerer built with the better Sorcery Priority, or the higher SP if that is a tie, or the higher Power Attribute if this is a tie as well, or the higher Occultism Skill if tied again.

The aggressor then announces a sorcerous Offensive Maneuver and a number of dice from his SP assigned to it, to which the defender reacts by declaring a sorcerous Defensive Maneuver and also assigns dice. Both then pay any necessary Activation Costs for the chosen Maneuver from their SP, roll their assigned Maneuvers against their normal Casting TN for the Mystery used (6 to 8), applying any modifiers from the Maneuver chosen, in an Opposed Check.

If the aggressor is victorious, he retains initiative as aggressor, and there are additional effects as per the Maneuver chosen. If the Defender is victorious, he may assume the part of the aggressor and possibly also invoke additional effects as per his chosen Maneuver. In case of a tie, the aggressor simply retains this role.

If the first Exchange does not result in an immediate decision, a second Exchange follows, for which the remainder of the SPs can be used, exactly as per the melee rules. If this Exchange does still not yield a decision, the SPs refresh and a new Round of two Exchanges begins.

The eventual loser of the duel is thrown to the ground bodily under the onslaught of his opponent's sorcerous power, where he lies stunned for the next Combat Round (all Pools at 0 dice). In addition, his sorcerous defences have been invaded and battered down by his opponent: For the remainder of the scene, he is at +2 TN to resist the victor's sorceries and is at +2 Casting TN to affect the victor with his own sorcery. Finally, he acquires 1 point of Taint.

Depending on the actual Offensive Maneuver by which he was overcome, the loser may also suffer physical damage on the Generic Damage Table. AV never averts such injury, but BN soaks up some of it as normal.

While crippling injuries are entirely possible from a Duel of Wills, outright annihilation is rare. Damage levels 1 through 4 are attained normally, by a result of (Impact Rating – half BN) of 1 to 4 respectively. Damage level 5 does however require a result of (Impact Rating – half BN) of 6+, and Damage level 6 of 8+.

Under certain circumstances a group of sorcerers may gang up on a single sorcerer, pooling their ultramundane strength to best him. The circumstances under which this is possible and the mechanical aspects of combining efforts are exactly as with Combining Sorcerous Efforts, as are the consequences of defeat (i.e. they are experienced by all to their full extent). The Duel of Wills is then handled normally, with the leader of each group of combatants making all decisions and Checks. The only exception is that the Mystery used must remain the same throughout the contest.

The default physical aspect of a Duel of Wills is the two sorcerers staring at each other intently, maybe breaking into sweat from the strain and swaying under the onslaught of the opponent's will. For some settings it might however be appropriate to be a bit gaudier. Lightning flickering between the sorcerers, gusts of wind tearing at them, tongues of flame licking at them, vortexes full of barely glimpsed demonic entities wavering between them are only a small portion of the possibilities.

Lastly, Duel of Will may, at the ref's discretion, be used between sorcerers and certain kinds of incorporeal creatures, whom the ref would have to assign the equivalent of an SP. It can also be used for battles between and any hostile beings they encounter while using the Scrying Mystery, though the latter under these circumstances is at a decided TN advantage, being as they are on their home ground.

Sorcerous Maneuvers:

All Maneuvers have an Activation Cost that has to be paid from the SP to utilize them. Some Maneuvers are easier to use with SPs based on certain Mysteries. Any such Mystery is listed as ‚Favoured□ with the Maneuver. Activation Costs are 2 dice less if the SP used is based on a favoured Mystery, though never less than 0 dice, with the sole exception of the Endure defence, which may add +2 dice to SP if used with the Mending Mystery. Minimum Activation Costs are noted with the Maneuvers.

Offensive Maneuvers:

Creep

Activation: 2 (minimum 0)

Favoured: Necromancy, Prophecy, Scrying

The attempt to find a weak spot in the opponent's psychic defences and to get one's assault through there.

It is in effect a feint: The aggressor at first declares another Offensive Maneuver

and only announces Creep once the defender has committed dice to a Defensive Maneuver.

The aggressor may then add dice from his uncommitted SP to those dice already committed to the attack at the additional Activation Cost of 1 die per die added.

The remainder of the offence is then resolved as if it was a Strike Maneuver.

Grind

Activation: 2 (minimum 0)

Favoured: Cursing

Grind is for keeping up a steady sorcerous assault to finally wear down the opponent's defence. Assigned SP are Checked against Casting TN and Opposed by enemy's chosen defense.

If Grind is victorious, half the QoS is added to the victor's SP for the following Exchange, up to a maximum bonus dice equal to the number of dice in his SP at the beginning of the following Exchange.

Grind is no means to win a Duel of Wills in itself; some other Offensive Maneuver is needed to finally deliver the decisive blow.

Overpower

Activation: 6 (minimum 4)

Favoured: Enslavement, Goety, Witchfire

The tactic of the sorcerer sure of his own superiority, this is a brutal onslaught of eldritch power, attempting to outright shatter the opponent's defense. The assigned SP dice are

Checked against Casting TN and Opposed by the enemy's assigned defence dice.

If the defender wins or ties, he may immediately assume the part of aggressor.

If the aggressor is victorious, he has brutally broken through the opponent's defences and inflicts damage of an Impact Rating equal to the total number of his successes, not just those surpassing the defence successes.

Strike

Activation: 0 (minimum 0)

The standard action of striking with one's sorcerous power at the opponent. Check assigned dice against Casting TN, Opposed by enemy's chosen defense. If victorious, the victor may simply retain initiative as aggressor, or may alternatively choose to inflict damage of an Impact Rating equal to the QoS. If this Impact Rating fails to inflict at least a level 1 wound, the attacker overestimated the power of his strike: The Duel of Wills is still undecided and the previous defender assumes the role of the aggressor.

Defensive Maneuvers:

Counterstroke

Activation: 3 (minimum 1)

Favoured: Cursing

The finicky and difficult tactic of turning the opponent's power against himself. Defence dice are assigned and Checked as normal, with a tie having the usual result of the aggressor retaining this role.

If the defender surpasses the attacker's number of successes, he immediately becomes the aggressor and attacks with a Strike on the very next Exchange (no choice here).

He can assign as many dice from his SP as he wants to this Strike, and will have additional bonus dice equal to the previous' aggressor's number of successes on the attack successfully defended against.

Deflect

Activation: 0 (minimum 0)

The standard tactic of simply deflecting the opponent's sorcerous onslaught. If the number of successes from the assigned SP Checked against Casting TN equals the aggressor's attack successes, the attack was deflected. If it does

not only equal, but actually exceed them, the defender may assume the mantle of aggressor.

Endure

Activation: 0 (minimum –2)

Favoured: Mending (including Pain), Necromancy

The tactic of hunkering down and taking everything the opponent throws at you in the hope that he will wear himself out. If the defence is successful, no matter to what degree, the defender may still not assume the role of aggressor. (See the sole exception below.)

However, the aggressor for his next Exchange loses dice from his SP equal to half the number of successes on his attack; the successful defender, who took the punishment, loses half as many dice as the aggressor, though always less than him (i.e. if the aggressor loses 1 die, the defender loses 0 dice).

If this results in the next Exchange starting with the current aggressor's SP depleted and the current defender still retaining dice in his SP, the latter may assume the part of aggressor.

Evade

Activation: 0 (minimum 0)

Favoured: Prophecy

The tactic of getting the hell out of the fight, only possible if the sorcerer wanting to utilize it did not use an Offensive Maneuver in the immediately preceding Exchange; neither can this Maneuver be used on a confrontation's very first Exchange.

The assigned defence dice are Checked against Casting TN –2, and if they at least tie the attack dice's successes, the Duel of Will is ended.

It does however entail a certain degree of acknowledgement of defeat and inferiority. For the remainder of the scene, the sorcerer ending a Duel of Wits by means of Evade is at Casting TN +1 to affect his opponent with any sorcery, and the opponent affects him at Casting TN –1.

8. Effecting Multiple Targets

Sorcerers can affect more than one victim at once with a single application of the Cursing, Enslavement, and Mending Mysteries. The targets effected must all constitute a group, either in the sense of their physical proximity (with no non-members of the group interspersed between them), or else in another, clearly delineated sense; for example, a sorcerer could affect all present redheads, or eunuchs, or priests, even if those are mixed into a larger group. Casting and Containment Checks are made as usual, but 1 Casting success is discarded for every target after the first. The remaining Casting successes are Opposed as by the mechanics for the Mystery used, but only once, by the single target with the best chances to succeed at resisting the Mystery. The outcome of this single Check determines whether the sorcery overcomes the

resistance of all targets; if it fails, all targets are effected, if it is successful, no target is affected.

Example: *A sorcerer uses Pain against three guardsmen charging him. He achieves 6 Casting successes, of which 2 are discarded for the two additional targets. The guardsmen with the best TY checks this Attribute to oppose the 4 Casting Successes. If he achieves 4 or more successes, no guardsman is effected; if he achieves less than 4 successes, all three guardsmen suffer Pain 12.*

The Witchfire Mystery can also be used against several targets at once, wih the same mechanic of discarding Casting successes for additional targets. The reduced number of Casting successes are used both for damage calculation and for the attack rolls. Unlike with the other Mysteries, Checks to hit and avoid the Witchfire attack are made individually, for every target and by every target.

This concludes Chapter Six.

S&S GAMING

Along the dark, silent tunnel Conan groped, momentarily dreading a fall into some unseen pit; but at last his feet struck steps again, and he went up them until he came to a door on which his fumbling fingers found a metal catch. He came out into a dim and lofty room of enormous proportions.

Fantastic columns marched about the mottled walls, upholding a ceiling, which, at once translucent and dusky, seemed like a cloudy midnight sky, giving an illusion of impossible height. If any light filtered in from the outside, it was curiously altered.

In a brooding twilight, Conan moved across the bare green floor. The great room was circular, pierced on one side by the great, bronze valves of a giant door. Opposite this, on a dais against the wall, up to which led broad curving steps, there stood a throne of copper, and when Conan saw what was coiled on this throne, he retreated hastily, lifting his scimitar.

Then, as the thing did not move, he scanned it more closely and presently mounted the glass steps and stared down at it. It was a gigantic snake, apparently carved of some jade-like substance. Each scale stood out as distinctly as in real life, and the iridescent colors were vividly reproduced. The great wedge-shaped head was half submerged in the folds of its trunk; so neither the eyes nor jaws were visible. Recognition stirred in his mind. The snake was evidently meant to represent one of those grim monsters of the marsh, which in past ages had haunted the reedy edges of Vilayet's southern shores. But, like the golden leopard, they had been extinct for hundreds of years. Conan had seen rude images of them, in miniature, among the idol huts of the Yuetshi, and there was a description of them in the Book of Skelos, which drew on prehistoric sources.

Conan admired the scaly torso, thick as his thigh and obviously of great length, and he reached out and laid a curious hand on the thing. And as he did so, his heart nearly stopped.

An icy chill congealed the blood in his veins and lifted the short hair on his scalp. Under his hand there was not the smooth, brittle surface of glass or metal or stone, but the yielding, fibrous mass of a living thing. He felt cold, sluggish life flowing under his fingers.

His hand jerked back in instinctive repulsion. Sword shaking in his grasp, horror and revulsion and fear almost choking him, he backed away and down the glass steps with painful care, glaring in awful fascination at the grisly thing that slumbered on the copper throne. It did not move.

- Robert E Howard - The Devil in Iron

Chapter Seven
S&S Gaming

"Thus he spoke to them: Come here and kill me, then, if indeed you can. But know this – within these walls, death ends nothing."

Hen'r the Long-Hailed

I. A Sword & Sorcery Overview

This chapter takes a look at the setting, the protagonists and the structure of the typical Sword & Sorcery tale. It shows the common traits of the many variants of the genre and attempts to aid both referees and players alike in getting a feel for the conventions of Sword & Sorcery, to better allow them to create settings and characters appropriate for the genre.

For the sake of demonstrating what the tales have in common, a degree of generalisation is inevitable. Please be aware that no writer has at all times followed all of the tenets explained in this chapter, and so you too should feel free to ignore those that do not suit you. But please be also aware that while you can and should well deviate in a few precepts, you will be rapidly abandoning the field of Sword & Sorcery if you deviate in more than a handful at once. If that's what you want, fine, go ahead, more power to you, just be conscious of it.

1. The World of Sword & Sorcery

"I've invited ye to keep to your own company, ye damned fool. Now begone or I'll invite ye further with my boot."

David C. Smith, The Witch of the Indies

A Sword & Sorcery world is almost always a harsh place where violence and even outright cruelty are quite commonplace. The world or the relevant part of it may be outright lawless, but it need not be; if it is, it will usually abound with pockets of lawless behaviour where might makes right, either because a central authority is non-existent, or too weak to keep the peace, or simply does not bother to do it. Callous and corrupt regimes interested in nothing but the perpetuation of their own power and comfort would be typical, as would be regimes whose authority and hold over their countries is undermined by

contenders, rebel, war or raiders, or maybe by the sheer size of the land and the remoteness of the government. In any case, the setting for Sword & Sorcery tales is one where violence is not or not effectively monopolized by whatever government there happens to be.

The majority of people in Sword & Sorcery stories usually do little to alleviate the harshness of the violent world. Self-serving and callous people are common, and only a minority of people can be considered altruistic – which is of course not to say that the latter don't exist at all.

While decent people do exist and actually figure quite frequently in Sword & Sorcery stories, it is universally understood that they constitute the minority and mostly figure as a device to throw the utter selfishness of the majority into starker relief.

By and large, most people will have little interest in anything but their own advantage, and compassion will, if they feel it at all, be limited largely to their thoughts and only rarely enter their deeds.

Combined with this uncaring attitude, the abundance of violence and the utter egoism of the typical government, make the Sword & Sorcery world into a tragic place. While most common people do not of course have to contend with the threat of a violent end on a daily basis, the menace of it is ever present in the background, and almost everyone will have personally experienced situations where somebody's life was either ruined or outright terminated by rampant violence or the uncaring arbitrariness of people in power.

It is typical that in spite of these tragedies, the people of the Sword and Sorcery world do not strive to make their world a better place. The response of the majority is either selfishly looking only after themselves and their own prosperity and safety, or else outright fatalism, or a combination of both.

In extreme cases, such a combination might lead to an utterly decadent world where everybody feels powerless in the face of fate and does, while he waits for his turn for fate to strike him inevitably down, look only to his own pleasure and immediate advantage.

This latter setting is a subset of the Sword & Sorcery world, a decadent, fatalistic, and often also quite sophisticated, wicked and sybaritic type.

It provides a distinctive flavour of its own and therefore serves more often as the backdrop for stories of the cloak-and-dagger type that play out rather in opulent pleasure palaces and the dark back streets of ancient metropolises than in the wilderness or on battlefields.

But there is of course nothing to keep a referee from providing his very own Sword & Sorcery setting with different areas suffused with either type of flavour, the savagely violent and the wickedly depraved.

2. Faith and the Divine

"Your death will be agonizing, mortal!"
"In your dreams, you whoreson!"

David Gemmel, The Legend of Deathwalker

Almost all Sword & Sorcery settings lack direct manifestations of the divine. The priests will typically run the gamut; from scholars to Machiavellian plotters to ritualists humbugging either themselves or their flock, but they will – with one notable exception – never be recipients of any kind of special supernatural powers of divine origin. There are no "clerical spells", and miracles are thus stuff of religious legend, with no game mechanics to regulate the contingency of their appearance. The only priests who receive any kind of powers from their deities are usually the celebrants of evil, forbidden and secret cults, and they can rather be considered sorcerers having received preternatural knowledge and powers from their ultramundane patrons – typically at a cost.

These cultists, turning to almost universally malignant entities for arcane power and wisdom are the magic users of the genre and will be more thoroughly dealt with in the next section.

Religion in Sword & Sorcery can be monotheistic, but will more usually be polytheistic. Religious practices are frequently steeped in convoluted ritual, or actually consisting of them entirely, with sacrificial rites common.

With the darker cults, this can definitely include human sacrifice. The faithful almost certainly believe in divine intervention, but actual intervention is exceedingly rare. Mostly, the gods, if they do exist at all, are remote and uncaring; when they do show their hands at all it is more likely that it will be to punish and cast down than to rescue and reward.

Pantheons of gods that are not regarded as benevolent but rather need to be appeased to spare humanity their wrath are therefore more common in Sword & Sorcery than in other genres, but still overly in the minority.

While common people in the setting may well be deeply devout, the attitude of the protagonists is more often than not a deeply self-sufficient one of trying to avoid the gods as much as possible.

Most heroes of Sword & Sorcery respect divine power and will rarely insult it, but by and large avoid treading on any deity's shadow.

Exceptionally devout protagonists are the exception – the majority feel that there is no use turning to a god for something one can, by sweat and supreme effort, achieve oneself.

Even a protagonist as deeply religious as Howard's Solomon Kane displays this latter attitude of self-reliance over reliance on divine agency.

3. Magic and the Supernatural in Sword & Sorcery

Even though it is in the name of the genre, magic need not actually be real in a world of Sword & Sorcery, though it usually will be. In the rare cases where magic does not exist, it will still be practically universally believed in, to such a degree that it might be preferable not to inform the players that it is all rank superstition and that magic does not actually work.

However, the default is for magic to be very real, but never commonplace. In Sword & Sorcery, true magic is always rare, rather powerful, mysterious, and not completely understood even by its practitioners – and most of all, it is menacing and strange to the point of being outright alien.

Only seldom will magic work by drawing upon some anonymous force pervading the universe – usually the source of magic is either a force or entity inimical to life or at least humanity, and by working magic the sorcerer is endangering his sanity, soul or humanity, or even all of them.

Acts of sorcery, especially the more powerful ones, will often involve blood sacrifice and similar unpleasantries.

It should by now have become apparent that sorcerers in Sword & Sorcery tales are rarely nice guys – at best they are shady and ambiguous, and often they are outright hell-raising fiends. Owing to the danger that sorcery represents to its own practitioners, sorcerers are usually driven people with a strong will and great self-discipline.

It does after all take a certain kind of person to risk his life, and probably also soul or sanity, and flirt with eternal damnation. This does make sorcerers the perfect villain of the Sword & Sorcery tale and only marginally suitable as PCs.

Magic in Sword & Sorcery is universally subtle and never worked quickly, but rather the product of more or less lengthy ritual. Its effects are not obvious, or necessarily magical to the onlooker, and they are almost never flashy.

The sorcerer of this genre may converse with the dead, scrye out distant places, magically enslave people to his sovereign will, inflict wasting plagues upon those who irk him, command the weather, fool with hallucinations, curse his enemies with terrible dooms, summon demons to do his bidding and maybe even shake the very earth to bring down entire cities, but he will not throw lightning from his fingertips nor mass-produce magical items.

Such items of power are invariably rare in tales of Sword & Sorcery, with most campaigns playing out without a single magical item ever turning up. When magic items do exist they are usually the stuff of legend and eminently powerful, on a level with Excalibur and the Holy Grail, and are quite frequently cursed or otherwise doom-laden. If they appear at all, they take center stage and are the very focus of an entire adventure, or better yet, a series of adventures.

4. The Racial Makeup of Sword & Sorcery

With magic and the supernatural being so rare, it will not come as a surprise that non-human races are equally rare in Sword & Sorcery. This is a world of humans, and while non-humans do exist they are relegated to legend and the very fringe of the setting. Such beings are never commonplace and almost never integrated to any degree into human society, or even familiar with it.

Rather, they represent the uncanny, the alien, and the utterly inhuman. Bitter survivors of anterior races, scattered communities plotting the eventual downfall of man, degenerated descendants of elder races preying upon man, reclusive and solitary guardians of pre-human wisdom, those are the usual roles for non-humans in Sword & Sorcery, but certainly not one of sharing the quintessentially human world with any degree of equality or amicability. What non-humans figure in Sword & Sorcery are anything but humans with pointed ears; rather, they are ultimately unfathomable and unknowable and thus quintessentially non-human.

The role of the non-human in the Sword & Sorcery adventure is therefore similar to that of the magic item, though maybe to a lesser degree: When one figures in an adventure, he will be central to it and much of the adventure will revolve around him.

The same does of course apply to monsters, those well-loved number one enemies of role-playing heroes: In Sword & Sorcery, they are ousted from this position. Here, the most common adversary of the hero is his fellow man, and monsters occupy a similarly special place as non-humans.

If they appear in the stories, they will not fulfil the role of the common orc, to be slaughtered in untold numbers, but rather the role of Grendel or Count Dracula: The focus and backbone of an entire adventure, or a recurring pot device on the way to the climax. It follows that they usually appear singly or at best in tiny, closely connected groups, for example Grendel and his mother. They are individual horrors, capable of single-handedly menacing all of the characters in a story – and slaying more than a few.

In Sword & Sorcery, the role of non-humans and monsters is a similar one: Both represent an encounter with the uncanny. Conan doesn't typically fight through hordes of monsters the way he does hordes of men, nor do Clark Ashton Smith's various heroes.

Even where Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser confront monsters with steel, they only once or twice battle them in great numbers. Elric is the exception but even then only occasionally. And even more recent Sword & Sorcery heroes, like Hercules or Xena, rarely battle more than one true monster at a time – and they live in an age of monsters.

In the few cases in the source literature where monsters appear in groups, the hero's solution is almost always to run, while villainous or simply less wary men are slaughtered.

5. Heroes and Villains in Sword & Sorcery

"Think well about this venture. For make no mistake, you cannot stand before me and live. No man ever has."

David Gemmell, Legend

The heroes of Sword & Sorcery come in many different shapes and sizes. Some, like Elric, are deeply introspective intellectuals, others, like Conan, are indomitable fighting men, others, like the Gray Mouser, are sly bounders, others, like Cyrion, are suave sophisticates, and yet again others, like Kane, are simply badasses; with Myal Lemyal there is even an outright goofball among the heroes of the genre. The genre abounds with many different types of protagonists, and by far not all them meet their opposition head-on and weapon in hand. But however divergent their method, outlook on life, and temperament may be, there are a few underlying, unifying traits they all have in common.

The Sword & Sorcery hero is usually a stranger, outcast or outlaw, an alien or a misfit in the region where his tale plays out. He is often, but not always, of humble descent, a commoner, former slave or outright barbarian. In cases where he hails from the higher classes of society he is either discredited, disinherited or irrevocably deposed from his once lofty position. He comes from the very lowest stratum of the upper class – the lowest of the mighty.

He lives by his brawn or cunning, and often by both. His personal capabilities are remarkable and lift him head and shoulders above the masses. By their virtue, he imposes his own brand of law upon desolate wilderness and sophisticated civilisation alike. He is as gregarious and as fond of companionship as the next person, but at the end of the day he is his own man and utterly self-reliant. This self-reliance typically extends to his attitude towards gods and the divine.

While he may be a deep thinker and even an outright intellectual, he is always a man of action. When a decision is called for, he does not hesitate or lose himself in doubt, but acts. This doesn't mean that he plunges head over heels into hasty action, but rather that he is neither afraid to act nor paralyzed by pondering the possible consequences. When the circumstances call for it, even a Sword & Sorcery hero who is usually a brooder will be able to quickly arrive at a decision and then have the guts to follow it through.

As he exists in a harsh and violent world, the Sword & Sorcery hero is typically himself a harsh person who does not shrink from violence – he has to be to survive, let alone prosper and further his goals. He well may, like Solomon Kane, be utterly dedicated to the pursuit of selfless and ulterior motives, but even if he is, he is almost never "good" in the conventional sense of the world – too uncompromising would best describe the righteous Sword & Sorcery hero, all too ready to dish out his own brand of summary justice, and incredibly callous towards those he judges to be wicked.

But this type of hero is in the minority; the clear majority of Sword & Sorcery heroes are hardly heroic in the conventional sense. Products of selfish and uncaring societies, they are usually ruthless and self-serving. Only few of them shrink from acts of savage violence, theft and even outright murder and rapine. They are out to make a living in a tragic, cruel and unforgiving world, and they are ready to do whatever it takes, by means foul or fair.

But there is a fine but clear line that divides the hero from the villain, a line the hero will almost never cross. Unlike the villain, the hero does typically treat people the way they treat him. Strangers and enemies are fair prey for whatever the hero deigns to visit upon them, but his friends, companions, and those he has shared danger with are at the very least exempt from the hero's depredations, and will often find him a faithful friend who will treat them fairly. This even extends to respected and honourable enemies, who will normally be treated with a kind of rough chivalry. For as long as those close to the hero play fair by him, he will play fair by them.

The Sword & Sorcery villain on the other hand will not shrink from stabbing anybody in the back, even companions who have never done anything but right by him. This is what constitutes villainy in Sword & Sorcery: Acknowledging no bounds to one's self-serving behaviour, and being more than ready to treat everybody, even friends and allies, as mere stepping stones on one's own egoistic path.

While the villain will readily prey on everybody, the hero will at least exempt friends and – this is important – those he has shared danger with, from his own depredations. This is the dividing line.

The hero, as savage and maybe even cruel as he may be, is harsh and violent because that's the way of a world where one has to be strong and possibly without mercy, but he exempts those who have in their previous behaviour towards him not been part of the harshness and violence of the world. The villain exempts nobody. All people, even those treating him with kindness and consideration, are but tools to him.

Even though this is not necessary, Sword & Sorcery affords the player at least the opportunity to portray true bastards, but however cold-blooded and callous a player character may be, it is of paramount importance that he does not cross the line into the realm where he becomes a predator to all of humankind.

A typical Sword & Sorcery hero will often do some very amoral, wicked and outright vicious things, but this behaviour needs to be balanced with at least some degree of decency on his part. If this decency is missing, he totally lacks any redeeming quality. Such a protagonist is disgusting; watching his exploits lacking any glimpse of even vestigial propriety, and he is hardly suitable to fulfil the role of the protagonist of something that should, with all its grittiness, be an entertaining pastime.

If there is a single tenet of Sword & Sorcery that must not be broken it would be this. The hero, no matter how depraved otherwise – and he need not necessarily be depraved at all – must never cross the line into completely anti-social behaviour.

6. The Sword & Sorcery Tale

It should now hardly come as a surprise that Sword & Sorcery adventures are not about the exploits of heroes in shining armour on white steeds, but rather about protagonists out for very private reasons. In this genre, stakes tend to be personal.

The Sword & Sorcery hero is never questing to save the world; instead, he is usually motivated by revenge, trying to save his own butt, or out to make a splash. Many will be totally indifferent to the classic damsel in distress, though there are quite a few Sword & Sorcery heroes who seem to display a peculiar kind of – very rough! –chivalry towards women.

Consequently, the antagonists are typically not vicious people whose nefarious plans have to be thwarted by the virtuous heroes. Much often they are rivals who happen to be after the same goal as the heroes, who want to thwart the heroes' pursuit of this goal, or simply personal enemies trying to get back at them for some real or perceived slight, or maybe somebody with whom the heroes unluckily cross paths with.

On occasion the antagonist is somebody from whom a hero has to protect people close to him, though such an unselfish motivation is somewhat of an exception. By and large, the hero is out to attain a goal that would be of immediate benefit to himself (personal gain, survival, escape), or to aid a friend of his, but never to further the common good.

As the supernatural is always rare in Sword & Sorcery, the majority of the antagonists will be human. When non-human antagonists appear, they are always central to the adventure, in such a way that they are effectively adventures in and of themselves – even when the object of the adventure isn't to slay the monster. Where non-human antagonists appear, a few points usually apply universally:

- The monster is not necessarily there to be slain. (Though, to be sure, it probably can be. Monsters are generally as mortal as anything else.) Often the objective is to avoid being slain by the monster.
- The monster is formidable enough to challenge several PCs at once.
- Most of the lesser – human – bad guys are not minions or cultists of the monster, but rivals of the PCs in whatever goal the PCs happen to pursue.
- The monster's lair is as dangerous to the lesser bad guys as it is to the PCs, and quite a few of these lesser bad guys may well be slain through the monster's agency.

As is often the case with Sword & Sorcery gaming, horror provides a better model for stories than high fantasy adventures. In the classic Sword & Sorcery tale the monster is a series of foreshadowed dangers and actual hazards that may, later in the game, blossom into an actual confrontation.

The locales where Sword & Sorcery tales are set vary widely, but are often exotic, and when not desolate, resonate heavily with the flavour of the setting. Dangerous backstreets of wicked cities, a countryside ravaged by war, the marble

halls of opulent palaces, the encampment of a mercenary company, a pirate ship on the high seas, a military encampment on the edge of civilisation, a caravan of slavers, a squalid camp of refugees and the like would all be perfect examples.

The second type of the locales are the desolate ones: Ruins of a lost civilisation, the abandoned temple of a forbidden deity, an inimical wilderness, an island shown on no map, the spider-haunted crypt of an ancient king, the forbidding lair of a legendary evil, and similarly hostile and mysterious places.

These isolated locales will more often be the setting for adventures revolving around non-human menaces, who by virtue of being not integrated into human society, are usually found on the desolate edge of civilisation.

The exception to this would of course be supernatural menaces that have been able to somehow insinuate themselves secretly into human society, like for instance vampires or maybe a thing inhabiting a temple and passing itself off as deity.

But whatever the locale of the Sword & Sorcery tale may be, it is never ever boring. It is exotic, or colourful, or even terrifying, but always an interesting place, though not one the wise would visit.

The pace of Sword & Sorcery adventures is fast and furious, with rarely a scene lacking action or conflict. Long stretches of quietude, where heroes gather information, or set up a convoluted intrigue, are absent from this kind of adventure.

Not every scene needs to have mad action – nor should it –, but where it is absent there should at least be a fair degree of tension, menace or some kind of non-physical conflict; for instance if a scene consists of nothing but conversation, these conversations should be laden with veiled threats, undercurrents of hostility or other elements adding tension to an otherwise peaceful stretch of adventure.

For the referee this means that he must under no circumstance allow the PCs to spend time just stalling, preparing, scouting, chatting, or otherwise passing long spans of time in secure complacency. Events, namely those of the exciting, rousing kind, should progress briskly, and if the PCs stray down a quiet side alley of the adventure for overlong, the referee has to hit them with unfolding events.

The worlds of Sword & Sorcery aren't safe places, they don't wait for their heroes, and they certainly don't afford them opportunities to stall; if they do, events are likely to overtake them at a furious, heart-throbbing pace.

To convey this, the referee should use NPCs, especially villains, who don't just sit around and wait for the PCs, but who actively pursue their own agendas; if the PCs want to thwart them or beat them to some goal, they have to act, and act decisively.

This concludes the overview over what Sword & Sorcery tales are like and what **Blade**

adventures should be like. At the very end, once more a very quick checklist of the most important and elementary corner stones of the genre:

- Settings are harsh – various combinations of corrupt, violent, decadent and callous.
- Heroes are often, though not always, bastards, with most having reservations about being total bastards.
- Magic is mysterious, often rare and powerful and dangerous to its users, but without flashy effects.
- Supernatural and non-human beings rare and when they appear are central to the adventure.
- Human opponents are often not direct enemies, but rivals in the pursuit of a goal.
- Stakes in adventures are personal, not global.
- Events in adventures progress at a fast pace.

II. 20 Tips for running your Blade game!

"No. Their god spared their city," Kane told him bitterly. "But I returned with an army of a hundred thousand. And I spared not a soul, nor left one stone standing, in all of Andalar."

Karl Edward Wagner, The Other One

Keep It Exciting

Everything that follows is an extension of this simple truth. The key to **Blade** is to keep it exciting, entertaining, and surprising. This is the responsibility of the ref and the players alike.

1. Go…Get…Some…Books!

Grab some Sword & Sorcery novels and read them, then encourage everyone in your group to read them too.

This is the stuff on which **Blade** is based, so there's no better source of inspiration for your games. Movies will do if you've got no alternatives, but it just isn't the same.

2. The Fray's the Thing

Combat is the heart of **Blade**, and the heart of combat is the maneuvering. Every attack in combat should be as creative and detailed and possible. Never simply say "I kick the guy," or "I swing at him." Explain how you're doing it, and make it exciting!

Visualize your character as if he were on a movie screen, and use all the scenery and the props at your disposal. If you don't know what I mean, go rent Brotherhood of the Wolf right now and study the fight scenes. Think about how they do it in the movies, and then transfer that style to the game.

Blade combat should be fast, fluid, and constantly jumping. The fun is based a mostly on how well you and your friends pull this off.

3. Do It with Style

Blade characters are action heroes. That means that not only can they do cool things, but they look cool doing them. Everything should be done with flair, panache, and attitude. Remember, you're one of the big fish, so act like it.

4. Subtlety Is Not a Virtue

Everything in **Blade** should be larger than life. This doesn't just apply to the action either; melodrama is a staple of S&S novels. Betrayal, loyalty, honor, and revenge are all common themes, and they should be played to the hilt. When your mortal enemy reappears, and your sweetheart turns up murdered, don't be lukewarm, that's not interesting. This is your time in the spotlight — go nuts!

5. Everyone Has a Past

Melodramatic hooks are not only one of the fundamental keys to defining your character; they're also a fertile source for plot twists and surprises. Everyone has a past, and thus everyone has a purpose.

Grab your Passion Attributes and have a blast! Maybe you're out for revenge, or maybe you're out for redemption. Maybe you're looking for something, or maybe you're trying not to be found. Maybe you've lost your memory, or maybe you're trying to forget.

What matters is that you're trying to do something, and the more defined the better. With a little cooperation from both sides of the table, there's always room to introduce long-lost family or traitorous friends who are out to get you.

6. Don't Loot the Bodies

It's crass. This may be a standard practice in other RPGs, but it just isn't done in **Blade**. When was the last time you read about any S&S hero rifling through the bad guys' clothes for a few coins? It's perfectly acceptable to search the bodies for vital clues, or just to grab their weapons if you need them, but loot is rarely an issue. You can usually get whatever you need anyway, so don't be a creep.

7. The entire World's a Cliché

Nothing's been done before that can't be done again in **Blade**. The stronger the stereotype the better, so play

it up. Villains always come with an army of henchmen, a secret fortress, and a nefarious plan which they will boast about when they think you're at their mercy. Old hermits always are fonts of Zen-like wisdom, cynical guards are always idealists at heart, and assassins always have the soul of a poet.

This doesn't mean every character in your story should be a walking cliché, but you shouldn't worry about using them in your adventures either. However, don't let your games become predictable. After all, the best clichés are the ones that you put your own twist on.

8. If It's Not Important, It's Off Screen

Some referees love to play out every situation the characters get into. That's fine for some RPGs, but not for **Blade**. Anything mundane, and thus uninteresting, should be dealt with quickly and without fanfare. Things like eating, sleeping, and shopping should all take place off-screen.

Now sometimes the weekly trip to the market will be an opportunity for your PCs to get vital information, or daily meditation in the shrine turns into a brawl. On these special days the mundane gets some screen time, but otherwise, forget about it.

9. A Game in Motion Tends To Stay in Motion

Blade is a game of action, so keep the action moving. Think of your game as a movie, and then think about what you do — and don't — want to see on the screen. Stick to pulp author Raymond Chandler's school of thought: "If things come to a standstill, have a couple of armed goons kick down the door". Any **Blade** setting worth gaming in is a dangerous place, and attackers out of the blue raises questions that can be investigated. This doesn't mean the game should be one continuous battle, but you should keep things moving along. Don't let your players get bogged down with trivia or become indecisive. Keep the arrows flying and the blades slinging!

10. It's Not Just About Combat

A common criticism of the Sword & Sorcery genre is that it's just about hack-and-slash. This is only true if you let it be so. Like all good action novels, what happens between the fights is as important as the fights themselves.

High melodrama, low comedy, and complex plot twists are as much a part of **Blade** as the action. Give your players their story! A story they really want to work through and a chance to develop their character's Passion Attributes. Endless fight scenes quickly become dull and meaningless.

11. Mooks — Set Dressing That's Fun to Beat Up

Refs new to **Blade** could possibly feel that unnamed characters die too easily, and ask "How can I make them tougher?". This is missing the point. Mooks aren't supposed to be tough.

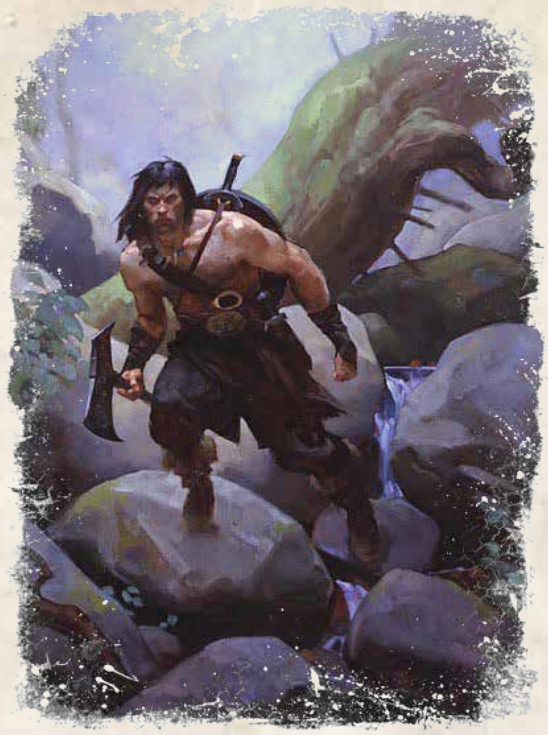
Mooks, thugs, goons, and Imperial Storm troopers… call them what you will, they're meant to be cannon fodder for your PCs. Mind you, this doesn't mean that they're harmless. Throw enough mooks at your PCs, and they'll eventually wear them down.

It also doesn't mean that mooks can't have a few interesting powers or use clever tactics. However, mooks are the extras of the game, meant to augment your main villains, not replace them. The real challenge should be the named characters. We would even go as far as to say that a level 4 or greater wound should slay a mook. Instantly! This well reflects S&S heroes clearing out a crowded hall of enemies!

By the way, don't worry about where all these mooks come from. Villains have an endless supply of losers working for them. "Crunch all you want, we'll make more."

12. Eat Your Mooks — they're good for you

To emphasize the appropriate respect the players should have for mooks (i.e., not much), keep



bowls of hard candies like Reese's Pieces or M&Ms, and use them to represent mooks. The rule is simple: If you take down a mook, you get to eat him.

Unless one of your players is diabetic, this is sure to get them in the spirit.

13. Let Your Players Shine

Player Characters are the heroes of your **Blade** novel — let them act like it. Most of what the heroes do in novels or movies would never work in real life anyway, so don't apply the "real life" rule to your players. **Blade** characters regularly bend the laws of physics to do the things they do. *Roll with it*.

Now you shouldn't let your players get away with things that are obviously impossible or just plain stupid. But don't trip them up with rules technicalities or reality checks.

14. Let Your Players Fail

As a counterpoint to the above, resist the temptation to rig the game in favor of your players. Players can smell a rigged game a mile away. Make them succeed on their own skills, smarts, and luck.

If too much attention is paid to story concerns, your **Blade** game may appear faithful to the original stories in form, but, ironically it will not feel that way. The trick with presenting an uncaring Sword & Sorcery world is to referee it impartially and without sentiment for the survival or well-being of the player characters. Some game theories espouse the concept that PCs should be special and merit special consideration.

Don't do this.

If they are to be special, it should be through their own actions and by their already considerable capabilities against the hostile milieu

So, no Plot or story Immunity!

Blade Heroes can fail or even die — it happens in novels all the time. Just be sure you give the players their shot at revenge later, and let them look good doing it.

15. Great Villains Never Die; They Come Back in Sequels

The most memorable villains keep coming back. No matter how badly they seem beaten, they always bounce back with a bigger army of goons, deadlier sorcery, a more impenetrable fortress, and an even more diabolical plan.

Always give your villain a hidden escape route, or at least an ambiguous death. If your players are enjoying it, they may help out with something like, "Well, that's the last we'll be seeing of old Thulsa. After all, no one could have survived that fall."

Of course players, being the savvy (and bloodthirsty) individuals that they are, will still go to great lengths to make sure your villains are truly and completely dead. That's normal, but if you think the players are getting tired of it, let the villain die. He can always return as a cackling ghost if they miss him.

16. Paint a Picture

Blade is a game that depends highly on visualization, more so than most other RPGs. The players say who they are and what they're doing; it's up to you to provide the rest. The better your description of the scene, the characters in it, and what they're up to, the more creative your players' acts of mayhem will be. More than this, a vivid description brings the game to life, and is instrumental in introducing the Sword and Sorcery feel to your players.

17. Let Players Roll the Dice

In large combats, players often have little control over the outcome of events when it isn't their turn in the Limelight. This can lead to boredom if a player's attention drifts between his turns, threatening to distance him from the outcome of events.

The best method of dealing with this problem is to put more dice rolling into your players' hands: *allow your players to make all of the dice rolls in and out of combat*.

This takes a lot of the work out of the ref's hands since he no longer needs to roll those Checks needed to administer the melee. This frees up his attention for other important things, such as enemy tactics, spell effects, terrain, and the like.

Conversely, it requires the players to become much more active and aware of what's going on. No longer can players snooze through all Limelights but their own: They'll be rolling more dice than ever before—which (among other benefits) gives them the feeling of having greater control over their successes and failure, plus, since the ref isn't rolling the dice, he can't fudge a result to give the characters a break (or take one away).

18. Keep Your Villains on their Toes

One major consideration for an arch-villain's organization that is often overlooked is the infighting that goes on between members. Any mook's main goal in life should be to become the next Chief Lieutenant. With that in mind, they should be quite willing to sell out their fellow mooks for a chance of advancement. This can often be beneficial to players who understand the value of a well-placed bribe. In turn, the Chief Lieutenants should have to watch out for daggers from the shadows, and the Arch Villain himself has to keep his Chief Lieutenants from becoming powerful enough to become a threat to his own schemes. It's very, very dangerous to be in the Hierarchy of Evil and the road to the top is paved with daggers.

19. Give Your Encounter a Hook

Call it what you will, but by 'hook' I'm talking about giving your **Blade** encounter that unusual element which will spark an immediate interest in your players. If the players get interested you can often feed off of that and become energized to referee a great encounter. A hook is that special something that makes the encounter strange, new, exciting, puzzling or provoking:

- A fascinating location (on a narrow, crumbling bridge; above a massive spinning fan; in the roaring, pounding surf)
- It could assail one of the senses (strobing light caused by strange fungi, intense heat from a blazing fire, strange noises, weird lights, sudden temperature changes)

20. Give your Players Small Secrets

Play with plenty of small secrets in your **Blade** game. Why does the prim and proper lady down the street go out every Thursday at midnight and not return until noon the next day? What's that blue flickering light that shines from a neighbor's basement window at night?

Why can't you remember last Tuesday morning, anyway? The "best" and most inspiring RPG material I've seen is always material that contains dozens of tiny, throw-away mysteries. Almost every paragraph mentions some weird oddity and doesn't really explain it. These are small things, not secrets that will change the nature of the universe. In addition, they give the players who can't solve mysteries to save their own lives something to play with.

Small mysteries tend to be much easier to solve: You follow the prim and proper lady. You sneak into your neighbor's basement. You ask people around your neighborhood whether they saw where you went last Tuesday morning. Not all mysteries involve webs of clues and payoffs.

Even someone who swears up and down that they hate mysteries may find some fun in hunting down the easy answer to a small question. You're no longer stuck with a choice between leaving mysteries out entirely or alienating one of your players. Have Fun!

Final Word: The Iron Rule

These rules are yours, and you are invited to make them even more so by customising them to your heart's content. Add, change, and ignore what you like. There is however only a single rule that cannot be altered while still playing **Blade** and this is the Iron Rule:

When we encourage "you" to make these rules your own we are referring to the gaming group, not the referee. The gaming group has every authority to change the rules; the ref on his own has none. He doesn't own the game he is refereeing, the group does. If he wants to change a rule, ignore a rule, or add a rule, he has to run this by his group, and if the majority of the group (himself included as but one member among several members of equal rights) repudiates this change, the change cannot be enacted.

The ref has but one special authority over the rules: He can vetoe any rules change proposed by any of the players. It doesn't matter if the majority of the group wants to change one of the rules presented herein, if the ref isn't comfortable with such a change, the rule still stands.

So that's the Rule of Iron. The group as a whole may change the rules as it likes, the ref without the group's consent may not.

This concludes Chapter Seven.

Tharag Thule
COLD WASTES
Onar
LAMU
KATHPATUKA
Laksha, Ghoma, Azjan and Taikang
Mazad
TUNDRA
Lamra
KHORSUL
TARAAM
ZORAB MOUNTAINS
Hamgatana
Achad
SUSRAH
NABASTIS
Jhaddar
Yaatana
Khargamum
STEPPE
Khadar
Ghezath
KHARJAH PASS
PLAINS
WHISPERING WASTE
Belthaar
DESERT
Yirlat Oasis
Dipur
Zhaol
Ghazor
KHAZISTAN
Yemar
Khazabad
Khora
JAIRAN
Zul-Bazzir
XOTH
Isles of the Sea Reavers
WILD NOMADS
Khadis
Ibar
Bahit Oasis
Amenti
YAR-AMMON
EASTERN OCEAN
SILVER LOTUS ISLES
Shan-Addah
LAND OF SOTALAS
Akhet
TOMB HILLS
Fakhuum
ALAT
ZADJ
Iraab
Sunken Isles of Ptahaana
Desolation of Elder Kuth
STONE DRAGON VALLEY
Sahfir
Al-Qazir
RUINS OF THE GIANT KINGS
Khariya
SAVANNAH
PARCHED LANDS
HILLS OF THE DEAD
AZIMBA
SHOMA
Zimballah
Ikuna Lands
CANNIBAL COAST
Katanga
Jungle Kingdoms of Yalotha
SHINING HILLS
SWAMP
LOST CITY OF SERPENTS
JUNGLE
SACRED LAKE
MAZANIA
UNKNOWN JUNGLES
Boma-Ya
Scale
100 miles

"The nostalgia of things unknown, of lands forgotten or unfound, is upon me at times. Often I long for the gleam of yellow suns upon terraces of translucent azure marble, mocking the windless waters of lakes unfath¬omably calm; for lost, legendary palaces of serpentine, silver and ebony, whose columns are green stalactites; for the pillars of fallen temples, standing in the vast purpureal sunset of a land of lost and marvellous romance. I sigh for (...) the strange and hidden cities of the desert, with burning brazen domes and slender pinnacles of gold and copper that pierce a heaven of heated lazuli."

Clark Ashton Smith - Nostalgia of the Unknown

Chapter Eight
Xoth

"The currencies of this savage land are coined from threefold metal: There is the silver of talking, the gold of brooding, and the steel of bloodshed."

On Lands Yet Tamed

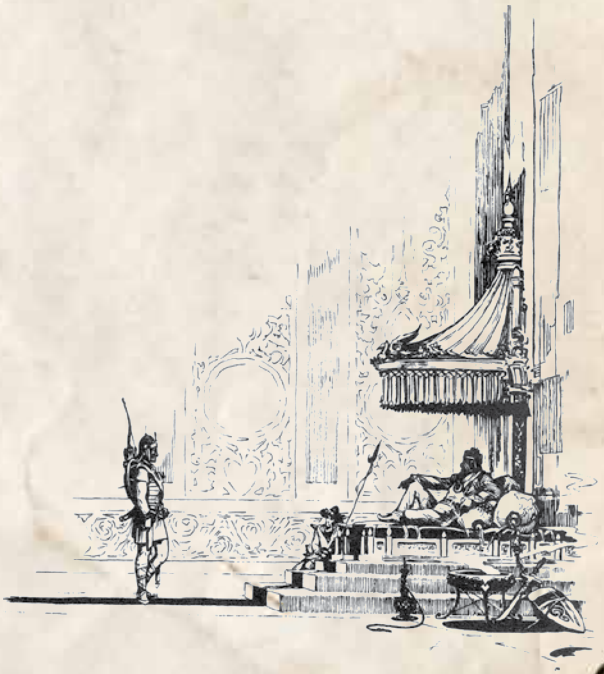
The Forlorn Tome of Du'Karrn

I. Xoth Overview

Welcome to a world where men are mighty, women are voluptuous, kings are cruel, and hidden terror lurks in every brooding ruin! It is an age of splendorous but decadent king¬doms, where armies clash at the whims of depraved nobles, and the bloody sword of an adventurer can topple empires.

The opportunities for adventure in the World of Xoth are endless. Perhaps the player characters are shipwrecked on the bleak shores of the cannibalistic Ikuna tribes, or encounter a Zadjite merchant-fleet headed for the Silver Lotus Isles.

Adventurers can explore the ancient ruins and ziggurat-temples of the Sunken Isles of Ptahaana, or head back to the warring city-states of Susrah to enlist as mercenary captains. Others may travel to the domed palaces and scented gardens of Zul-Bazzir, through the scorching deserts of Khazistan, to the barbaric stone cities of Azimba, or into the for¬bidden temples of Susrah, and beyond.



Read on, and prepare for high adventure! From the forbidden catacombs of Belthaar to the sunken temples of Namthu, a world of adventure awaits you!

1. The People

The following describes the various peoples and cultures found in the world of Xoth. Survivors of older, pre-human races, such as the giant-kings of Kuth and the Yalothan snakemen, exist only in small numbers and are primarily intended as non-player characters and villains. Each people have among its numbers various cultural archetypes.

Languages: There is no common language in the world of Xoth. Each people speaks its own language.

Azimbans

Also known as the "dwellers in the cities of stone" by their tribal neighbors, the Azimbans have an old culture centered around their stone fortresses and bird-worship.

Physical Description: The black warriors of Azimba are tall, strong and proud, known for their discipline in formations with shield and spear. The men are usually shaven-headed, and the wearing of brightly colored robes and feathered plumes is common.

Religion: The god of the Azimbans is Jul-Juggah, a reptilian bird-god that must be propitiated with human sacrifice. His feather-cloaked priests know the secret spells to summon lesser winged lizards, survivors of a lost age.

Cultural Characteristics: Azimbans are almost invariably Civilized, with only some of the more jaded or depraved members of their upper class qualifying as Decadent.

Bhangari

The mysterious eastern realms of Laksha, Ghoma and Azjan are inhabited by a multitudinous people known for their fierce warrior castes, master craftsmen, skilled herbalists, and ranks of ascetic priests. The Bhangari live in great walled cities and build temples that soar to the sky.

Physical Description: Of medium height, with golden skin and delicate features. The men keep their black hair cropped short and dress in simple cotton garments, while the women wear colorful silken gowns and weave their hair in long braids.

The armies of Laksha, Ghoma and Azjan wear medium armor decorated with silver and gold; the officers have turbans set with feathers or gems to denote their station.

Religion: Not much is known about the cults of the east. The cult of the ape-god Simatala originated in the land of Laksha, and there

are several cults that worship aspects of the elephant.

Cultural Characteristics: The remote Bhangari seem to be mostly Civilized, obviously with a small sprinkling of Hillmen. Apparently, their upper classes consist of a fairly equal Civilized and Decadent proportions.

Daka

The Daka are the pygmies inhabiting the Silver Isles of the Eastern Ocean. They live in jungle caves and know the secrets of the rare lotus herbs that grow only on their islands.

Physical Description: Short of stature (even adults are rarely 5 feet tall) with curly black hair and dark, wrinkled skin; dressed in loincloths and jewelry of feather and bones, and armed with hunting bows and blowpipes.

Religion: The Daka worship as gods the monstrous slugs of colossal size that inhabit the marshes and swamps of the Silver Isles.

Cultural Characteristics: All known Daka are Savages, but there might be the remote possibility that their swamps harbour small communities of Degenerates. In any case, every Daka character must take the Dwarf Poor Asset

Ghazorites

The Ghazorites are a sub-race of the Susrahnites, who dwell in and around the great port-city of Ghazor on the coast of the eastern ocean. The Ghazorites are known both as avaricious merchants, ruthless warriors, and excellent sailors.

Physical Description: Slightly smaller of stature than their plains-dwelling brethren, Ghazorite men and women often have some foreign blood, the result of intermingling of races. Such crossbreeding usually manifests as a flat nose, blond hair, green eyes, swarthy skin, or some other unusual feature.

Religion: The Ghazorites worship the gods of Susrah, in addition to many strange gods brought to the city by foreign sailors, mercenaries and merchants.

Cultural Characteristics: Like their cousins the Susrahnites, the Ghazorites are a people both Civilized and Decadent. While Decadents are more commonly found among the upper classes, they are in no way confined to it, nor are they composed uniformly of them.

Ikunas

The cannibalistic tribes of the Ikuna lands are a constant plague upon the neighboring nations. From their homeland south of the Hills of the Dead, between the jungle and the coast, the Ikunas wage a war of terror upon the Zadjites, Azimbans, and anyone venturing into the southern waters. Few dare go into these lands; likewise, an Ikuna raiding party on the warpath is something best avoided.

Physical Description: Copper-skinned with wavy hair and slightly green-tinted eyes that give them a preternatural, fearsome appearance. The Ikuna warriors are heavily muscled and move with pantherish grace, clad only in loincloths. The women, who are often shamans and tribal priestesses, adorn themselves with necklaces of bone and teeth.

Religion: The Ikunas worship several tribal gods, some of which are simply deified serpents, giant bats and great lizards from the nearby jungles of Yalotha.

But also on the blood-stained altars in the witch-houses of the Ikuna are grotesque idols of older demon-gods and grinning, inhuman skulls of unnatural proportions.

Cultural Characteristics: Characters of Ikuna ancestry can be portrayed as either Degenerates or Savages but do in any case start out with the Cannibalism Poor Asset.

Jairanians

Dwellers in the desert-cities of the west, the Jairanians are renowned as master craftsmen, breeders of fine horses, and cunning thieves. Mercenaries from the cities of Jairan are employed across the continent.

Physical Description: Light brown skin, deep brown eyes, wearing loose pants and short vests.

Religion: Various grim gods are worshipped among the Jairanians, including Yadar, Othabbhon, and even Al-Tawir.

Cultural Characteristics: Jairanians from the desert can either be Nomads or, more rarely Civilized. City-dwelling Jairanians are Civilized, with part of their upper class being Decadent.

Khazistanis

Conquering horsemen of the northwestern steppes, the Khazis or Khazistanis are a proud people, and justly so. From humble nomadic roots, they have established an empire with glittering cities stretching from the Eastern Sea to the deserts of Jairan, and scores of caravans bringing tribute and loot to the proud nobles of Khazabad.

The ruling warrior caste consists of mounted archers riding magnificent purebred horses into battle.

Physical Description: Tan-skinned, brown-eyed and black-haired. The Khazis are generally lithe of build, although large individuals certainly exist. The men sometimes wear turbans and grow long moustaches or beards. The women usually wear veils and robes.

Religion: The Khazis primarily worship Yadar and Nhakhramat, neither of which are native Khazistani gods, but whose cults have replaced former elemental and ancestor worship.

Cultural Characteristics: Almost all Khazistanis are Civilized, with the small portion clinging to a more traditional, ancestral lifestyle still being Nomads. As a still vigorous, only recently conquering people, almost none of their upper class are as of yet Decadent. Khazistanis and Khazrajites speak almost identical dialects.

Khazrajites

The nomadic tribes of the northwestern desert are descended from Khazistani stock. Calling themselves the Khazraj, they are a free-willed, fierce and stubborn lot; a constant menace to caravans and travelers.

Physical Description: The Khazrajites are physically identical to the people of Khazistan, but of a slightly darker tan due to their exposure to the desert sun. Adult men usually grow thick, black beards, and wear white khaftan robes and silver-hilted scimitars.

Religion: Chief among the gods of the desert is Al-Tawir, the Ancient One, although his name is more often used in curses than in prayer. Still, the nomads fear the Lord of the Empty Wastes and make small offerings to avoid getting lost or suffering from hunger and thirst.

Cultural Characteristics: These fierce desert tribesmen, the more rustic brothers of the Khazistanis, are invariably Nomads. Khazrajites and Khazistanis speak almost identical dialects.

Khoran

The Isles of the Sea Reavers are inhabited by dangerous men and cunning women from many nations, and their couplings have brought forth many who are born as natives of the isles, in the fortified pirate-city of Khora. Such children usually inherit the worst traits of both parents.

Physical Description: The skin-tone of Khorans range from the icy white of Tharag Thulans to the night-black of Ikunas, but is usually somewhere in-between. They dress in gaudy pantaloons and adorn themselves with gold earrings and ivory-hilted knives pilfered from burning merchant-vessels.

Religion: The gods are more feared than worshipped in the lawless port of Khora, but even the Sea Reavers occasionally offer sacrifice to the gods of the sea and the sky. Akhlathu, the god of twisted fate, is also a popular patron of many pirate crews.

Cultural Characteristics: The mongrel Khorans are mostly Civilized or Decadent, but encompass a small stratum of Hillmen and an even smaller one of Degenerate throwbacks. They don't speak a proper language of their own, but a dialect of Susrahnian, with a few words from various languages thrown in for good measure.

Kuthan, Halfbreed

The pureblooded giant-kings of Elder Kuth took human concubines, and the results of these unions were halfbreeds, exceptional humans who would usually (but not always) serve as loyal agents of their powerful masters.

Physical Description: Of normal human size, but usually heavily muscled and wielding huge swords crafted by the giant-kings.

Religion: Believing themselves the sons of gods, the Kuthan halfbreeds demand to be worshipped as demi-gods.

Cultural Characteristics: If half breed descendants of the ancient Kuthans do at all still exist somewhere on Xoth, they would surely either be god-like Enlightened individuals, or else horrible Decadents. In any case they would almost invariably have the Giant Asset, either Good or Poor, and speak the language of their non-Kuthian parent as their native one.

Kuthan, Pureblood

The people of Elder Kuth, known as the "Giant-Kings", is a race believed to have become extinct after the fall of their ancient empire. The decayed ruins of their cyclopean cities can still be glimpsed in the western wastes.

Physical Description: Rumored to have been fully 9 feet tall (or even taller, by some accounts), the Kuthans were truly giants among men.

Religion: The Giant-Kings of Elder Kuth were themselves worshipped as gods by their human slaves, servitors, and concubines.

Cultural Characteristics: No pure-blooded Kuthans do exists anymore. Or do they?

Lamurans

The men of Lamu are regarded as a degenerate and evil people by other nations, a belief that mainly springs from ignorance, but is strengthened by the fact that the Lamurans have unnaturally keen eyesight in the dark, and that they worship many weird and loathsome gods in the isolation of their remote hill kingdom.

Physical Description: Gaunt of build and pale-skinned, with long flowing hair, although the priests are often shaven-headed. The Lamurans dress in flowing robes and wear distinctive tall caps, often wound around with turbans.

Religion: The cult of Yot-Kamoth is best-known, but a multitude of other deities are worshipped.

Cultural Characteristics: The Lamurans, corrupted by their worship of sinister Yot-Kamoth, are mostly Decadent, but retain both a significant Civilized stratum in and around their cities and of Hillmen in the more remote parts of their realm.

Mazanians

Deep in the southern jungles rise the moss-grown palisade walls of the Mazanians, a matriarchal society whose female warriors raid into the surrounding lands for male slaves. The jungle kingdom is ruled by the black sorcerer-queen of Boma-Ya, the forbidden city of the amazons.

Physical Description: Female Mazanians are all stunningly beautiful, since all girls with the slightest physical flaw are quickly abandoned in the jungle. These copper-skinned warriors are not shy about using their charms to distract male opponents.

Religion: The gods of the Mazanians are not well-known. Some say they worship female snake-beings, others that their queen is the thrall of a male demon-god.

Cultural Characteristics: Mazanians are invariably Savages, but some Civilized individuals might exist among their upper classes.

Nabastisseans

The sun-drenched land of Nabastis consists of a collection of city-states ruled by petty kings with their own armies of bronze-armored pikemen. While the interior terrain is dominated by rolling hills and forest-covered mountains, the coast has sandy coves nestled amid jagged cliffs. The cities along the coast are centers of trade and are protected by fleets of trireme galleys.

The great city of Khargamum is well-known for the temple of Apsis, with its vast library-halls, founded by the scribes and philosophers of ancient Nabaos and Totha.

Physical Description: Bronze-skinned, with gleaming white teeth and curly black hair, and short of stature. The Nabastisseans dress in brightly colored robes, and don breastplates and full helmets when going to war.

Religion: The Nabastisseans have few gods of their own, but tolerate the temples of foreign gods to be built in their cities. The coastal peoples usually make small offerings to the gods of the sea before setting out on voyages of trade or war.

Cultural Characteristics: Nabastisseans are usually Civilized, but a sizeable and increasing proportion of their upper classes has become Decadent.

Ptahaanans

Like the people of Elder Kuth, the Ptahaanans are believed to have become extinct during the last days of their bloodstained empire. The bulk of the Isles of Ptahaana sunk beneath the waves in ancient times, perhaps as a result of failed sorceries.

Physical Description: Surviving depictions of the Ptahaanans show them as short of build, with bronze skin, and slightly slanted eyes. Other sources claim they were tall, with elongated skulls and fingers, clad in voluminous robes that concealed blasphemously mutated bodies.

Religion: The Ptahaanans are said to have worshipped Ia-Azutlatl, the "Blood-God", atop their stepped pyramids.

Cultural Characteristics: Should any descendants of the blood-stained Elder Ptahaana still survive, they have surely devolved into the most abject of Degenerates.

Shomas

The kingdom of Shoma is rich in gold, to the extent that even the king's great herds of cattle wear golden ornaments. There are many skilled artisans and goldsmiths among the Shoma. Outside of the capital city of Katanga, the land is peopled by semi-nomadic tribes.

Physical Description: Dark brown skin, with close-cropped curly black hair. The Shoma dress in simple loincloths, but even commoners are often adorned with golden jewelry.

Religion: Nataka, the ivory woman, is worshipped among the nobles and upper class, while various tribal gods are revered by commoners.

Cultural Characteristics: City-dwelling Shomas are almost invariably Decadent, with only a scattering of simpler, Civilized people. Among the semi-nomadic rural Shomas, Decadents are still largely confined to the wealthy classes, with the commoners being still mostly Civilized.

Susrahnites

The fertile plains of Susrah are home to a race renowned for their skill in war and their religious devotion.

Physical Description: Broad-shouldered, with hooked noses and black, curly hair, the Susrahnites are dressed in flowing robes. The men braid their long

beards. The women are lithe, wearing golden armbands and necklaces of pearl; they are prized as slaves in Taraamite seraglios.

Religion: Nowhere, except perhaps in Yar-Ammon, can there be found as many gods as in the city-states of Susrah. Above the hundreds of lesser gods arise the names of greater deities such as Baal-Khardah, Belet-Lil, Maggash, and Yammosh.

Cultural Characteristics: Susrahnites are a people both Civilized and Decadent. While Decadents are more commonly found among the upper classes, they are in no way confined to it, and neither are they composed uniformly of them.

Taikangians

The realm of Taikang is near-mythical, a land of teeming yellow masses, bamboo towers, and serpentine dragons. Few westerners have ventured here, but merchants who brave the unknown can make a fortune when they return with caravans of silks, lotus flowers and painted ceramics.

Physical Description: Lithe and yellow-skinned, with slanted eyes and long, black hair. Both men and women dress in silk if they can afford it, although the commoners often wear little more than a loincloth.

Religion: The chief god of the Taikangians is Wa-Ying, the so-called "Emperor of Hell".

Cultural Characteristics: Taikang is a legendary land, but judging by what legends are told of it in the west and by what Taikangians have ventured forth from their homeland, they seem to be a wicked and almost uniformly Decadent people. But who knows? Maybe they still retain a few more wholesome, Civilized individuals – or some utterly Degenerate ones…

Taraamites

The plains and highlands of Taraam are inhabited by a people known both for the sophistication of their culture and their talent for intrigue. A caste of mounted warriors is the backbone of their army, which threatens the lesser cities of Susrah and Nabastis with destruction unless tribute continues to flow into the thousand-columned palace of Achad.

Taraam's royal palace is also a place of thousand intrigues, where the eunuchs and priests of the court wear coats of golden brocade and baggy silk pants, great scimitars always at their side.

Physical Description: Male Taraamites usually favor short, trimmed beards. Warriors carry straight short swords and lances, and dress in robes decorated according to their status, with the king's personal guard wearing gold-trimmed robes and circlets of gold, in the fashion of princes.

Religion: Ahyada, the "high god", is the chief god of the Taraamites, served by an influential priesthood of astrologers and omen-readers.

Cultural Characteristics: Taraamite commoners are almost invariably Civilized, just as the upper classes of this people are almost invariably Decadent. Exceptions to this generalisation do exist, but are very rare.

Tharag Thulans

Also known as Tharagians, these northern tribesmen inhabit the cold wastes at the edge of the world. In each generation, there are always some northerners who leave their ancestral lands to escape the ancient blood-feuds of their clans and explore the decadent empires of the south.

Physical Description: Dressed in wolf-skin cloaks and tall boots of wolverine-fur, these barbarians of the north have long, yellow beards, white skin, and piercing blue eyes.

Religion: The Tharag Thulans revere the Moon-God, the Wolf-God, and the Skull-God.

Cultural Characteristics: These remote northern barbarians are Savages.

Yar-Ammonites

Also known as the "kingdom of tombs", Yar-Ammon is a land covered with desert and haunted by ancient sorceries. The silent streets and broad ceremonial avenues of black-templed Amenti is an awesome sight to behold. The papyrus used by the scribes and sorcerers of Yar-Ammon is harvested from the inland marshes of Fakhuum.

Physical Description: Tall and slender, with bronze skin, dark hair and black eyes. The nobles and priests wear golden pectorals and masks carved with beastly visages, while commoners dress in simple garments of white linen.

Religion: The ancient ancestors of the Yar-Ammonites, who are worshipped as gods, are depicted as beast-headed humanoids. These ancient ones are said to have had lives spanning millennia; they brought humankind knowledge and civilization. Some claim they returned to the stars from whence they came after being buried in the depths of the black pyramids of Amenti.

Cultural Characteristics: Children of an old culture steeped deeply in sorcerous mysteries, Yar-Ammonites are a mixture of Civilized and Decadent people, though leaning toward the latter.

Zadjites

The turbaned fire-worshippers of Zadj are an offshoot of the Jairanian race in the west. They have exploited the riches of their new homeland well, and grown rich as spice merchants and slave-traders. Having brought with them a high level of culture from Jairan, the Zadjites are skilled artisans and Iraab, the marble capital by the sea, is a center of learning as well as rich trade and exquisite craftmanship.

The interior plains and forests of Zadj are dominated by the fortress-city of Al-Qazir, also known as the City of Slave Sultans, for it is held by a council of slavelords who only pay lip service to the emir of Iraab.

Physical Description: Swarthy, turbaned, wearing colorful robes and gold-hilted curved daggers. The raven-haired Zadjite women are famed for their sensual beauty; they are often scantily clad and adorned with glittering jewelry.

Religion: The Zadjites hold "the Sacred Flame", a nameless elemental god, above all others.

Cultural Characteristics: This wealthy and callous people of tradesmen is mostly Decadent, with only a smattering of Civilized individuals remaining, virtually none of them among the upper classes.

Zorabi

These tribesmen inhabit the Zorab Mountains that jut up between Lamu and Khazistan. The southernmost tribes have accepted the overlordship of the Khazistanis, at least in name, while the rest are opportunistic raiders who feud incessantly among themselves.

Physical Description: These mountain wolves wear white turbans and heavy cloaks, and are armed with scimitars and shortbows. They have long black beards, and their brown skin is wrinkled by the sun and mountain winds.

Religion: There are few priests among the Zorabi, but worship of certain Lamuran gods is probable.

Cultural Characteristics: Zorabi are invariably Hillmen.

II. The Gods

"In the temple of the city of Morm, which lies between the desert and the sea, are two images of the god Amanon, a bronze image facing an iron image, across the fires and blood-stains of the alter-stone. When the gory sunset of the day of sacrifice is over and the writhing fires of the sacrifice are dead, and the moon smiles with a cold and marble smile on the blackened altar – then Amanon speaks to Amanon, with a voice of iron, and a voice of bronze…" – Clark Ashton Smith: The Image of Bronze and the Image of Iron

The Nature of the "Gods"

Here is the big secret: True deities do not ex¬ist. Most of the "gods" are simply monstrous or alien creatures of flesh and blood; others don't even exist except as an invention of the cult, a ruse by the priests to gain power and influence over the worshippers.

Very few priests possess any degree of spell-casting ability. When the rare priest does wield supernatural power, it is of sorcerous nature, independent of the god the priest claims to worship. The "gods" cannot grant spells and powers to their followers. Some can, however, teach spells and other arcane secrets to humans, and they often live long and so accumulate a lot of knowledge which they may (or may not) share with their servants.

Even so, some of the creatures worshipped as gods have alien minds and/or do not care or know about their followers, making it difficult from the priests to benefit from such knowledge.

On the other hand, the "gods" may gain various benefits from having a human priesthood, including sacrifices of food, wealth, slaves, and willing servants. In some cases, blood sacrifices from the cult can also empower sorcery cast by the "god", or increase its powers.

The following types of creatures may be labelled "gods" and be worshipped or placated by humans:

- "Demons", a definition that is itself some¬what problematic. Any creature with innate supernatural or magical abilities may be called a demon.
- Creatures from other planets and stars, from the void between the stars, and the black gulfs of space.
- Monstrous and prehistoric animals, such as giant serpents, lizards, spiders, and dinosaurs.
- Undead and spirits are sometimes worshipped as gods.

Ahyada

the High God of Taraam

Ahyada is the bringer of truth and protection to the people of Taraam, and the patron of the royal house of Achad as well. He grants visions and omens to the king, which is interpreted by astrologer-priests and soothsayers. Amulets of Ahyada are said to be effective wards against demons.

Aklathu

the God of Twisted Fate

Figurines of this god, who has few temples and no priests, depict Akhlathu as a deformed dwarf, whose facial features even show a hint of retardation. Many Susrahnites swear "By Akhlathu's Beard!" when in trouble. This is also a god of thieves and gamblers.

Al-Tawir

the Ancient One, the Sleeper Beneath the Sands

Some say that Al-Tawir dwells in the black gulfs between the stars, others that he sleeps in a sealed and forbidden tomb beneath the desert sand. Al-Tawir is one of the Old Gods. The nomads hear his voice in the howling of the desert winds, and they see his face in the rage of sandstorms. He is the emptiness of the desert, associated with getting lost, with thirst and hunger, with darkness, and with sandstorms.

Baal-Khardah

the Sun-God of Susrah

The lord of the sky, protector and judge of humankind, Baal-Khardah is a distant god, usually worshipped only by nobility. The com-mon people tend to favor the more earthly passions of his mate, Belet-Lil. His lavish temples are filled with ram-headed statues, golden sun-discs, and sacred swords.

Belet-Lil

the Moon-Goddess of Susrah

Voluptuous mate of Baal-Khardah, and earth-mother, Belet-Lil is a goddess of fertil¬ity, revelry, and beauty. She is very popular among the Susrahnites, not least due to the large numbers of temple prostitutes found in every city.

Ia-Azutlatl

the Blood-God of Sunken Ptahaana

The true form of Ia-Azutlatl is unknown, but he is one of the Old Gods; some even claim that he is the greatest and oldest of those ancient ones. It is known that the blood-druids of now-sunken Pthaana worshipped him with ceremonies of mass slaughter atop their stepped pyramids of green stone. Today, his name survives only in the rituals of primitive savages and mad hierarchs.

Jul-Juggah

the Devil-Bird of Azimba

The sweltering plains of Azimba are dotted with hundreds of monstrous statues of lizard-birds. Whether these grim effigies were crafted by an older civilization, or placed there more recently by the feather-cloaked shamans of Jul-Juggah, is not known.

The Living Flame

Nameless God of Zadj

The Zadjites worship a nameless elemental god, the Living Flame, above all other gods. The priests tend everburning fires in their marble temples. Fire is considered pure; both the dead and the unbelievers are cast into the flames to be purified. Fire also imbues metal with a spark of the divine; the priests of the Living Flame are skilled metal-workers and weaponsmiths.

Maggash

the Brazen God of Zhaol

Abominable are the brass idols of Maggash, the fire-god of Zhaol, and even worse are the rites of the priesthood, which include the burning of infants as sacrifice. The priests of Zhaol accept no other god than their own, and worship of other gods is strictly forbidden and punishable by death. Maggash

is sometimes depicted as a bull, or a bull-headed humanoid.

Nhakhramat

the Six-Armed Woman

The ivory woman, said by some to be the mate of Yadar, is worshipped largely by Khazistanis who disapprove of Belet-Lil's open sensuality, which is a source of conflict between the Khazistanis and the Susrahnites.

Nwanga Zhaal

the Lord of Beasts

Known and feared across the Jungle King¬doms, this bloodthirsty god is master of the beasts that howl at the moon. His shamans are always served by flocks of bonded animals.

Othabbhon

the Guardian of the Gates

Depicted as a horse-headed humanoid clutching a bronze key, this mysterious god is a protector of homes and vaults, as well as the guardian of secret and hidden places.

Simatala

the Ape-God of Laksha

Turbaned priests strangle sacrificial victims on the white jade altars of this grim ape-god of the east, whose cult has even begun to spread to the west.

Yaathra Yok

the Wise One

This is an elephant-headed god of the east, revered for its great strength and wisdom. Temples of the cult contain rich treasures of ivory.

Yadar

the Lord of Death and Secrets

The mysterious high god of the Khazistanis, Yadar, is said to live in the desert and to collect the souls of every living man and woman when they give up their final breath.

Yadar is associated with scorpions and bats. Many carry charms and amulets in the image of Yadar, said to ward against disease and violent death.

Such worship is often personal and unorga¬nized, since the locations of Yadar's temples are generally kept secret and known only to the priests. The cult is suspected to have subterranean shrines in cities and temples in desert ruins. The nomads stay well away from such ruins, since any who stray too close disappear without a trace.

To be initiated into the cult of Yadar, the candidate must spend a night in a sealed sar-cophagus in a mausoleum haunted by ghouls.

Yammosh

the Sea-God of Ghazor

The greatest temple of this Susrahnite sea-god is located in the sinful port city of Ghazor, although sailors from many nations offer sac¬rifice to him before setting out on long ocean voyages. To be initiated into the cult of Yammosh, the candidate must survive being plunged into a water-filled pit for 1d6 minutes without drowning.

Yibboth

the Sacred Toad of Fakhuum

Despite having its cult-center deep within the poisoned marshes of Fakhuum, whether Yibboth is part of the true Yar-Ammonite pan¬theon is uncertain; some claim he is one of the Old Gods. The priests of Yibboth are reputed to worship a "golden frog-thing", along with mummified crocodiles and all manner of water lizards and giant toads.

Yot-Kamoth,

the Spider-God of Lamu

The Lamurans bow before black idols of Yot-Kamoth, the monstrous eight-legged god worshipped for centuries in the mountain fastness of Lamra, the capital city. In truth, the priests of the spider-god are the royalty of Lamu, for they wield considerable influence and for a common

man to resist their demands is a certain death sentence.

To be initiated into the cult of Yot-Kamoth, a candidate with the proper qualifications must survive the lethal bite of a temple-bred spider.

Zanthiss

the Great Serpent

The ancient demon-serpent of Yalotha, in some worlds known as Hassith-Kaa, is the father of various ophidian races and a master of sorcery.

Zanthiss is currently believed to be confined to an extradimensional prison, or perhaps banished to a remote star, after the downfall of the serpent-empire of Yalotha.

However, cults of Zanthiss still lair in ancient temples, with writhing serpent-pits, giant slithering temple snakes, malachite altars stained with the blood of centuries of sacrifice, and demon-guarded vaults wherein lie hidden the lost papyri of jungle-lost Yalotha. To become an initiate of the cult, the candi¬date must survive the lethal bite of a sacred temple cobra.

Ascension to greater titles within the priesthood may involve the bites of greater and more poisonous snakes.

The Gods of Tharag Thule

Among the gods worshipped in the cold wastes of the north are the Moon-God, the Wolf-God, and the Skull-God.

The Moon-God is served only by female priestesses; old hags and crones are respected omen-readers and oracles among the Thara¬gians.

The Wolf-God is a god of strength, war, and bloodlust. Tribal chieftains are often also priests of the Wolf-God.

The Skull-God is the lord of the dead and the king of ghosts; this god has no priests or fol¬lowers, but each village has a hut set up with a skull-adorned altar where he is placated with offerings.

The Gods of Yar-Ammon

The Yar-Ammonites worship an ancient pantheon of beast-headed man-gods, disturb¬ing fragments of a lost age. Depictions of these gods, said to have brought knowledge and wisdom to the first civilization of Yar-Ammon, include serpent-headed, vulture-headed, hyena-headed, and crocodile-headed human¬oids. The priests of Yar-Ammon often wear masks in imitation of these gods¬

III. The World

"Stand aside, girl," he mumbled. "Now is the feasting of swords."

Robert E. Howard, The Slithering Shadow

In the far distant, legendary past, Xoth is said to have been ruled by the depraved snake-men of Yalotha, who used the primitive early men as slaves, food and objects for their sadistic amusement. The snake-men's empire of terror is rumoured to have extended over all of Xoth, save the frigid north, and it from here that men did finally venture south to overthrow evil Yalotha. These men were the giant Kuthan, who erected an empire of their own, replacing the snake-men as overlords of men.

Though the largest kingdom by far and also the most powerful and advanced one, Elder Kuth was not the only realm. There was also evil, blood-drenched Elder Ptahaana, and others. Decadence, civil strife, barbarian incursions, and – some say – the secret machinations of surviving Yalothan snake-men did after a period of greatness that lasted for maybe two centuries finally bring about the downfall of Elder Kuth. The giant Kuthans passed into the realm of legend.

With the march of the nine or ten centuries since the ruin of Elder Kuth, realms rose and fell. In the modern age, the most powerful realm is the recently arisen desert empire of Khazistan,

followed probably by warlike Taraam in the northeast.

In the north, Taraam, though already past the apogee of its greatness and wrecked by intrigue, is poised over Susrah and Nabastis, two loose confederacies of city-states rent by constant infighting and beset by their powerful northern neighbour. Isolated and protected by its mountain fastness, spider-haunted Lamu keeps to itself.

In the desert lands, Khazistan overshadows all other kingdoms and threatens both hoary Yar-Ammon with its mystery-shrouded tombs and far western Jairan. Only distant Zadj is free from the shadow of powerful Khazistan, its ships and caravans bringing the wealth of Xoth to marble-pillared Iraab.

In the Deep South, Azimba, land of the cities of stone, is the most advanced of the Black Kingdoms and swamp-riddled Ikuna with its cannibal tribes the most primitive. Shoma, renowned for its mines and gold-adorned cattle herds, may be primitive, but is still far from savage.

The Amazonian jungle realm of Mazania is more myth than reality, even more so than wolf-haunted Tharag Thule in far frigid north. Only the realms of the distant east, Laksha, Ghoma, Azjan and most of all distant Taikang, are hidden behind an even denser veil of legend and mystery.

Modern languages spoken throughout Xoth are Taikangian and Bhangari in the Far East and Lamuran, Taraam, Nabastissan, Susrahnite and remote Thulan in the north.

Of the languages of the desert lands, Yar-Ammonite and Zorabi are distinct, but Khazrajite and Khazraji are virtually identical, and Jairani and Zadjite at least similar enough to allow for some degree of understanding between its speakers. The languages of the black peoples, Shoma, Azimban, Mazanian, mongrel Ikunan, and Daka are all distinct as well.

The dead languages used by sorcerers and some sages are first and foremost the dead tongue of the giant kings, Elder Kuthan. Ptahaanan is another ancient language, but known to only very few scholars. Even more rare is knowledge of Yalothan, the reptilian sounds of which are however largely unpronounceable by humans.

The economy of the World of Xoth is based on brass, silver, and gold coins. Each country has its own names and shapes for these coins. Money-changers do a brisk business, but coins from neighbouring realms are usually accepted at least in the cities. In uncivilized areas, bartering with livestock, slaves, ivory, gems, and similar items is more common than using coins.

Iron weapons are the campaign standard, and

are used by most cultural groups. The exceptions are the Zadjites, who craft superior steel weapons; the ancient Yar-Ammonites, who wield archaic weapons of bronze; and the people of the jungle kingdoms, who fashion weapons primarily from wood, bone, or flint.

Swords on Xoth tend not to be straight, but curved – every blade longer than a short sword is always bent; the weapons of the barbarian Tharag Thulans are the only exception to this rule. It is possible to wield some of the Xothian swords with both hands, but they are mainly intended to be used with just one, and no swords exist intend mainly, let alone solely, two-handed use.

The most advanced types of armor are chain, lamellar, and scale; neither brigandine nor plate is known, save of course for helmets. With the possible exception of distant Taikang, crossbows are unknown, but all types of bows see widespread use.

Now that you have an idea of the peoples and gods, the history and politics, and the technology of Xoth it is our hope that you will flesh it out to suite your needs and the interests of your gaming group. What follows are some points of interest to get you started.

Lamu: The City of Lamra

In the city of Lamra, in the land of Lamu, the dreaded priests of Yot-Kamoth have built a temple to house their god, which is a colossal eight-legged spider-idol, carved from the black stone of a fallen star. Great is the power of the spider-priests of Lamu, for they outnumber even the austere priestesses of Nhakhramat and the muffled priests of Yadar, and they ride as kings through the shadowed streets of Lamra.

But though the iron-fisted rule of the priests is largely uncontested, such ruthless men and women as worship Yot-Kamoth are often at war with each other, driven by ambition and power-thirst.

The cunning rule of wily old Hamadara, Archapostle of Yot-Kamoth, is uncontested, but his priestly cohorts are in a constant struggle for predominance. Utilizing a extensive network of spies and informers, Hamdara keeps well abreast of temple intrigue and fuels priestly rivalries; as long as his minions are busy infighting, his position is unassailable.

Susrah: Land of Warring City-States

The City of Yaatana

There are many depraved cities in the land of Susrah, such as red-walled Zhaol where children are burned as sacrifice to Maggash the fire-god, and the cesspool of vice that is the harbour city of Ghazor.

But Yaatana, at the headwaters of the Ophrat River, is said to be the most wicked city of them all, and so all manner of debased folk flock to it, like insects attracted to a greasy torch.

This wealthy trading post along the route from the city-states of Susrah to Khazistan and Jairan in the west is noted for its sinful back alleys and nefarious inhabitants. It is a city of furtive sorcerers, strange and depraved cults, and a place where the most perverted desires can be fulfilled by the arrangements of fat mer¬chants eager to sell anything.

The city is old and surrounded by ancient clay walls faced with colourful glazed tiles. Tar¬nished golden domes and marble minarets are visible beyond the walls as one approaches the city. The massive main gate is over 600 years old and receives a constant stream of visitors entering and leaving.

The City of Ghazor

The harbour city of Ghazor is located strategically at the mouth of the Ophrat River. It has a large navy of galleys, which is used to protect the sea lanes from the raids of the sea reavers of Khora, as well as in occasional clashes with the Nabastis¬sean fleet. As one of the Susrahnite city-states, Ghazor is ruled independently by the petty king Rahim-Dul, but is allied with the other cities of Susrah through treaties and intermar¬riage. The city has around 150,000 inhabitants.

Much trade flows through Ghazor, arriving by boats from the south, and carried inland by river barges or donkey caravans. The trade goods include Susrahnite wine, spices from Laksha and Azjan, dried fruit, slaves, and pearls har¬vested off the coast of Zadj.

The main ziggurat of the city is dedicated to Baal-Khardah, but the sea-god Yammosh is more popular among the many sailors and merchant-captains. Offerings of gold and animals are often made to the temple of Yam¬mosh before any sea-voyage.

The southern quarters of the city, home to sailors, slavers, mercenaries and other for¬eigners, is well-known outside Ghazor for its many depraved vices and lawless atmosphere. The king and his nobles, busy with their own schemes and pleasures behind massive palace walls to the north, largely ignore the unruly docks. Thus the southern seafront is rarely patrolled by the city guard, but the naval docks to the northeast are well-guarded.

With somewhat over 100,000 inhabitants, Yaatana has over 100 temples (and probably double that number of hidden or secret underground shrines), a dozen public bath-houses, and almost 10,000 houses, most of which are several stories high, topped with flat roofs, and decorated with elaborate friezes and intricately carved windows.

Yaatana is ruled by an elected governor (currently a middle-aged man named Akhdari Marza), but the real power is in a council of seven men drawn from the ranks of wealthy merchants, sorcerers, and high priests. The armed forces of the city are mostly comprised of mercenaries; law is enforced haphazardly and most laws are ignored as long as money from trade keeps flowing into the city. The local magistrates are notoriously corrupt and rule in favour of the biggest bribe.

In the central souk (market), a variety of goods, including meat, spices, cotton, silverware, copper, and pottery can be bargained for. There are a number of smaller, more specialized souks dealing with slaves, weapons and drugs scattered throughout the city.

The City of Belthaar

This city, located west of the Ophrat river, is one of the smallest city-states of Susrah, with a population of only 60.000 people, yet its foundations are ancient and rest on a maze of catacombs, and its gloomy, serpentine streets wind their way between mighty monuments and hoary towers. There are temples and ziggurats dedicated to Belet-Lil, Baal-Khardah, Yadar, and a multitude of others.

Belthaar is currently ruled by the petty king Simashattar III, whose army of pike¬men and charioteers is involved in a three-way war with its bigger neighbours, Zhaol and Ghezath. Despite his small army, Simashattar has avoided defeat by capturing a princeling of Ghezath and holding him hostage. At the same time, he is secretly negotiating a separate truce with emissaries of Zhaol.

The Cult of the Keepers:

It is the custom and the law that all who die within the walls of Belthaar, from commoners to kings, are delivered into the hands of the silent priests of Yadar after their death.

It is the sacred duty of these Keepers to remove the corpse, and to wash and purify the body. If the bereaved have left a well-filled purse for the Keepers, the corpse is usually preserved and embalmed with utmost skill by the priests; otherwise the corpse is burned and the ashes placed in urns of clay, bronze, or sometimes even gold.

The Cult of the Keepers also maintains and guards the extensive network of cata¬combs and crypts beneath the city, where the urns and the mummies are placed after the funereal ceremonies.

No one except the priests are allowed to enter the catacombs, but on certain days friends and family of the deceased may come to the Shrine of the Keepers and place offerings on the altar of Yadar to ensure the well-being of lost ones.

It is even said that when such offerings are plentiful, the priests may unlock the doors to the catacombs and allow brief visits to private crypts.

Others whisper that the mute, cowled priests are actually ghouls, who carry away and eat the dead, and that they guard only empty urns and coffins in the catacombs.

Zorab Mountains

The foothills of the mighty Zorab Mountains separate the plains of Susrah from the steppes and deserts of Khazistan. The feuding clans of the Zorabi inhabit impregnable stone towers carved into the mountain-sides.

From here, they sally forth to raid each other and the neighboring people of Lamu and Susrah, and also their nominal sovereign Khazistan.

These mountain-men wear cloaks of wolf fur, white turbans, and all warriors have full beards bristling with curly black hair.The Kharjah Pass is the only crossing traversable other than on foot (although several secret passes, known only to the Zorabi mountain peoples, are rumoured to exist), and is guarded by mountain tribes loyal – least in name to the Padishah of Khazistan.

Two large stone tower-fortresses protect the western end of the Kharjah, each housing around 50 warriors and their families. Travellers are typically ap¬proached by troops consisting of at least ten warriors, or distinctly more if large caravans are coming through.

The tribesmen collect taxes from caravans passing through the pass. They claim one-tenth of the value of trade goods carried (the majority of this tax is in turn supposed to be brought as tribute to Khazabad), as well as a fixed amount for each man, horse or camel making the pas-sage.

However, the tribesmen are not above demanding much more if they think they can get away with it.

The al-Khazi Desert

The wastelands of the al-Khazi Desert are harsh and inhospitable to city-dwellers, igno¬rant of the secrets of the nomads. The al-Khazi is very hot (the average daytime temperature is 38 degrees Celsius), and the majority of this desert is covered with vast sand dunes, broken up here and there by

areas of stony desert with hills, jagged rocks and wind-worn cliffs.

Khazraj, the Wolves of the Desert

At the fringes of the Khazistani Empire, the wild Khazraj nomads (themselves descended from the same racial stock as the Khazistani peoples) are a constant menace to caravans and travellers; sometimes even outlying vil¬lages and towns of Khazistan, Yar-Ammon and Jairan are subject to raids from these free-willed nomad clans.

These Khazraj raiders are lean, wolfish men dressed in gleaming white khalats and green turbans. Their skin is a wrinkled bronze. The nomads sit easily atop their cam¬els, striking down foes with curved swords, but prefer to attack from a distance, using their bows from atop their war camels. They attempt to circle around the caravan and pick their foes off at their own leisure.

If possible, the nomads will strike at night to soften their opponents up for a later attack, sneaking into their opponents' camp to steal, kill or maim their animals, and likewise steal or foul their water. They then retreat, but trail the caravan and pick off starved and weakened characters in the following days.

If the Khazraj manage to disable the camp guards without being detected during the initial attack, they simply proceed to slay the remaining caravan members in their sleep.

Being opportunistic raiders, they flee into the desert if their leader is slain, if they take significant casualties, or if they face a group of well-equipped and clearly skilled opponents (but no one dares retreat before their leader flees).

Khazistan

The Padishah of Khazistan is the most powerful monarch of Xoth. Showing little signs of complacency, the power of Khazistan seems to be still growing, and its shadow looms large over Jairan and Yar-Ammon and is felt also in Susrahn. Khazabad by the sea is the residence of the Padishah, and with easily more than 300.000 inhabitants the largest city of Xoth.

The City of Zul-Bazzir

Zul-Bazzir is the eastern metropolis of Khazistan and the largest cities of desert, located amidst lush palm trees in the sprawling oasis of Zul. It was founded five centuries ago by Yar-Ammonite traders from the south and grew quickly into a major center of trade, a stopover for all major caravan routes through the al-Khazi desert.

In the last century, Zul-Bazzir was conquered by the Khazistani horsemen coming out of the western steppes. Sizeable populations of Yar-Ammonites remain, along with people from Susrah, Jairan and elsewhere, and the city remains a thriving place of com¬merce, housing a population of maybe as much as 200,000 people.

Located on the westernmost edge of Khazistani influence, the city is often threat¬ened by foreign invasion and raids. Despite this, Zul-Bazzir is unwalled, although the bey's sprawling palace-citadel is protected by a tall inner city wall.

Khadim Bey, the governor of Zul-Bazzir of the city depends heavily on mercenaries, to defend against occasional Yar-Ammonite intrigues, Jairanian ambitions, and the raids of wild Khazraj nomads.

He maintains an army of about 5.000 men, two thirds of which are foreign mercenaries, mostly from Yemar in Jairan.

Typical houses are two-story buildings with flat roofs. Nobles and wealthy merchants live in walled mansions with lush gardens and artificial pools.

Between the outer districts where foreigners and slaves throng, and the golden minarets and spires of the inner citadel, are bustling markets and bazaars. Lesser streets wind their way through the maze-like districts of the city, where thieves skulk and revelers feast at night.

The Citadel: The great citadel of the governor

rises above the crowded streets of Zul-Bazzir. This walled district contains the governor's palace, the grand court, a labyrin¬thine harem said to have a hundred bed¬rooms, a temple dedicated to Nhakhramat the six-armed ivory goddess, as well as barracks housing Khazistani officers and Yemarite mercenaries.

Noble District: Occupied by Khazistani nobles, officers and merchants, this district has broad streets and walled mansions. Slaves care for the desires of the Khazistani nobles in their lush gardens here, day and night.

Caravanserai: The caravans entering and leaving Zul-Bazzir are based in this district, with its warehouses, stables and sleeping-halls. Camels and horses are bought and sold here as well. The area is plagued by beggars and thieves preying on new-comers, as well as more respectable-looking people trying to attract customers to the Pleasure District.

In reality, many foreigners are led into ambushes by such people. There are plenty of mercenaries and hired guards here, looking after valuables from the caravans and guarding the warehouses in the area.

Bazaar: The bazaar is bustling with activity during daylight hours. Almost anything can be bought or bartered for here, including food and drink, clothing, silks of distant Taikang, equipment and tools, weapons and armor, pottery, Jairanian carpets, gems, and jewellery fashioned by Susrahnite and Zadjite artisans. Camels and horses are offered across the street, in stables near the caravanserai.

Among the more special offerings in the bazaar are caged exotic animals and birds, medicinal herbs, talismans and amulets said to ward off evil, rare books and maps, as well as large and small statuettes of gods and demons.

Extraordinary items, such as poison, silver lotus juice and certain alchemical powders, are usually not found in the Bazaar, and are only available to those who have special contacts (an Information Gathering Check in the Plea¬sure District directs a PC in the right direction if he wishes to buy such items).

Slave Market: An adjunct to the bazaar, the slave market is filled with imports from the empire of Khazistan. Largely run by slavers from Khazabad, the slave market is busy, with daily displays of human wares. Once a week, special offers such as daughters of nobles, virgins, and mighty warriors whose wills have been broken by the whip, are auctioned off.

Foreign District: Home to people of predominantly Susrahnite origin, this district contains a small shrine to Belet-Lil. Many of the Yemarite mercenaries in the city's employ, as well as other foreigners, have their houses here. This district is also the place to look for healers and those skilled in the use of medici¬nal herbs.

Artisan District: Here one finds the work¬shops and warehouses of the city's artisans. Makers of expensive wares, such as sword-smiths and gem-cutters, usually do not trust the governor's soldiers and keep a few hired guards as backup in the case of burglary.

Old Town: This is the oldest existing district of the city, hailing from the time when the city was little more than a collection of mud-brick houses clustered around a central well.

The old town is still important, due to the existence of underground tunnels that lead water from here to the rest of the city. The district is oth-erwise noted for its many sages, scholars and students of the arcane.

Temple District: In this maze of alleyways and tall walls are a number of temples and shrines devoted to various gods. Located here is a temple dedicated to the beast-headed Yar-Ammonite pantheon. Near the temple is a small necropolis, where mum¬mified Yar-Ammonites as well as preserved animals lie entombed for eternity.

Poor and desperate people from the nearby slums sometimes try to break into these tombs to steal valuables, which then surface for sale in the bazaar.

However, buying such tomb jewellery is associated with a certain risk: it might be

cursed, or the priests of Yar-Ammon might take offense and send assassins after the blasphemers.

Slum District: Home to the poor, homeless and diseased, and plagued by the occasional fire, this is a place best avoided. Unless, of course, one needs to hide from the authorities. The Yemarite mercenaries of the city guard rarely venture into this part of the town.

Pleasure District: A large district filled with all manner of depravities, including gambling-houses, drinking-houses, bordellos, fighting-pits and lotus-smoking dens. Thieves, thugs, prostitutes and slavers abound. This is a great place to waste coin quickly. One of the most notorious locations of the district is the House of Abu Khafi. Also in this district is a "temple" to Belet-Lil, in reality little more than a gathering-place for orgiastic revellers.

Shoma and the Town of Katanga

Katanga is the only town of any importance in the kingdom of Shoma; the lesser "towns" are merely crude villages scattered across the grassy plains. South and east of Katanga are the Shining Hills, jungle-covered highlands that abound with gold.

Approaching the town, great herds of cattle can be seen; these belong to the king himself and many of the animals wear ornaments of beaten gold. The cattle in each herd number in the hundreds, but are guarded closely by scores of spearmen.

Katanga itself is surrounded by a wooden pali-sade, inside which over 12.000 people huddle together in wretched huts. The average citizens of Katanga are poor, but free, for the rulers of the Shoma do not keep slaves.

However, people do not live to be old, so almost two thirds of the population are children and young adults. Most live in buildings of sun-dried mud with roofs of straw along with their animals, such as goats and fowls.

The spacious inner city, forbidden to commoners is ringed by a great mud-brick wall. Its gates are adorned with massive ivory tusks taken from the greatest specimens of elephants. A guard of spearmen at each gate makes sure that only nobles, royal guards, priests, merchants and foreign dignitaries are allowed entry to the inner city, which houses the royal palace and cattle pens, the temple of Nataka, and the goldsmiths' workshops.

The current king is Mashota, a middle-aged man with many wives and several young heirs, all fighting for the king's attention and favours.

The jungle-shrouded uplands south and east of Katanga are known as the Shining Hills. Like the Ishrah¬nites before them, the Shoma people operate several gold mines in these hills, all owned by the king and protected by his loyal spearmen. These mines have a long and evil history:

In the centuries of the downfall of Elder Kuth, the former slave peoples of the giant-kings migrated north and east to settle in the lands of Susrah. An offshoot of these proto-Sushrahnites, called the Ishrah, chose instead to wander south into the hills of what is now the black kingdom of Shoma.

In the jungled hills of Shoma, the Ishrah discovered rich deposits of gold and precious stones. They enslaved the native tribes and set their new slaves to toil day and night in the mines. The small kingdom of the Ishrah pros-pered and a series of purple stone fortresses was built to control the mines.

Driven by greed, the Ishrah forced their slaves to dig ever deeper into the rich ore, until one day the toiling workers unearthed a series of stone chambers beneath the mine tunnels in the most remote and inaccessible part of the Shining Hills. The priests of the Ishrah studied the weird pic-tograms on the walls and deemed it unwise to disturb these prehuman vaults.

The mine was sealed off and declared taboo by the priests, and soon the surrounding area was abandoned by the Ishrahnites. Centuries later,

the area was re-settled by a native tribe, the Wamuba, who built a village in the shadow of the ruined stone citadel of the Ishrahnites.

Protected by their remoteness and the impenetrable jungle, the Wamuba defy the rule of Katanga. Strange things are whispered about the Wamuba and their supposedly deathless evil queen, Nugga-Tikanda.

Azimba and the City of Zimballah

The terrain of northern Azimba is dominated by savannah, while the southern regions are covered by jungles. Throughout the land are hundreds of stone statues in the likeness of Jul-Juggah, a great lizard-bird with monstrous features and outstretched, leathery wings.

The statues range from 3 to 10 meters in height. They are sacred and offerings, some¬times including blood sacrifice, are regularly placed in front of the statues by the priests of Jul-Juggah. To touch the statues or steal the offerings is an offense punishable by death.

The main city, Zimballah, is situated to the west, in the foothills of the Shining Hills. Although there are dozens of lesser stone-walled settlements within Azimba's borders, concentrated mostly in the northern savannah lands, whoever holds Zimballah dominates the region and can claim to be king of Azimba.

However, the king must be on good terms with the influential cult of Jul-Juggah, whose high priest for¬mally appoints new kings and provides advice and auguries to the royal house.

Zimballah is sometimes simply called "the city of stone" by virtue of its size and importance. Surrounded by hills, the city has massive walls, towers, and multiple interior gates. No one knows who reared Zimballah's mas¬sive, concentric walls and circular towers. The outer walls are 10 meters tall and 4 meters thick, and are fitted seamlessly together without the use of mortar.

Close to 30,000 inhabitants throng Zimballah's inner districts, with several hundred merchants, animal-herders, peasants, mercenaries and beggars living in semi-permanent caravan camps outside the city walls.

Foreigners are free to roam the market and residential districts, although all must return to the foreign district at night, when the gates are closed.

At the top of the hillside in which Zimballah nestles is the noble district, which houses the royal palace, the houses of the nobles, the barracks of the king's guard and the city's granaries, and also the temple of Jul-Juggah. It is a testament to the cult's influence in Zimballah that the shrine of Jul-Juggah is more grand and imposing than the palace's throne room.

The large hall of worship, dominated by a monumental idol of Jul-Juggah, is illuminated by sun- or moonlight filtering in from somewhere above, and smells of exotic drugs and incense. A pair of doors leads out to the sacrificial platform.

The city is an important trading center in the jungle kingdoms region. Cattle and ornaments of beaten gold from Shoma, steel swords and cut gems from Zadj, jungle herbs and animal-skins from Mazania, carpets and peacock feathers from Jairan, and even silks and ceramics from far-off Taikang finds its way here.

The king levies a tax on all trade; five per cent of the market value of all trade goods must be paid to the city guards upon entry into the city.

In a desolate valley north of the city walls are the "Caverns of Bone", ancient burial-places for the Azimban dead. The high priest of Jul-Juggah has placed a taboo on the valley, preventing people from worshipping their ancestors, claiming the caverns are haunted by the restless and malign ghosts of the dead.

Hills of the Dead

As one reaches the limit of the green, rank jungles of the Ikuna lands, the jungle begins thinning out to low shrubs, stunted trees and tall grass. In the distance one will make out a chain of bare, somber hills, littered with boulders, shimmering in the merciless heat of the sun.

Between these hills and the

jungle lay a broad expanse of rough, uneven grasslands, dotted here and there by clumps of thorn trees. An utter silence hangs over the country. The only sign of life is perhaps a few vultures flapping heavily across the distant hills.

Amongst the greater of these hills there is a silent city of stone, and in days of old many folk lived there. They were human, but they were not as mortal men, for they had ruled those hills for ages and ages.

The ancestors of the Ikuna made war on them and at last all died, but their magicians brought them back from the dead and now they listlessly dwell in burning hunger. For ages have they preyed on the tribes of the jungle, stalking down from the hills at mid-night and at sunset to haunt the jungle-ways and slay and slay.

Isles of the Sea Reavers

Hopefully you will have entered of your own free will and not as a slave, either to a person or to a vice. Regardless, few will have little or no idea the scale of debauchery and villainy that waits in these infamous dens of iniquity. The folk of the isles as a whole are seducers and harlots, torturers and slavers, assassins and kidnappers, zealots and thieves.

The denizens of Khora, however, are even worse…

Khora is the largest city of the isles and the most lawless. Its strategic location has made it an excellent hideout for its conglomeration of merchants, thieves, bandits, soldiers, renegades, assassins, mercenaries, outlaws, cutthroats and more.

Said to have over 5,000 residents, bar fights, riots, protests and general chaos are normal and common. Because of this, Khora has earned the nickname "The City of Blood".

From Khora, the "Brethren of the Isles" sail forth and raid those wealthy merchant vessels traversing the ocean between the isles and the coast. When they flee back to their sanctuary, no warship dares enter Khora in pursuit, for it is zealously guarded by four forts of immense size, giving this den of murderers one of the best defended ports in the world, and the most feared.

Men of all races and cultures came to this port to trade their treasures and booty, most looted on the high seas from ships flying the flags of Susrah or Taraam.

Cannibal Coast

The coastal Ikuna tribes are known to their neighbors as 'man-eaters". Those forms of cannibalism include both resorting to human flesh during times of want, and ritual cannibalism, the latter usually consisting of eating a portion of an enemy warrior.

When warriors from one tribe slew 2,000 enemies they remained on the battlefield "eating the vanquished until they were driven off by the smell of decaying bodies". It's said that when a witch or shaman dies all members of the community will eat a portion of the eldritch one's heart.

Considered a great triumph, the Ikuna greatly enjoy eating their captives. They treat such captives with great cruelty and often break their legs to prevent them from attempting to escape before being eaten, while still keeping them alive so that they may brood over their impending fate…female captives are always in great demand.

Silver Lotus Isles

These isles are the haunt of the pygmy Daka, who dwell within the deep jungle caves that dot the islands. There the Daka cultivate delicate Silver Lotus for their hidden rituals. The islands are a warren of swamps, marshes, quicksand, and predatory wildlife, chief of which are the many enormous man-eating slugs long used to ritually feed on those who would trespass against the Daka.

The swamps themselves are a perilous place for the inexperienced or unwary. The few dry paths through these marshes are all kept privy by the

Daka. Dense clouds of swamp gas, marsh fog, and an endless tangle of drooping moss tends to make everything look the same. Many become hopelessly lost, go crazy, or circle for days before the end comes…usually a grisly one.

The Sunken Isles of Ptahanna

Ten centuries ago, a rich and prosperous civilization flourished on the Ptahanna islands. Its people were expert sailors, and they worshipped the gods of the sea. In the central lagoon of the largest island, the Namthuans built a great temple. A great hoard of treasure accumulated as sacrifices of gold and jewels, the fruits of flourishing trade, were heaped upon the cyclopean altars of the lagoon-temple.

In the abyss beneath the temple dwelt the living god of the Namthuans, a tentacled mon¬strosity named Bhaomog by the priests. Some say that this creature was attracted to the is¬land because of the rich sacrifices thrown into the seas by the bearded priests, while others claim that the temple was built in its honor.

It was at the height of the power of the Namthauans that a dangerous ritual performed by their high priest failed, causing earthquakes radiating from the ocean floor to first tear apart the temple, burying the entrance to the lower catacombs and Bhaomog under tons of rock, and then ultimately to destroy the islands themselves. It is said that many loyal priests were able to flee the temple and reach the safety of boats, setting sail for what is now the Cannibal Coast, along with other survivors fleeing the aftershocks of the earthquake.

Yar-Ammon and the City of Khadis

The mysterious land of Yar-Ammon continues many ancient traditions harkening back to Elder Kuth and other, even more obscure prehuman roots. For its people, the afterlife seems to be more real than their mortal existence. High and low alike are buried as lavishly as they can afford, making the country is rightfully known as the ‚Kingdom of Tombs□. The grandest of these are the pyramids, immemorially ancient man-made mountains of stone erected along the marshy banks of the lower Fakhuum.

Yar-Ammon's capital and only seaport is Amenti, located slightly inland in the northern part of the Fakhuum's delta. It is as an old and alien city, as majestic as it is forbidding, dominated by the High King's palace, broad ceremonial avenues, and – most of all – the pylon-flanked, black temples dedicated to Yar-Ammon's beast-gods, whose priesthoods wield more political power than even the High King himself.

Other important population centres are the oasis cities of Akhet to the west, and Khadis to the far north. With some 50,000 permanent inhabitants, Khadis is one of Yar-Ammon's smaller cities, but important as the gateway to Khazistan, who grows ever more covetous of it as Khadis' king, old Akhtesh, shows signs of slipping into dementia.

As with all towns of Yar-Ammon, Khadis has one god who is its patron and revered above all others. In Khadis' case, this is Kherarut, the hyena-god. At the outskirts of the city, an idol of Kherarut towers over Khadis, the Red Sphinx, a fifteen meters high colossal sphinx with a hyena's mangy body, wings folded along its sides, and enigmatically devoid of a face. The Red Sphinx is venerated as sacred to Kherarut, but it also frightens the people of Khadis: It is said to be older than humanity, and to guard soul-blasting secrets. Some also whisper about half-men slinking in from the desert during moonless nights and howling in worship of the Red Sphinx.

IV. Drugs of Xoth

A great many types of drugs are used and abused by the jaded or the desperate throughout Xoth. The following is a short list of known drugs, to which the referee is encouraged to add new ones. Most of these drugs are addictive to a greater or lesser degree, but a PC's addiction to one of them should never be handled as a chance occurrence but rather as a device player and referee are interested in portraying for the character. Likewise, no mechanical effects for these drugs are provided – they are intended first and foremost to add colour and not to have a mechanical influence.

Dreaming Powder: (Susrah) The main ingredient of this flaky and slightly moist powder is the bark of a certain tree native to Susrah. It is smoked and causes vivid, fantastic, and utterly fascinating hallucinations, but the apparitions conjured up by a rare "bad trip" can be outright maddening. Addicts have a progressive difficulties telling reality from fantasy and may become outright mad.

Grey Desert Lotus: (Khazistan) The powdered leaves of the Grey Lotus of the al-Khazi desert is a popular drugs with the Khazraj nomads, but also the settled Khazistanis. The powder is sniffed and does then impart a heady feeling of power, grandeur, and strength. These delusions fade out into spells of nervousness, skittishness, and sometimes aggression.

Ghoma-Weed: (Ghoma) The Red Lotus of Ghoma, as this drug's full name is, are the reddish leaves of a certain type of lotus growing purportedly in distant Ghoma, where they are harvested, dried and specially treated by ascetic priests. When the leaves are chewed they act as a powerful stimulant counteracting both bodily fatigue and mental depression and imparting a very pleasant feeling of calm confidence. Addicts are progressively reliant on Ghoma-Weed to feel at all calm and confident and are easily recognized by red stains to their teeth.

Silver Lotus: (Silver Lotus Isles) The Silver Lotus is a rare plant growing in the dark depths of remote caves on the Silver Lotus Isles, where it is guarded by belligerent pygmy savages. The leaves are vulnerable to sunlight and spoilt by just a few moments of exposure to it, but they can, with certain additives, be ground into a powder that is usually burnt in censers or else smoked in long-stemmed pipes. The fumes of the Silver Lotus induce a deep sleep ripe with fantastic, though sometimes frightening, dreams.

The drug has a certain sorcerous characteristic and the dreams contain prophetic hints; one Xothian version of the Omen Reading Skill is the interpretation of visions imparted by the Silver Lotus.

Khanquah-Fungi: (Zorab) These fungi are picked from sheer cliff walls of the Zorab Mountains, dried and smoked over various special fumes. Ingesting one of these fungi acts as a powerful stimulant; the user doesn't feel fatigue and becomes energetic and hyperactive, but also high-strung and has problems concentrating.

Oolnar: (Zandj) The Zandjites extract the bile of a certain leech from the Ikuna Swamps along with a few other esoteric ingredients, mix the lot into a sticky brown paste that is either mixed with wine or coated under the tongue to slowly dissolve. Users of Oolnar typically become both sexually aroused and extremely drowsy or languid when under the drug's influence, many also experiencing dreamy hallucinations of an erotic nature. Some heighten this drugged arousal by watching dances or other erotic displays from their barely conscious eyes.

This concludes Chapter Eight

APPENDICES

The twigs which N'Longa flung on the fire broke and crackled. The upleaping flames lighted the countenances of the two men. N'Longa, voodoo man of the Slave Coast, was very old. His wizened and gnarled frame was stooped and brittle, his face creased by hundreds of wrinkles. The red firelight glinted on the human finger-bones which composed his necklace.

The other was an Englishman, and his name was Solomon Kane. He was tall and broad-shouldered, clad in black close garments, the garb of the Puritan. His featherless slouch hat was drawn low over his heavy brows, shadowing his darkly pallid face. His cold deep eyes brooded in the firelight.

"You come again, brother," droned the fetish-man, speaking in the jargon which passed for a common language of black man and white on the West Coast. "Many moons burn and die since we make blood-palaver.

You go to the setting sun, but you come back!"

"Aye," Kane's voice was deep and almost ghostly. "Yours is a grim land, N'Longa, a red land barred with the black darkness of horror and the bloody shadows of death. Yet I have returned."

- Robert E Howard - The Hills of the Dead

Cleaving Damage Tables

Cleaving Damage Table: Area 1, Right and Left (Lower Legs)							
Roll	**Location**	**Level 1 Negligible**	**Level 2 Slight**	**Level 3 Minor**	**Level 4 Substantial**	**Level 5 Grievous**	**Level 6 Catastrophic**
1	Foot	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 3 Weak strike.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 5 Struck foe with more force than edge.	BL: 2 Shock: 5 Pain: 7 KD: 1 Foe steps quickly out of your reach.	BL: 3 Shock: 8 Pain: 9 KD: 2 Foe stumbles, Quality strike.	BL: 4 Shock: 10 Pain: 12 KD: 3 Foe dances right into your swing.	BL: 5 Shock: 13 Pain: 14 KD: 4 Opens up a terrible wound. Blood everywhere.
2-4	Shin and Lower Leg	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Feeble strike taps target.	BL: 1 Shock: 3 Pain: 4 KD: 1 An opening appears and all you can do is smack foe lightly.	BL: 2 Shock: 5 Pain: 6 KD: 1 Foe avoids your main effort, but you nick him on your recovery.	BL: 3 Shock: 8 Pain: 9 KD: 2 Blow lands solidly upon foe's shin. You get some slashing action, but no mortal wound.	BL: 4 Shock: 10 Pain: 12 KD: 3 Reached long and caught foe in lower leg. He twists out of it, but is unbalanced.	BL: 5 Shock: 13 Pain: 14 KD: 4 Slashed muscle and tendons in lower leg. Foe stumbles forward into you with his guard down.
5-6	Knee and nearby areas	BL: 0 Shock: 1 Pain: 3 Unbalanced foe.	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 5 KD: 1 You are lucky to strike foe's knee while recovering from a lunge.	BL: 2 Shock: 6 Pain: 8 KD: 1 Nick foe above knee. Wound bleeds surprisingly strongly.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 10 KD: 2 Good Form! He can't stand this much longer.	BL: 4 Shock: 11 Pain:13 KD: 3 Foe mistakenly brings his leg in line with your attack. Severed tendons.	BL: 5 Shock: 14 Pain: 15 KD: 4 Your weapon slices through foe's calf. Hideous wound! Foe is instantly pale from the pain.

Cleaving Damage Table: Area 2, Right and Left (Upper Legs)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-2	Knee and nearby areas	BL: 0 Shock: 1 Pain: 3 Foe's evasion puts him out of an aggressive posture.	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 5 KD: 1 The blow does nothing more than open a wide shallow cut.	BL: 2 Shock: 6 Pain: 8 KD: 1 So-So strike. Slight leg wound.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 10 KD: 2 Foe leaps back, but you still catch his thigh. It's a bleeder!	BL: 4 Shock: 11 Pain: 13 KD: 3 Slash foe's knee. Your strike tears garments and armor off.	BL: 5 Shock: 14 Pain: 15 KD: 4 Strong blow to foe's leg. Foe drops his guard and almost his weapon.
3-5	Thigh	BL: 1 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 Foe evades frantically.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 Foe goes airborne to evade your strike.	BL: 3 Shock: 6 Pain: 6 KD: 1 Slash to foe's thigh sends a piece of equipment flying.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 KD: 2 The blow has some edge, but much impact.	BL: 5 Shock: 11 Pain: 10 KD: 3 Wound falls open and foe is in agony. His guard is still up, amazingly enough.	BL: 6 Shock: 14 Pain: 12 KD: 4 Foe blocks your attack with his thigh. Take a blood shower.
6	Hip	BL: 0 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 Foe backpedals 5 feet.	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 Strike passes across left hip and grazes right. It lands lightly.	BL: 2 Shock: 6 Pain: 7 Miss foe's arm and strike his hip. He drops something.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 10 KD: 2 You follow your training well. You extend on your slashing arc.	BL: 5 Shock: 11 Pain: 13 KD: 3 Catch part of foe's hip. You make an ugly wound.	Your blade gets stuck in foe's hip. Lots of screaming before he dies.

Cleaving Damage Table: Area 3, (Horizontal Swing Right and Left)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1	Hip	BL: 0 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 Foe evades your much of your swing.	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 You should have swung much harder.	BL: 2 Shock: 6 Pain: 7 Blow to foe's hip causes his right leg to falter for a moment.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 10 KD: 2 Disorient foe with a tricky shot. He is at a loss for words.	BL: 5 Shock: 11 Pain: 13 KD: 3 Catch foe with devastating hit. A terrible howl erupts from him.	That does it for him. He's very dead.
2-3	Upper (2) and Lower (3) Abs	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Your grip fails you.	BL: 1 Shock: 5 Pain: 5 Glancing blow takes skin with it.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 8 Strike blunted by clothing.	BL: 5 Shock: 10 Pain: 11 Very solid strike to foe's shield side.	BL: 7 Shock: 12 Pain: 14 Masterful strike to foe's chest.	Boom! Shot strikes foe's abs with stunning effect. He's dead. You're drenched.
4-5	Ribcage	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Foe steps right, then left, and almost evades your blow.	BL: 1 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 Destroy one of foe's silly decorations.	BL: 2 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 Blow is forceful, not hard.	BL: 3 Shock: 10 Pain: 10 Strong blow breaks foe's guard. He is unbalanced.	BL: 5 Shock: 12 Pain: 13 Foe yells out before the impact and is silenced by the blow. Ribs crackle.	Blow thunders as it connects. Foe's ribs shatter. Heart destroyed. Dead on his feet.
6	Arms	Go to Area 7 (Arms) below.					

Cleaving Damage Table: Area 4, (Overhand Right and Left)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-2	Upper Arm and Shoulder	BL: 0 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 Good form, but it disappoints.	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 Hard strike with no edge. Foe steps clear before you sort it out.	BL: 3 Shock: 6 Pain: 6 You push aside foe's weapon and force him back.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 You strike foe's shoulder and slash muscles.	BL: 5 Shock: 11 Pain: 10 Foe mistakenly brings his weapon arm across your blade's path. Ripping damage.	BL: 6 Shock: 14 Pain: 12 Bury your sword into foe's shoulder. He dances a jig.
3	Chest Cross-cut	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Strike lands poorly.	BL: 1 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 Strike passes under foe's arm. It fails to bite deep. He recoils.	BL: 2 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 Foe blocks your attack with his chest.	BL: 3 Shock: 10 Pain: 10 You crack foe's rib with a lightning strike to his chest.	BL: 5 Shock: 12 Pain: 13 Vicious Slash to foe's chest. Massive internal organ damage.	Strike to chest. Foe goes prone trying to avoid your strike. He gets up facing the wrong direction and collapses dead.
4	Neck	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Foe is shaken by your attack. He screams.	BL: 3 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 Blow opens shallow but bloody cut in neck.	BL: 5 Shock: 7 Pain: 6 Strike lands against foe's neck. Foe is horrified.	BL: 7 Shock: 10 Pain: 8 KD: 1 Foe tries to disarm you and pays with a massive chop to his neck.	Your edge bites half its width into foe. Opens up a terrible wound. It's raining blood as he drops dead.	Meat chopping strike severs foe's head.
5	Head (Lower), including the Face	BL: 1 Shock: 3 Pain: 3 Blade misses foe's eye by inches.	BL: 2 Shock: 6 Pain: 5 Foe defends energetically to avoid disaster.	BL: 3 Shock: 8 Pain: 7 KD: 1 KO: 1 Foe is shaken by your blow to his head. His defensive measures look clumsy.	BL: 4 Shock: 11 Pain: 9 KD: 2 KO: 2 Foe twists oddly to avoid your attack. Blow strikes foe's chin.	BL: 5 Shock: 13 Pain: 11 KD: 3 KO: 3 Foe moves his shield arm too slowly. You gladly slash his face.	Foe turns out and away from your swing. You still catch his face and destroy his head. Dead before he hits the ground.
6	Head (Upper)	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 You force your opponent back. He keeps you at bay with wild swings.	BL: 2 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 Your attack is weak.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 6 KD: 1 KO: 2 Foe yelps with pain!	BL: 4 Shock: 10 Pain: 9 KD: 2 KO: 4 Foe sobs as ear is removed.	Strike to foe's head cracks skull and causes massive brain damage. He gibbers and dies.	Strike down, in, and across foe's forehead. Destroy foe's eyes. He drops dead in his tracks.

Cleaving Damage Table: Area 5, (Vertical Swing)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-3	Head (Upper)	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Strike slides off.	BL: 2 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 Nick your weapon and your foe.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 6 KD: 1 KO: 2 Foe blocks your attack with his ear.	BL: 4 Shock: 10 Pain: 9 KD: 2 KO: 4 Strike to brain makes life difficult for foe.	Devastating Strike through foe's cranium. He leaps to the left and dies.	Your weapon slices through foe's head and out the other side. Foe drops and dies.
4	Head (Lower), including the Face	BL: 1 Shock: 3 Pain: 3 Strike lands flat.	BL: 2 Shock: 6 Pain: 5 Shot unbalances foe.	BL: 3 Shock: 8 Pain: 7 KD. 1 KO: 1 Catch foe in the cheek. He drops his guard and stumbles away from you.	BL: 4 Shock: 11 Pain: 9 KD: 2 KO: 2 Strike along foe's neck. Foe is frantic to escape death.	BL: 5 Shock: 13 Pain: 11 KD: 3 KO: 3 Slice through foe's cheek and throat.	Destroys foe's jaw. Drives bone through brain. Foe dies instantly.
5-6	Shoulders	BL: 0 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 Glancing blow. Nothing extra.	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 Strike failed to connect well.	BL: 2 Shock: 6 Pain: 6 Foe dances clear of the worst.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 Shot raises foe's arm up in involuntary salute.	BL: 5 Shock: 11 Pain: 12 Tear open foe's shoulder in a graphic display of violence.	Strike to foe's shoulder severs an artery. Foe drops to his knees and dies.

Cleaving Damage Table: Area 6, (Upward Swing)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-3	Inner Thigh	BL: 1 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 Foe is concerned with his own preservation. He steps back 5 feet.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 Good attack angle but poor follow up.	BL: 3 Shock: 6 Pain: 6 KD: 1 Foe jumps in the wrong direction and gets clipped.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 KD: 2 Foe loses some resolve from your solid strike.	BL: 6 Shock: 11 Pain: 10 KD: 3 Strike to side slips down into foe's thigh. Foe reels away in agony.	BL: 7 Shock: 14 Pain: 12 KD: 4 Blow to foe's thigh. Foe twists out of it and you turn your weapon to magnify the wound. Foe screams.
4	Groin (Male)	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 5 Your swing falls short when foe leaps back.	BL: 2 Shock: 8 Pain: 7 Light swing to foe's groin. Foe is nicked.	BL: 3 Shock: 10 Pain: 9 Glancing blow takes skin with it.	BL: 4 Shock: 12 Pain: 11 KD: 2 Blow to foe's groin. The strike is solid. The pain is certain.	BL: 5 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 KD: 3 Strike to foe's groin area. All vital organs are destroyed immediately.	Chop through the top of foe's groin and sever foe's leg. Foe drops and dies.
	Groin (Female)	BL: 0 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 Your swing falls short when foe leaps back.	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 Light swing to foe's groin. Foe is nicked.	BL: 2 Shock: 6 Pain: 7 Glancing blow takes skin with it.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 10 KD: 2 Blow to foe's groin. The strike is solid. The pain is certain.	BL: 5 Shock: 11 Pain: 13 KD: 3 Strike to foe's groin area. All vital organs are destroyed immediately.	Chop through the top of foe's groin and sever foe's leg. Foe drops and dies.
5	Abdomen	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Good form but ineffectual.	BL: 1 Shock: 5 Pain: 5 Your weapon stings foe but nothing solid.	BL: 3 Shock: 8 Pain: 8 Great finesse but low power.	BL: 5 Shock: 11 Pain: 11 Solid strike sends foe into defensive frenzy.	BL: 7 Shock: 14 Pain: 14 Your weapon rips into foe's stomach. Major abdominal wound.	Disembowel foe, killing him instantly.
6	Chest	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Foe rears back just in time to save his hide.	BL: 1 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 Foe's fancy move earns him the tip of your blade.	BL: 2 Shock: 8 Pain: 7 Your blow, though minor, takes off most of foe's shirt.	BL: 3 Shock: 11 Pain: 10 A hard blow that leaves your foe shaking in his boots.	BL: 5 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 Upward swing gets hung up in foe's ribs. Screaming, he tears himself away from your blade.	Slash up through foe's heart. Foe dies instantly.

Cleaving Damage Table: Area 7, Right and Left (Arms)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1	Hand	BL: 0 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 Weak strike.	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 Foe's evasion puts him out of an aggressive posture.	BL: 2 Shock: 6 Pain: 6 Foe's knuckles are laid bare defending against your strike.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 Foe tries to disarm you and pays with fingers.	BL: 4 Shock: 11 Pain: 11 Butcher chop to hand freezes foe in agony.	BL: 5 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 Foe screams as severed hand lands behind him.
2-3	Forearm	BL: 0 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 Strike lands poorly.	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 Minor wound. Cut foe with the smallest of slashes.	BL: 2 Shock: 6 Pain: 6 Catch part of foe's forearm. You make a long slice in foe's arm.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 You are lucky to strike foe's forearm while recovering from a lunge.	BL: 4 Shock: 11 Pain: 11 Your blow cuts deep and severs an important vein.	BL: 5 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 Block foe's weapon arm away and then nearly sever it.
4	Elbow	BL: 0 Shock: 1 Pain: 3 Your attack is weak.	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 5 Point of your blade makes foe yelp.	BL: 2 Shock: 6 Pain: 7 Strike to foe's elbow causes his shield to crack teeth.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 Foe's clumsy shield work costs him.	BL: 4 Shock: 11 Pain: 11 Your strike lays open foe's elbow to the bone.	BL: 5 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 Foe dances away in shock and pulls free of your blade.
5-6	Upper Arm and Shoulder	BL: 0 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 Foe steps quickly out of your reach.	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 Your assault catches foe in bicep and forces him back 5 feet.	BL: 3 Shock: 6 Pain: 6 Your great form makes foe cautious.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 Foe's awkward parry gives you the opening you've waited for.	BL: 5 Shock: 11 Pain: 10 Blow to shoulder has foe panting in pain.	BL: 6 Shock: 14 Pain: 12 Massive wound to upper arm causes foe to howl in agony.

PIERCING DAMAGE TABLES

Piercing Damage Table: Area 8, (Lower Legs, Right and Left)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1	Foot	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Strike lands without energy.	BL: 0 Shock: 1 Pain: 4 Foe's evasion puts him out of position.	BL: 1 Shock: 3 Pain: 6 KD: 1 Panic!	BL: 2 Shock: 6 Pain: 8 KD: 1 Foe vibrates from the impact of the strike.	BL: 3 Shock: 8 Pain: 10 KD: 2 Massive thrust to foot. If foe has shoe, the blow rips it off.	BL: 3 Shock: 11 Pain: 12 KD: 3 Your strike pins foe's foot to the floor! You twist your blade for luck.
2-4	Shin and Lower Leg	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Convince foe of his peril by just missing his calf.	BL: 1 Shock: 1 Pain: 4 Strike lands oddly.	BL: 2 Shock: 3 Pain: 6 KD: 1 Foe is fearful of your skill and steps back from your mighty onslaught.	BL: 3 Shock: 6 Pain: 8 KD: 2 Deal foe a measurable blow to his leg. Any one low hanging container on your foe now has a hole in it.	BL: 3 Shock: 8 Pain: 10 KD: 2 Foe leaps high to evade your attack. Oops!	BL: 4 Shock: 11 Pain: 12 KD: 3 Agonizing blow to foe's leg. He stumbles 5 feet to your left.
5	Knee and nearby areas	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Foe questions his resolve.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 4 Cheap shot to foe's knee.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 7 KD: 1 Foe steps back defensively.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 9 KD: 2 Catch foe's leg. The wound opens up nicely.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 11 KD: 2 Strike plunges into leg with deadly effect. Foe completely panics.	BL: 4 Shock: 12 Pain: 13 KD: 3 Strike pierces both of foe's legs. He moans in agony.
6	Passed between Legs	Missed target, better luck next time!					

Piercing Damage Table: Area 9, (Upper Legs, Right and Left)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1	Knee and nearby areas	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Glancing blow. Nothing extra.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 4 Strike to foe's leg. He looks impressed.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 7 KD: 1 Strike foe in upper leg. You rip his pretty pants.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 9 KD: 2 Excellent attack to knee slides and deeply punctures muscle.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 11 KD: 2 Savage strike to kneecap has foe shrieking in agony.	BL: 4 Shock: 12 Pain: 13 KD: 3 Amazing strike to knee area. If foe has armor it is ripped away.
2-5	Thigh	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Foe twitches away and wound does very slight damage.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 4 Foe's evasion exposes his back to you.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 6 KD: 1 Deep wound in foe's thigh. Well, it looked like a killing blow.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 8 KD: 1 Strike to foe's thigh. Slashes muscle. Foe teeters off-balance.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 10 KD: 2 Strike pierces cleanly but tears free in bloody finish.	BL: 5 Shock: 12 Pain: 12 KD: 3 Foe runs up half the length of your blade!
6	Hip	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 For steps back and avoids the worst.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 4 Hip strike shakes foe up. Foe attempts a recovery.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 6 Strike bites into foe's hip. The impact sounds truly terrible.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 9 KD: 1 Solid blow to foe's hip leaves his side numb. He screams.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 12 KD: 2 Foe gets run through the hip. That must really hurt!	BL: 6 Shock: 12 Pain: 14 KD: 3 Foe's sloppy footwork gets him stuck on your blade.

Piercing Damage Table: Area 10, (Pelvic Region)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-2	Hip	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Strike fails to pierce.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 4 Strike pokes foe's hip. He yells as though burned.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 6 Probing strike makes foe cautious.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 9 KD: 1 Foe's sluggish defense gives you the opening you've waited for.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 12 KD: 2 Savage strike strips equipment from right side of foe's waist.	BL: 6 Shock: 12 Pain: 14 KD: 3 Authoritative thrust briefly pins foe's weapon hand to his hip.
3-4	Groin (Male)	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 5 Close call for foe's groin has him sweating.	BL: 2 Shock: 6 Pain: 7 Foe dances clear of the worst.	BL: 3 Shock: 8 Pain: 9 Foe reels back from blow.	BL: 4 Shock: 10 Pain: 11 KD: 1 Foe screeches in pain from your combat lesson.	BL: 5 Shock: 12 Pain: 13 KD: 2 Foe dances in agony as he tears off your point. He is having trouble breathing.	BL: 7 Shock: 14 Pain: 15 KD: 3 Rip foe's groin wide open with twisting strike that leaves him wide-eyed with horror.
	Groin (Female)	Count as Lower Abdomen (on 3) or Hip (on 4)					
5-6	Lower Abdomen	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Foe is fearful of your skill and leaps back from your flashing blade.	BL: 2 Shock: 3 Pain: 5 Foe evades and maneuvers for a better position.	BL: 4 Shock: 5 Pain: 8 Strike through foe's bladder has him frantic to escape.	BL: 5 Shock: 8 Pain: 10 Strike up and through foe's kidney. Lots of screaming.	BL: 6 Shock: 10 Pain: 12 Major abdominal wound. Blood pours out in frightening quantities.	Tear out foe's guts in a graphic display of violence. Yep, he's dead.

Piercing Damage Table: Area 11, (Belly Thrust)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-5	Lower Abdomen	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Your thrust falls short when foe leaps back.	BL: 2 Shock: 3 Pain: 5 Struck foe with more force than edge.	BL: 4 Shock: 5 Pain: 8 Foe staggers away from the worst of your strike.	BL: 5 Shock: 8 Pain: 10 Plunge through foe's guts with long follow through and twist.	BL: 6 Shock: 10 Pain: 12 Strike tears in just below foe's belt. He's frozen in pain.	Strike through foe's belly spills his guts to the floor. He's dead.
6	Flesh to the Side	BL: 1 Shock: lvl-1 Pain: lvl+2 Pierced body without hitting any major organs, mostly just flesh and muscles. It hurts and bleeds, but probably isn't lethal.					

Piercing Damage Table: Area 12, (Chest)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-2	Under the ribs (Upper Abdomen)	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Catch foe in ribs. He drops his guard and leaps back.	BL: 2 Shock: 3 Pain: 5 Foe mostly deflects your attack.	BL: 4 Shock: 5 Pain: 8 Foe's evasion puts him out of position.	BL: 5 Shock: 8 Pain: 10 Solid strike into abs has blood spraying everywhere.	BL: 6 Shock: 10 Pain: 12 Lightning strike up and through ribs staggers foe back and off your blade.	Strike through both of foe's lungs. Foe drops and passes out. He dies during the next Limelight.
3-6	Chest	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 3 Minor chest wound. It could have been much better.	BL: 2 Shock: 3 Pain: 5 Foe's attempt at daring riposte earns him pain.	BL: 4 Shock: 6 Pain: 7 Minor chest wound numbs foe.	BL: 5 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 Foe whirls left into your strike.	BL: 6 Shock: 12 Pain: 11 Strike plunges into foe's chest and emerges from the other side.	Shot through heart sends foe reeling back 10 feet to a place suitable for death. Okay, he's gone.

Piercing Damage Table: Area 13, (Head)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-2	Collar and Throat	BL: 1 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Foe dances and weaves with vigor to avoid the worst of your assault.	BL: 3 Shock: 3 Pain: 4 Foe deflects the weight of your strike at the last moment with his shoulder.	BL: 5 Shock: 6 Pain: 6 Shot caroms off foe's shoulder and up into throat.	BL: 6 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 Excellent strike to collar slices through muscle and tendons.	BL: 7 Shock: 12 Pain: 10 KD: 1 Strike through throat. Mangles veins and artery. Foe cannot breath.	Piercing strike up through Adam's Apple. Foe dies instantly.
3-6	Face (3-4) or Head (5-6)	BL: 1 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 Foe's slip allows his narrow escape.	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 Foe's furious defense earns him a momentary reprieve.	BL: 3 Shock: 6 Pain: 6 Shot slips through lips and jaw. What a mess.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 KD: 1 Strike through nose. Foe's eyes cross momentarily.	Strike plunges through foe's eye. Foe dies immediately.	Shot through both ears proves effective. Foe drops dead instantly. Smooth move.

Piercing Damage Table: Area 14, (Arm Thrust)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1	Hand	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Foe evades and maneuvers for a better position.	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 3 Strike lands with much force but no edge.	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 5 Stinging thrust through fleshy web of foe's hand.	BL: 2 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 Artful attack leaves foe breathless and minus a digit.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 Strike and flick leaves two fingers hanging by threads.	BL: 4 Shock: 11 Pain: 11 Completely pierce foe's hand. Oh yeah, he's howling.
2-3	Forearm	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Strike lands without energy.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 3 Slice foe's forearm with long follow through.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 5 Strike along foe's arm. The damage takes a moment to show.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 Deep wound to foe's arm. It's a bleeder!	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 Savage stab to foe's arm makes him hiss with pain.	BL: 4 Shock: 11 Pain: 11 Strike ricochets through muscle in shield arm. If foe has shield, he drops it.
4	Elbow	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Strike prods foe back.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 4 Strike pierces flesh of foe's elbow. Ow, It burns!	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 6 Foe blocks your attack with his elbow.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 9 Foe's leap sends your point tumbling through the flesh of his elbow. He pulls free.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 11 Foe is stunned when his flurry ends with your steel buried in him.	BL: 4 Shock: 11 Pain: 13 Strike plunges into doomed foe's elbow and rips out through other side.
5-6	Upper Arm	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Foe veers away and avoids all but the tip of your blade.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 4 Strike costs foe a piece of his hide.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 5 Stinging shot through foe's bicep.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 Solid strike pierces flesh and digs into bone.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 Foe loses concentration for just one moment. That was enough.	BL: 5 Shock: 11 Pain: 11 Savage strike pins foe's arm briefly to his side. Take a blood shower.

BLUNT DAMAGE TABLES

Blunt Damage Table: Area 1, (Lower Legs)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1	Foot	BL: 0 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 Thud.	BL: 0 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 KD: 1 Foe recoils as your blow impacts.	BL: 1 Shock: 6 Pain: 6 KD: 2 Ouch, dam-mit, Ouch!	BL: 2 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 KD: 2 Blow lands with a crack! Foe's eyes roll in pain.	BL: 3 Shock: 11 Pain: 11 KD: 3 Foe's hair stands on end as your strike crushes toes.	BL: 3 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 KD: 4 Strike comes down like a ton of bricks smashing foot to paste. So much screaming!
2-4	Shin and Lower Leg	BL: 0 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 Practice this one.	BL: 0 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 KD: 1 He leans to your shield side as you strike.	BL: 1 Shock: 6 Pain: 6 KD: 2 Shot takes foe in lower leg. He fails to jump over it.	BL: 2 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 KD: 3 Foe dances a strange agony jig.	BL: 3 Shock: 11 Pain: 11 KD: 3 Masterful strike to shin causes foe to spit out wooden dentures.	BL: 3 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 KD: 4 Powerful blow sweeps foe onto his back. Bones break and muscles tear.
5-6	Knee and nearby areas	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 3 The strike lost some-thing in the translation.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 5 KD: 1 Glancing strike to knee. Foe turns away to avoid the damage. Foe uses his weapon for balance.	BL: 1 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 KD: 2 Big bruise, lots of pain.	BL: 2 Shock: 9 Pain: 10 KD: 3 Foe leaps to avoid strike to guts and catches blow full on left knee. He howls on impact.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 13 KD: 3 Massive Strike to foe's right knee. Oh that hurts ya know!	BL: 3 Shock: 14 Pain: 15 KD: 4 Blow to foe's kneecap breaks it. Help! Foe has fallen and cannot get up!

Blunt Damage Table: Area 2, (Upper Legs)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-2	Knee and nearby areas	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 3 Foe evades frantically.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 5 KD: 1 Foe dances first left, then right, and almost avoids blow.	BL: 1 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 KD: 2 Blow lands just above knee. Minor fracture.	BL: 2 Shock: 9 Pain: 10 KD: 3 Disorient foe with a tricky shot. He is at a loss for words.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 13 KD: 3 Foe should have stayed in bed. Knee Joint is shattered.	BL: 3 Shock: 14 Pain: 15 KD: 4 Foe makes a mistake and pays. You send him crashing to the ground writhing in pain. What a mess!
3-5	Thigh	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Light swing to foe's thigh. Foe is bruised.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 KD: 1 Strike blunted by clothing. What's he got under there?	BL: 0 Shock: 7 Pain: 6 KD: 2 No blood but he's yelling his head off.	BL: 1 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 KD: 2 Strong blow breaks foe's guard. He is unbalanced.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 11 KD: 3 Blow to foe's right thigh crushes a variety of organs. He curses you between screams.	BL: 4 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 KD: 4 Massive blow to thigh. Compound fracture severs an artery. Foe goes down hard.
6	Hip	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Blow is forceful, but not hard.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 Blow to foe's left hip. He spins sideways	BL: 1 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 KD. 1 Blow to foe's hip causes his right leg to shake in bizarre fashion.	BL: 2 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 KD: 2 Strike to side slips down into foe's hip. Good strike!	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 11 KD: 3 Blow thunders as it connects. Foe's hip contorts to a crazy angle.	Titan-like strike renders foes hip to powder. He collapses and dies in but a single Limelight.

Blunt Damage Table: Area 3, (Upper Body)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1	Hip	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Foe steps back 5 feet. He is out of position.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 More noise than impact.	BL: 1 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 KD: 1 Blow to foe's hip causes him to rage at you.	BL: 2 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 KD: 2 Miss foe's arm and strike his hip. Something flies off foe.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 11 KD: 3 Deal foe an Olympic blow to his left hip. Any one container on your foe is now flat.	Crush what was once foe's hip. He takes 3 hops and collapses dead.
2-3	Upper (2) and Lower (3) Abs	BL: 0 Shock: 3 Pain: 2 Well it sounded devastating!	BL: 0 Shock: 6 Pain: 4 Precise strike to foe's abs, though it needed more weight.	BL: 1 Shock: 9 Pain: 7 Foe walks into your blow. Some strength in the strike would have finished him.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 10 Foe seeks to avoid this attack again. He has lost his way.	BL: 4 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 Catch foe in mid-swing and disarm him with crushing strike.	Blast to foe's abs. A bone is driven into vital organs. Foe is down gasping and dies in 1 Limelight.
4-5	Ribcage	BL: 0 Shock: 3 Pain: 2 Cheap shot to foe's ribs profits you little.	BL: 0 Shock: 6 Pain: 4 Shot too close to foe's throat. He seeks to get away.	BL: 1 Shock: 9 Pain: 7 Blow to chest. He seeks to regain his wind and survive your onslaught.	BL: 2 Shock: 12 Pain: 10 Drive foe's shield backward into ribs and break them.	BL: 4 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 Strike takes foe down on one knee. Finish him.	Demolish foe's chest cavity. He grips your arm then drops and dies.
6	Arms	Go to Area 7 (Arms) below.					

Blunt Damage Table: Area 4, (Overhand Right and Left)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-2	Upper Arm and Shoulder	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Foe is not sure what you're up to.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 Well, it didn't seem like a solid hit, but foe gasps and shrieks.	BL: 1 Shock: 7 Pain: 6 Foe raises an arm to block your strike. He does himself harm. You profit.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 Miss foe's head and strike his arm. He gasps and drops something.	BL: 4 Shock: 12 Pain: 11 Catch foe in shoulder blade. Foe drops his guard and reels from your blow.	BL: 5 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 Thunderous Blow to shoulder crushes bone. Foe mumbles and is frozen in shock.
3	Upper Body	BL: 0 Shock: 3 Pain: 2 Feeble tap.	BL: 0 Shock: 6 Pain: 4 This needs practice.	BL: 1 Shock: 9 Pain: 7 Your main effort misses, but you catch foe on recovery.	BL: 2 Shock: 12 Pain: 10 Foe miscalculates his attack's timing and lunges into your swing.	BL: 4 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 Slam foe with little grace. You are unsure of your success until you see the blood pouring out of his tunic.	Savage blow pulps chest. Foe falls down dead.
4	Neck	BL: 0 Shock: 3 Pain: 2 Lots of smoke but little fire.	BL: 0 Shock: 6 Pain: 4 Close strike to neck has foe panicking.	BL: 1 Shock: 8 Pain: 6 KD: 1 Foe's flashy moves earn him a slap to the Adam's Apple.	BL: 1 Shock: 11 Pain: 8 KD: 2 You are lucky to strike foe's neck as he ducks strike to chest.	Blow snaps neck. Foe is paralyzed from the shoulders down. He'll be dead in a bit.	Foe's head flops at crazy angle. He drops like a brained cow, twitches and dies.
5	Head (Lower), including the Face	BL: 0 Shock: 4 Pain: 2 Terrific form yields puzzling result.	BL: 0 Shock: 7 Pain: 4 KO: 1 KD: 1 Strike splits foe's nose. His frantic defense saves him for now.	BL: 1 Shock: 9 Pain: 5 KD: 2 KO: 2 Foe tries to block your strike with his lips. Front teeth knocked out.	BL: 2 Shock: 12 Pain: 7 KD: 3 KO: 3 Break foe's jaw.	BL: 3 Shock: 14 Pain: 10 KD: 4 KO: 4 Strike to foe's nose drives cartilage back into brain.	Blow to foe's face. If visored, the visor is driven into his face and foe dies in 2 Limelight rounds. Without a visor, he dies instantly.
6	Head (Upper)	BL: 0 Shock: 3 Pain: 2 Light tap to the noggin gives foe headache.	BL: 1 Shock: 6 Pain: 4 KD: 1 KO: 1 Not much blood, but he's bellowing like a wounded ox.	BL: 1 Shock: 8 Pain: 6 KD: 2 KO: 3 Blow to foe's head pulps ear.	BL: 2 Shock: 11 Pain: 8 KD: 3 KO: 5 Foe gasps, leans forward, and receives your blow.	Iron-fisted strike to crown of foe's head drives skull into brain. Foe falls down dead while limbs dance about.	Strike to forehead shatters foe's brain. Instant Death.

Blunt Damage Table: Area 5, (Vertical Swing)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-2	Shoulders	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Okay, that's different.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 Modest strike to foe's shield drives edge into shoulder.	BL: 1 Shock: 7 Pain: 6 Foe bobs and weaves desperately to avoid your strike.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 Bold slam to foe's shoulder has him screeching soprano.	BL: 4 Shock: 12 Pain: 11 Titan-like swing drives foe's own weapon into shoulder.	BL: 5 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 That does it for him. Strike pulverizes foe's shoulder blade.
3	Head (Lower), including the Face	BL: 0 Shock: 4 Pain: 2 Your stroke rips off half of foe's mustache.	BL: 0 Shock: 7 Pain: 4 KD: 1 KO: 1 Foe dances away and evades your much of your swing.	BL: 1 Shock: 9 Pain: 5 KD: 2 KO: 2 Foe attempts to disarm you and takes strike to ear for his trouble.	BL: 2 Shock: 12 Pain: 7 KD: 3 KO: 3 Foe deflects your stroke down into his cheek.	BL: 3 Shock: 14 Pain: 10 KD: 4 KO: 4 Brilliant blow to chin sends foe reeling.	Mangle what was once foe's face. Foe flings weapon over shoulder and dies instantly.
4-6	Head (Upper)	BL: 0 Shock: 3 Pain: 2 Well, it stung a lot!	BL: 1 Shock: 6 Pain: 4 KD: 1 KO: 1 Foe slips and escapes the brunt of your attack.	BL: 1 Shock: 8 Pain: 6 KD: 2 KO: 3 Blow drives foe's shield back between his eyes.	BL: 2 Shock: 11 Pain: 8 KD: 3 KO: 5 Workmanlike blow rings foe's helm like a church bell. His eyes glaze over.	Furious stroke to orbit of foe's eye pulps both eye and brain. Dead before he hits the ground.	Masterful strike to hairline of foe's head. He bows before you and dies.

Blunt Damage Table: Area 6, (Upward Swing)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-3	Inner Thigh	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Foe snorts.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 KD: 1 Blow is forceful, not hard.	BL: 0 Shock: 7 Pain: 6 KD: 2 Foe howls in pain.	BL: 1 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 KD: 2 Blow to foe's thigh sends him reeling to the right.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 11 KD: 3 Foe's back arches in agony. It's a bleeder!	BL: 4 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 KD: 4 Foe's leg nearly torn from body. Impact is heard far and wide.
4	Groin (Male)	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 6 Close call for foe's groin.	BL: 0 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 You now have foe's complete attention.	BL: 1 Shock: 11 Pain: 9 KD: 1 You have foe hopping in agony dance.	BL: 1 Shock: 13 Pain: 10 KD: 2 Foe throws up. Mind your shoes.	BL: 3 Shock: 15 Pain: 12 KD: 3 Blow drives foe to frenzy of agony. Oh, the screaming!	BL: 4 Shock: 17 Pain: 14 KD: 4 Master strike to foe's groin has foe kneeling in front of you. Massive internal bleeding.
	Groin (Female)	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Close call for foe's groin.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 You now have foe's complete attention.	BL: 0 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 KD: 1 You have foe hopping in agony dance.	BL: 1 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 KD: 2 Foe throws up. Mind your shoes.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 11 KD: 3 Blow drives foe to frenzy of agony. Oh, the screaming!	BL: 4 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 KD: 4 Master strike to foe's groin has foe kneeling in front of you. Massive internal bleeding.
5	Abdomen	BL: 0 Shock: 3 Pain: 2 Strike blunted by thick gambeson.	BL: 0 Shock: 6 Pain: 4 You knock the air from foe's lungs.	BL: 1 Shock: 9 Pain: 7 Bash to the gut has your foe spitting blood.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 10 Lightning strike to foe's gut has him gasping. Internal bleeding.	BL: 4 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 Foe doubles over in agony. Blood pours from his mouth.	BL: 5 Shock: 17 Pain: 16 Savage strike has foe prostrate at your feet. Finish him.
6	Head (Lower), including the Face	BL: 0 Shock: 4 Pain: 2 Foe leans far back to evade blow. He is off-balance.	BL: 0 Shock: 7 Pain: 4 KD: 1 KO: 1 Your swing raps foe's jaw.	BL: 1 Shock: 9 Pain: 5 KD: 2 KO: 2 Foe's lips burst from blow's impact.	BL: 2 Shock: 12 Pain: 7 KD: 3 KO: 3 Journeyman swing removes foe's nose and upper lip.	BL: 3 Shock: 14 Pain: 10 KD: 4 KO: 4 Upward stroke drives foe's nose cartilage into brain.	Foe' face sheared off from force of blow. Foe dances back and collapses dead.

Blunt Damage Table: Area 7, (Swing to Arms)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1	Hand	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Strike failed to connect well.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 Strike raps foe's knuckles. Ouch!	BL: 1 Shock: 7 Pain: 6 Strike crosses foe's hand. If he has a gauntlet it is dented and knocked off.	BL: 2 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 Blow bends back foe's fingers. Blood streams from wound.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 10 Strike crushes foe's wrist and mangles vein.	BL: 3 Shock: 14 Pain: 12 Crush foe's hand to powder with masterful strike. Foe is speechless.
2-3	Forearm	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Strike lands without energy.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 Strike causes foe to flinch.	BL: 1 Shock: 7 Pain: 6 Strike to forearm rips clothing.	BL: 2 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 Solid forearm bash numbs foe's grip.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 10 Foe blocks your strike with his forearm. He drops his weapon.	BL: 3 Shock: 14 Pain: 12 Blow destroys foe's forearm. Arm is useless.
4	Elbow	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Glancing blow. Nothing extra.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 Foe goes low to evade your attack.	BL: 1 Shock: 7 Pain: 6 Foe questions his resolve.	BL: 2 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 Drive foe's elbow into his side. Some internal bleeding.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 10 Blow sends bone shards flying. Oh, the noise!	BL: 3 Shock: 14 Pain: 12 Strike shatters foe's elbow. Foe screams his head off.
5-6	Upper Arm and Shoulder	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Foe evades and maneuvers for a better position.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 Minor shoulder wound. It could have been better.	BL: 1 Shock: 7 Pain: 6 Strike foe in upper arm. You tear his pretty clothes.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 Strike to foe's arm and he looks impressed.	BL: 4 Shock: 12 Pain: 11 Reach long and catch foe in his upper arm. His eyes glaze over.	BL: 5 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 Strike foe in weapon arm, the bone is broken. Arm is useless, artery is open.

Blunt Damage Table: Area 8, (Thrust to Lower Legs)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1	Foot	BL: 0 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 Foe's deft footwork saves him from the worst of the attack.	BL: 0 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 KD: 1 Foe dances back from your strike.	BL: 1 Shock: 6 Pain: 6 KD: 2 Solid whack to foe's big toe has him cursing and hopping.	BL: 2 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 KD: 2 Authoritative blow delivered to foe's heel has him gasping in pain.	BL: 3 Shock: 11 Pain: 11 KD: 3 Savage thrust to foe's instep crushes bone and tears muscle.	BL: 3 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 KD: 4 Foe tried to kick you. Your response shatters his foot completely. So much screaming.
2-4	Shin and Lower Leg	BL: 0 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 Not much weight to your strike, but he yells anyway.	BL: 0 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 KD: 1 Hard crack to the shin-bone. Ouch!	BL: 1 Shock: 6 Pain: 6 KD: 2 As foe spins away from you, you blast his calf.	BL: 2 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 KD: 3 Cheap shot to foe's shin has him ashen with pain.	BL: 3 Shock: 11 Pain: 11 KD: 3 Foe leapt right into your low thrust. Blood everywhere.	BL: 3 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 KD: 4 Pile-driving strike to shin snaps foe's leg in half. Foe stunned with pain.
5	Knee and nearby areas	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 3 Foe smiles.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 5 KD: 1 Okay, at least he's not smiling now.	BL: 1 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 KD: 2 Light swing, but it hits foe's kneecap flush.	BL: 2 Shock: 10 Pain: 10 KD: 3 Powerful thrust drives foe's own weapon into his knee. Messy.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 13 KD: 3 Foe blocks your thrust to groin with his leg. He raves with pain.	BL: 3 Shock: 15 Pain: 15 KD: 4 Foe mistimes his attack and plants his leg directly beneath your descending strike. Take a blood shower.
6	Passed between Legs	Missed target, better luck next time!					

Blunt Damage Table: Area 9, (Thrust Upper Legs)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1	Knee and nearby areas	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 3 Feeble strike taps target.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 5 KD: 1 Foe slips to the left and avoids the brunt of the strike.	BL: 1 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 KD: 2 Cheap shot to the kneecap forces foe to hop back.	BL: 2 Shock: 10 Pain: 10 KD: 3 You fake foe into stepping into your swing. Oh, he yells all right.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 13 KD: 3 Miss foe's hip and strike his knee. He gasps and spits up blood.	BL: 3 Shock: 15 Pain: 15 KD: 4 That does it for him. Your power thrust lands flush on foe's knee. The knee buckles and foe goes down hard.
2-5	Thigh	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Strike slides off.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 KD: 1 Well, you clipped him.	BL: 0 Shock: 7 Pain: 6 KD: 2 Light thrust has foe off-balance.	BL: 1 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 KD: 2 Solid slam to thigh has foe staggering. Blood stains his pants.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 11 KD: 3 Blow to foe's thigh causes his left leg to tremble and shake. Bloody foam pours from his lips.	BL: 4 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 KD: 4 Foe screeches and babbles something to you before collapsing. Blood fountains from the wound.
6	Hip	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Foe leans back just in time to save his hide.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 Foe is getting a bit nervous.	BL: 1 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 KD: 1 Foe's clumsy footwork costs him.	BL: 2 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 KD: 2 Foe screams as your thrust connects straight to his hip bone.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 11 KD: 3 Monster strike strips equipment from left side of waist.	Titan smash to foe's hip blasts it to powder. Foe blows an enormous spray of blood over you and collapses moaning. He dies in but 1 Limelight.

Blunt Damage Table: Area 10, (Pelvic/Groin Thrust)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-2	Lower Abdomen	BL: 0 Shock: 3 Pain: 2 Foe sucks in his gut to avert disaster.	BL: 0 Shock: 6 Pain: 4 Foe's evasion puts him out of position.	BL: 1 Shock: 9 Pain: 7 Foe quivers from the impact of your assault.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 10 Foe stumbles, Quality strike.	BL: 4 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 Blow thunders as it connects. Foe's guts mangled.	Hellish Blow to foe's abdomen. Strike destroys a variety of organs. Poor fool drops and expires in 2 Limelights.
3-4	Groin (Male)	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 6 Foe twists at the last moment to save himself,	BL: 0 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 Foe goes airborne to avoid your thrust.	BL: 1 Shock: 11 Pain:9 KD: 1 Foe turns white as a sheet and panics as your strike slaps his jewels.	BL: 1 Shock: 13 Pain:10 KD: 2 Disorient foe with a canny strike. The air is blue with his curses.	BL: 3 Shock: 15 Pain:12 KD: 3 Boom! Shot to foe's groin has him down and screaming. His pants are soaked with blood.	BL: 4 Shock: 17 Pain:14 KD: 4 Crush foe's stones. He kneels clutching at his ruined manhood. Finish him.
	Groin (Female)	Count as Lower Abdomen (on 3) or Hip (on 4)					
5-6	Hip	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Foe rolls away from your blow.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 Your thrust catches foe in hip and forces him back 5 feet.	BL: 1 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 KD: 1 Glancing blow takes skin with it.	BL: 2 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 KD: 2 Inattentive foe panicked by your strike.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 11 KD: 3 Foe's leg swings around like string. Joint is shattered.	Massive blow to hip. Compound fracture severs major artery. Foe goes down hard and bleeds out dead in 1 Limelight.

Blunt Damage Table: Area 11, (Belly Thrust)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-6	Lower Abdomen	BL: 0 Shock: 3 Pain: 2 This needs practice.	BL: 0 Shock: 6 Pain: 4 Foe fakes to the left and spoils your aim.	BL: 1 Shock: 9 Pain: 7 Foe's clever move earns him pain.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 10 Well timed blow delivered to foe's gut has him reeling in agony.	BL: 4 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 Foe leaps high in agony. Yep, he's bleeding!	Blow to foe's abdomen. Strike shatters organs. He collapses to the ground moaning. He'll be gone in 2 Limelights.

Blunt Damage Table: Area 12, (Chest)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-2	Under the ribs, (Upper Abdomen)	BL: 0 Shock: 3 Pain: 2 Foe vaults back 5 feet.	BL: 0 Shock: 6 Pain: 4 Foe turns with your strike.	BL: 1 Shock: 9 Pain: 7 Strike foe under ribs. Muscles and cartilage are damaged.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 10 Solid strike causes a host of trouble.	BL: 4 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 Masterful strike up and into ribs shatters bone and rips muscle.	Powerful blow flips foe onto his back. Bones break and muscles tear. He gags a bit and dies.
3-6	Chest	BL: 0 Shock: 3 Pain: 2 Strike absorbed by thick clothing.	BL: 0 Shock: 6 Pain: 4 Foe dances to the left, then to the right, and nearly avoids your strike.	BL: 1 Shock: 9 Pain: 7 Blow to foe's ribs. It hurts him to raise his arms. Foe cannot lean over.	BL: 2 Shock: 12 Pain: 10 Blow to chest. He seeks to regain his wind and survive your onslaught.	BL: 4 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 Strike plunges into chest with deadly effect. Foe completely panics.	Monster blow to chest. Foe flung back from your strike. He jumps up facing you, smirks, and collapses dead.

Blunt Damage Table: Area 13, (Head Thrust)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-2	Neck	BL: 0 Shock: 3 Pain: 2 Foe is interested in where you're going with this.	BL: 0 Shock: 6 Pain: 4 Shot unbalances foe.	BL: 1 Shock: 8 Pain: 6 KD: 1 Foe spins to disarm you and instead gets a strike to his neck.	BL: 1 Shock: 11 Pain: 8 KD: 2 Blow lands with a crack! Foe's eyes roll in pain.	Foe yells out before the impact and is silenced by the blow. Yep, he's dead.	Blow to foe's weapon drives edge back into neck. His eyes bulge with shock before he dies.
3-4	Face and Head (Lower)	BL: 0 Shock: 4 Pain: 2 Good form but poor results.	BL: 0 Shock: 7 Pain: 4 KD: 1 KO: 1 Foe is shaken by your attack. He screams.	BL: 1 Shock: 9 Pain: 5 KD: 2 KO: 2 Solid blow to face costs foe his front teeth. He lisps curses at you.	BL: 2 Shock: 12 Pain: 7 KD: 3 KO: 3 Drive home strike to foe's cranium. Foe makes a frenzied effort to keep his footing.	BL: 3 Shock: 14 Pain: 10 KD: 4 KO: 4 Crush foe's cheek and drive bone into brain. Foe turns about to walk away.	Face strike shatters bone and destroys eyes. Foe drops dead at your feet.
5-6	Head (Upper)	BL: 0 Shock: 3 Pain: 2 Strike yields small graze to foe's head.	BL: 1 Shock: 6 Pain: 4 KD: 1 KO: 1 Foe shakes his head after your weak tap.	BL: 1 Shock: 8 Pain: 6 KD: 2 KO: 3 Light blow to foe's head causes him to retreat with odd hopping motion.	BL: 2 Shock: 11 Pain: 8 KD: 3 KO: 5 Strike to hairline sends helm flying. Foe is spun about.	Strike to brain causes foe to babble before he dies.	Catch foe flush with massive thrust above the ear. Foe sits down calmly and dies.

Blunt Damage Table: Area 14, (Arms Thrust)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1	Hand	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Light rap to foe's knuckles.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 Cheap shot to foe's hand yield meager results.	BL: 1 Shock: 7 Pain: 6 Foe yelps with pain as you relieve him of some hand hide.	BL: 2 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 Solid smash to foe's hand costs him his thumb.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 10 Foe foolishly blocks your strike with his hand and pays the price.	BL: 3 Shock: 14 Pain: 12 Lucky strike shatters every bone in foe's hand. He looks as though he may faint.
2-3	Forearm	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Blow is forceful, not hard.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 You miss with your main effort but clip foe with your recovery.	BL: 1 Shock: 7 Pain: 6 Foe was so confident that you would miss.	BL: 2 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 Journeyman thrust to forearm has foe panting in agony.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 10 Blow thunders as it connects. Foe's forearm mangled. Stop that screaming!	BL: 3 Shock: 14 Pain: 12 Shatter foe's forearm. He's out of his head with the pain.
4	Elbow	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Odd, your strike made him cry out.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 Stinger to foe's elbow.	BL: 1 Shock: 7 Pain: 6 Foe's misery is proportionate to wound.	BL: 2 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 You crack foe's elbow with a lightning strike. He's making a lot of noise.	BL: 3 Shock: 12 Pain: 10 Crush foe's elbow against his side. It's a bleeder!	BL: 3 Shock: 14 Pain: 12 Power blow to elbow destroys both muscle and bone. Foe rages at you weakly.
5-6	Upper Arm and Shoulder	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2 Hard thrust with poor impact. Foe steps clear before you sort it out.	BL: 0 Shock: 5 Pain: 4 You force your opponent back. He holds you back with wild swings.	BL: 1 Shock: 7 Pain: 6 Foe dances back from the brunt of your thrust.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 Foe's sluggish form gives you the opening you've waited for.	BL: 4 Shock: 12 Pain: 11 Strike into the shield shoulder of foe. Joint shatters.	BL: 5 Shock: 14 Pain: 13 Blow breaks foe's weapon arm. Sling foe's weapon to the right 5 feet. Foe's arm is useless. Tendon damage.

SWUNG PIERCING DAMAGE TABLES

Swung Piercing Damage Table: Area 1, Right and Left (Lower Legs)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1	Foot	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Foe dodges your wood-chopping strike.	BL: 0 Shock: 1 Pain: 4 Your point drifted – foe would have been other-wise dead.	BL: 1 Shock: 3 Pain: 6 KD: 1 Great recovery slices foe's foot.	BL: 2 Shock: 6 Pain: 8 KD: 1 Power chop hammers through foe's foot.	BL: 3 Shock: 8 Pain: 10 KD: 2 Animal swing tears into foe's instep. What a mess!	BL: 3 Shock: 11 Pain: 12 KD: 3 Where's my foot? Color drains from foe's face as he collapses.
2-4	Shin and Lower Leg	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Okay, now he's worried.	BL: 1 Shock: 1 Pain: 4 Wild swing would have removed foe's leg had it connected properly.	BL: 2 Shock: 3 Pain: 6 KD: 1 Cheap shot to foe's shin causes him to rage at you.	BL: 3 Shock: 6 Pain: 8 KD: 2 Okay, now he's in a frenzy.	BL: 3 Shock: 8 Pain: 10 KD: 2 You shift gears and sur-prise foe with wicked blow to shin.	BL: 4 Shock: 11 Pain: 12 KD: 3 Your rag-ing swing destroys foe's leg below the knee. Call the meat wagon!
5-6	Knee and nearby areas	. BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Foe fakes to the right and avoids the brunt of your strike.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 4 Lazy strike delivers weak tap on knee.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 7 KD: 1 Kamikaze attack drives foe back.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 9 KD: 2 The strike was solid, the pain is certain.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 11 KD: 2 Foe walked right into it.	BL: 4 Shock: 12 Pain: 13 KD: 3 Foe tries to hold his ground against your assault. You rip off his kneecap.

Swung Piercing Damage Table: Area 2, Right and Left (Upper Legs)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-2	Knee and nearby areas	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Foe is successful in mostly deflecting your blow.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 4 Great energy! Foe is getting a solid workout. Lots of sweat.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 7 KD: 1 Foe tries to end fight early by ducking into your swing.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 9 KD: 2 Professional shot has foe panting in agony.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 11 KD: 2 You hit him. Now he's sobbing.	BL: 4 Shock: 12 Pain: 13 KD: 3 Missed. Missed. Okay, the last one nearly killed him.
3-5	Thigh	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Near miss to groin has foe panicked.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 4 Scary swing tears open foe's pants.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 6 KD: 1 Foe sensed an opening and went for it – he was wrong.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 8 KD: 1 Smooth delivery has foe dazed and confused.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 10 KD: 2 Fake foe out and rip open his thigh. It's a bleeder!	BL: 5 Shock: 12 Pain: 12 KD: 3 Your odd shuffling attack style had foe confused. He has other problems now.
6	Hip	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Foe snarls at you.	. BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 4 Savage strike rips off foe's belt.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 6 Foe is terrified that you might berserk.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 9 KD: 1 Sweeping attack staggers foe. He is off-balance.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 12 KD: 2 Titan strike buries point deep in foe's hip. Foe faints.	BL: 6 Shock: 12 Pain: 14 KD: 3 Foe was laughing loudly and talking smack - until your blow landed.

Swung Piercing Damage Table: Area 3, (Horizontal Swing Right and Left)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1	Hip	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Well, your form looks great!	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 4 Foe vaults left to avoid disaster.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 6 Foe screams at you.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 9 KD: 1 It connected. Now he won't shut up.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 12 KD: 2 Foe screams as you give weapon a twist to widen wound track.	BL: 6 Shock: 12 Pain: 14 KD: 3 Swing catches foe on the recovery and lays him flat. No, he won't be getting up again.
2-3	Upper (2) and Lower (3) Abs	. BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Solid swing, poor impact.	BL: 2 Shock: 3 Pain: 5 Foe is slammed back but is unafraid.	BL: 4 Shock: 5 Pain: 8 Foe roars as blow tears into his abs.	BL: 5 Shock: 8 Pain: 10 One solid hit and he's pale and shaking.	BL: 6 Shock: 10 Pain: 12 Foe tries to speak. You silence him.	Foe goes berserk – you calm him with cold strike to abs. He drops dead.
4-5	Ribcage	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 3 Strike landed flat.	BL: 2 Shock: 3 Pain: 5 Foe's attempt to disarm you earns him a bleeder.	BL: 4 Shock: 6 Pain: 7 Okay, this hurt like hell.	BL: 5 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 Foe screams as your point tears into his ribs.	BL: 6 Shock: 12 Pain: 11 Ruthless strike leaves blood spatter everywhere.	Foe smiles and collapses dead. Take a blood shower.
6	Arms	Go to Area 7 (Arms) below.					

Swung Piercing Damage Table: Area 4, (Overhand Right and Left)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-2	Upper Arm and Shoulder	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 This is not what you were taught.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 4 Light swing backs foe up.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 5 Foe tries to go toe-to-toe with you and loses his nerve.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 Clipped foe on follow-through and drove him wild.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 Foe ducks one swing, two swings, but the third hits him flush on his weapon arm.	BL: 5 Shock: 11 Pain: 11 Savage swing drives foe to his knees before you. Finish him.
3	Chest Cross-cut	. BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 3 Foe gets nervous, jumps back 5 feet.	BL: 2 Shock: 3 Pain: 5 Swing partially connects and spoils foe's aim.	BL: 4 Shock: 6 Pain: 7 Foe seems distracted. There. That focused him.	BL: 5 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 Foe is confused by your style.	BL: 6 Shock: 12 Pain: 11 Your blow has foe begging for death's release. Help him.	Your blow rips through foe's chest. He tries to crawl away and dies after moving but a few feet.
4	Neck	BL: 1 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Clumsy strike followed by smooth recovery nicks foe.	BL: 3 Shock: 3 Pain: 4 Foe shifts stance at last moment and saves himself.	BL: 5 Shock: 6 Pain: 6 Foe slips and stumbles into your strike.	BL: 6 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 Foe can't keep up and backs away - exhausted and bloody.	BL: 7 Shock: 12 Pain: 10 KD: 1 Foe panics and offers you his neck. Oblige him.	Strike leaves foe stuck on your point. He weakly tries to free himself. Okay, he shudders and dies.
5	Head (Lower), including the Face	BL: 1 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 Foe loudly declares a curse on you.	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 Glancing blow takes skin with it.	BL: 3 Shock: 6 Pain: 6 Your blow hooks briefly into foe's gum. His eyes grow large as saucers. Foe is hysterical.	. BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 KD: 1 Massive power strike drives foe's weapon back and through his cheek.	BL: 5 Shock: 11 Pain: 10 KD: 2 Foe gibbers and rages as he pulls his face off your weapon's point.	Your point plows through foe's forehead and scrambles his brains. He's gone. Shake him off your weapon.
6	Head (Upper)	BL: 1 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 This could have gone better.	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 Strike blunted by hat.	BL: 3 Shock: 6 Pain: 6 You dug your point in a bit! It took a moment, but there, it's bleeding now!	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 KD: 1 Your blow briefly nails foe's shield to his forehead.	Foe wheels around to run away and you bury your point through the back of his head. He trembles violently before dying.	Foe mistimes his block and you tear his head off above the ears. He points behind you and drops dead.

Swung Piercing Damage Table: Area 5, (Vertical Swing)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-3	Head (Upper)	BL: 1 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 Foe screams "Say my name!"	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 Blow opens shallow but messy cut in scalp.	BL: 3 Shock: 6 Pain: 6 Your strike makes a lovely hole through foe's earlobe.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 KD: 1 Foe deflects your stroke to a spot just above his left eye. Stop with the screaming!	Boom! Your master stroke tears out back of foe's head. He spins, drops his weapon and collapses dead.	Foe's weapon is shattered as he tries to block your thunderous strike. Blow tears through his cranium and destroys brain. Um, he's dead.
4	Head (Lower), including the Face	BL: 1 Shock: 1 Pain: 2 Foe backpedals out of your reach.	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 4 An opening appears and all you can do is tap at foe lightly.	BL: 3 Shock: 6 Pain: 6 Foe panics as your stroke nearly plucks out an eye.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 8 KD: 1 Solid strike removes foe's nose and part of chin.	BL: 5 Shock: 11 Pain: 10 KD: 2 Master strike removes foe's jaw.	Block foe's weapon arm away and then rip off his face. He retches and dies.
5-6	Shoulders	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Foe begins loudly counting down to zero.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 4 Your assault catches foe in right shoulder and forces him back 5 feet.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 5 You remove a chunk of foe's shoulder on your recovery.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 Reaching blow rips deeply into foe's right shoulder blade. He turns white as a sheet.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 Tricky strike destroys foe's left shoulder. He begs for mercy.	Perfect execution! You strike through foe's shoulder and tear off his arm. Yep, he's really dead.

Swung Piercing Damage Table: Area 6, (Upward Swing)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1-3	Inner Thigh	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Needs practice.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 4 Foe mostly deflects your attack.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 6 KD: 1 Your weapon stings foe, but nothing solid.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 8 KD: 1 You lured foe in and punished him. Now make him be quiet.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 10 KD: 2 Foe babbles at you as you pull your weapon free. What a mess!	BL: 5 Shock: 12 Pain: 12 KD: 3 You gamble with daring stroke. It pays off as you tear off foe's leg.
4	Groin (Male)	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 5 Foe is off-balance.	BL: 2 Shock: 6 Pain: 7 Strike pierces flesh of foe's manhood. Oh, It burns!	BL: 3 Shock: 8 Pain: 9 Slap foe in groin. He drops his guard and stumbles away from you.	BL: 4 Shock: 10 Pain: 11 KD: 1 Artful strike has foe hooting in agony.	BL: 5 Shock: 12 Pain: 13 KD: 2 Your strike rips into foe, skewering him. He rages and screams.	BL: 7 Shock: 14 Pain: 15 KD: 3 Foe drops weapon and clutches ruined manhood. Okay, finish this.
	Groin (Female)	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Foe is off-balance.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 4 Strike pierces flesh of foe's femininity. Oh, It burns!	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 6 Slap foe in groin. She drops her guard and stumbles away from you.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 9 KD: 1 Artful strike has foe hooting in agony.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 12 KD: 2 Your strike rips into foe, skewering her. She rages and screams.	BL: 6 Shock: 12 Pain: 14 KD: 3 Foe drops weapon and clutches ruined femininity. Okay, finish this.
5	Abdomen	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Foe trips.	BL: 2 Shock: 3 Pain: 5 Foe laughs – nervously.	BL: 4 Shock: 5 Pain: 8 Light swing up removes six inch strip of foe's hide.	BL: 5 Shock: 8 Pain: 10 Journeyman strike hooks foe's naval. Shut this guy up!	BL: 6 Shock: 10 Pain: 12 Foe stumbles into your point and vomits blood on your arm.	Your weapon gets fouled in foe's guts. You yank it free and rip out his entrails. He sobs and tries to push them back in before collapsing dead.
6	Chest	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 3 Someone shouted your name.	BL: 2 Shock: 3 Pain: 5 You lift your swing higher and catch foe off-guard.	BL: 4 Shock: 6 Pain: 7 Neatly remove foe's right nipple.	BL: 5 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 Foe dances into your blow. This should just about finish things.	BL: 6 Shock: 12 Pain: 11 Wild swing buries your weapon in foe's chest. He claws at you weakly.	Brilliant Strike rips out foe's chest. Instant death.

Swung Piercing Damage Table: Area 7, Right and Left (Arms)							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
1	Hand	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Motion to your left distracted you.	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 3 Foe's plodding defense costs him.	BL: 1 Shock: 4 Pain: 5 Foe's cat-like reflexes betray him.	BL: 2 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 Your point slides down foe's weapon and removes a finger.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 Strike through foe's hand and swing him about on your point.	BL: 4 Shock: 11 Pain: 11 Tear off foe's hand in a graphic display of violence.
2-3	Forearm	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Foe glances behind you.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 3 Fake foe out and score a cheap hit.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 5 Foe shows you his fancy moves. Not.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 Foe tried to block your strike with his arm. Oh, the screaming!	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 Foe ducked to avoid strike to guts and now has your weapon stuck in his arm. Rip it free.	BL: 4 Shock: 11 Pain: 11 Your blow stabs deep and shatters foe's weapon arm.
4	Elbow	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 Foe nods at you.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 4 Strike passes slices into foe's elbow. It fails to bite deep. He recoils.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 6 Foe catches your attack on his bracer. He howls when your edge slips into his elbow.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 9 Elbow cracking strike has foe dancing the agony jig.	BL: 3 Shock: 9 Pain: 11 Foe is stunned when his flurry ends with your steel buried through his entire elbow.	BL: 4 Shock: 11 Pain: 13 Strike ricochets through elbow of shield arm and shreds it. Major artery mangled. If foe has shield, he drops it.
5-6	Upper Arm and Shoulder	BL: 0 Shock: 0 Pain: 2 A stinger, nothing more.	BL: 1 Shock: 2 Pain: 4 Destroy one of foe's silly decorations.	BL: 2 Shock: 4 Pain: 5 Strike foe high on bicep. Light wound bleeds surprisingly strongly.	BL: 3 Shock: 7 Pain: 7 Pain from your strike has foe raving in pain.	BL: 4 Shock: 9 Pain: 9 Nail foe's arm to his side. He is speechless.	BL: 5 Shock: 11 Pain: 11 Destroy foe's shield arm with savage strike. Foe shrieks and hops about.

Generic Damage Table							
Roll	Location	Level 1 Negligible	Level 2 Slight	Level 3 Minor	Level 4 Substantial	Level 5 Grievous	Level 6 Catastrophic
See Chapter 5	See Chapter 5	BL: 0 Shock: 2 Pain: 2	BL: 0 Shock: 4 Pain: 4	BL: 1 Shock: 6 Pain: 6	BL: 1 Shock: 8 Pain: 8	BL: 2 Shock: 10 Pain: 10	BL: 2 Shock: 12 Pain: 12

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Short Sword	**S**	**6**	**0**	**6**	**+1**	**7**	**-2**

A sword with a short, two-edged blade.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Arming Sword	**M**	**7**	**+1**	**7**	**+1**	**7**	**-1**

The basic, run-of-the-mill one-handed sword.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Hand-And-A-Half, Two-Handed	M	7	+2	7	+1	6	0
Hand-And-A-Half, One-Handed	L	8	+2	8	+1	8	0

An arming sword with a slightly longer blade and hilt long enough to accommodate both hands.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Hand-And-A-Half, Swing-Optimized, Two-Handed	M	7	+3	7	+1	6	0
Hand-And-A-Half, Swing-Optimized, One-Handed	L	8	+3	8	+2	8	0

Thrust- and swing-type Offensive Maneuvers with this tip-heavy blade require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

A hand-and-a-half sword with a slightly broader blade and parallel edges along most of its length.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Hand-And-A-Half, Thrust-Optimized, Two-Handed	M	7	+1	7	+1	6	-1
Hand-And-A-Half, Thrust-Optimized, One-Handed	L	8	+1	8	+1	7	-1

Thrust- and swing-type Offensive Maneuvers with this hilt-heavy blade have their Acitivation Cost reduced by 1 MP. If the Activation Cost thus becomes –1, +1 is added to the MP for the Maneuver.

Additional +1 Thrust DR against armor.

A hand-and-a-half sword with a stiff diamond cross-section, and edges tapering even for most of its length.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Greatsword	VL	8	+3	8	+1	8	+1

A hand-and-a-half sword with a longer blade, intended solely for use with both hands.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Falchion, One-Handed	M	8	+2	10	0	9	-1
Falchion, Two-Handed	S	7	+2	9	0	7	-1

Thrusts inflict Cleaving damage, not Piercing.

Additional Swing DR +1 against armor.

An arming sword with a slightly longer hilt and a heavy, broad blade, it's back straight and blunt and its one edge curved.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Sidesword	M	6	-1	7	+1	6	-2

Thrust-type Offensive Maneuvers have their Acitivation Cost reduced by 1 MP. If the Activation Cost thus becomes –1, +1 is added to the MP for the Maneuver.

Swing DR decreased by –1 against all metal armor.

Thrust DR decreased by –1 against all metal armor with the exception of maille.

The DTN is increased by +1 against two-handed and heavy one-handed swords, by +2 against light pole-arms and one-handed mass weapons, and by +3 against heavy pole-arms and two-handed mass weapons.

An arming sword with a slender blade of stiff diamond cross-section tapering to an acute point.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Rapier	L	6	-3	8	+1	6	-3

DR decreased by –2 against all metal armor with the exception of maille.

DR decreased by –1 against maille and all non-metal armor.

The DTN is increased by +1 against daggers and sideswords, by +2 against one-handed swords, by +3 against two-handed and heavy one-handed swords, by +4 against light pole-arms and one-handed mass weapons, and by +5 against heavy pole-arms and two-handed mass weapons.

Point will break on any connecting swing against armor better than gambeson or pliable leather unreinforced by metal, reducing Reach to Medium and Thrust DR to 0.

A sidesword with a somewhat longer but even more slender blade, tapering for much of its length to a very acute point.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Saber	M	7	+1	8	+1	7	-1

Swing-type Offensive Maneuvers have their Acitivation Cost reduced by 1 MP. If the Activation Cost thus becomes –1, +1 is added to the MP for the Maneuver.

Swing DR decreased by –1 against all types of armor.

A one edged arming sword with a slight to moderate back-curve.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Scimitar	M	7	+1	9	+1	7	-1

Swing-type Offensive Maneuvers have their Acitivation Cost reduced by 1 MP. If the Activation Cost thus becomes –1, +1 is added to the MP for the Maneuver.

Swing DR decreased by –1 against all types of armor with the exception of gambeson and pliable leather unreinforced by metal.

A saber with a more pronounced back-curve.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Dao	M	8	+2	9	0	7	0

Defensive Maneuvers with this heavy blade require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

A far Eastern type of saber with a slight flare towards the – rather blunt – point of the blade.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Katana, Two-Handed	M	7	+2	8	+1	6	-1
Katana, One-Handed	L	8	+2	9	+1	8	-1

Swing-type Offensive Maneuvers have their Acitivation Cost reduced by 1 MP. If the Activation Cost thus becomes –1, +1 is added to the MP for the Maneuver.

Swing DR decreased by –1 against armor.

A far Eastern hand-and-a-half sword with a long hilt and a one-edged, back-curved blade.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Wakizashi	S	6	+1	7	+1	7	-2

Swing-type Offensive Maneuvers have their Activation Cost reduced by 1 MP. If the Activation Cost thus becomes –1, +1 is added to the MP for the Maneuver.

Swing DR decreased by –1 against armor.

A short sword with a blade of the Katana type.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Kopis / Makhaira	S	7	+1	6	+1	7	-1

Defensive and thrust-type Offensive Maneuvers require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

An ancient Greek one-edged short sword with a forward curve and a slight flare to the blade before it tapers to a point.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Yatagan	M	7	+2	7	+1	7	-1

Thrust-type Offensive Maneuvers require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

Swing DR decreased by –1 against all armour with the exception of gambeson.

A longer, Ottoman version of the kopis with a less pronounced flare to the blade.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Xiphos	S	6	+1	6	+1	7	-2

Thrust- and swing-type Offensive Maneuvers require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

An ancient Greek short sword with a leaf-shaped blade tapering to a slight waist before flaring out and then tapering once again to an acute point.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Gladius	S	6	0	6	+1	7	-2

Additional +1 Thrust DR against armor.

An ancient Roman short sword with a stiff diamond cross-section and edges either parallel for most of its length before tapering to an acute point, or else of more slightly flaring xiphos-type.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Spatha	M	7	+1	7	+1	7	-1

Thrust-type Offensive Maneuvers require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

The ancient Roman version of the arming sword, tapering slightly along most of its length before suddenly tapering to an acute point.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Viking Sword	M	7	+1	7	+1	7	-1

Thrust-type Offensive Maneuvers require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

Thrust DR reduced by –1 against armor.

The Viking version of the Roman spatha, with a less acute point.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Dagger	H	6	-1	5	0	9	-3

A straight fighting knife with a substantial blade, usually two-edged.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Knife	H	6	-2	5	0	10	-4

A dagger with a shorter blade, one- or two-edged.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Stiletto, Edged	H	6	-2	5	0	9	-4

Additional +1 Thrust DR against armor.

A dagger with a slender blade of very stiff diamond cross-section, tapering to a very acute point.

Weapon	Reach	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN
Stiletto, Blunt	H	5	0	9

Additional +2 Thrust DR against armor; this bonus cannot exceed the armour's AV.

An immensely stiff three- or four-sided bar of metal set in a dagger grip and tapering to a very acute point.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Broad Dagger	H, S	6	0	6	+1	8	-2

Can equally be used at Hand and Short Reach at the same time.

Swing-type Offensive Maneuvers require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

A dagger with a slightly longer and significantly broader, two-edged blade.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Crescent Dagger	H	6	0	6	0	9	-3

Swing DR decreased by –1 against all armour with the exception of gambeson.

Usually a two-edged dagger with a slight to moderate curve and tapering along its entire length to an acute point.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Parrying Dagger	H	6	-1	5	0	6	-4

Offensive Maneuvers require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

The DTN is increased by +1 against one-handed swords, by +2 against two-handed and heavy one-handed swords, by +3 against light pole-arms and one-handed mass weapons, and by +4 against heavy pole-arms and two-handed mass weapons.

Remember: Parrying with the off-hand is at an additional +1 DTN.

A dagger with – usually – a slightly more slender blade, but a very broad and sturdy cross-guard.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN
Baton	S	5	-1	6	-1	7

A stout stick.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN
Club	S	6	0	7	-1	8

Additional +1 Shock on any wounding Swing.

Due to the surprise element inherent in such an attack, defending against the first thrust with a club in any given combat requires an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

A stout stick, thicker at the business end.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN
Mace	S	6	+1	7	-1	9

Offensive Maneuvers require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

Additional +1 Shock on any wounding Swing.

Due to the surprise element inherent in such an attack, defending against the first thrust with a mace in any given combat requires an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

A stout stick with a head bound in metal or wholly made of metal or sometimes stone.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN
Flanged Mace	S	6	+1	7	-1	9

Offensive Maneuvers require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

Additional +1 Swing DR against armor.

Additional +1 Shock on any wounding Swing.

Due to the surprise element inherent in such an attack, defending against the first thrust with a mace in any given combat requires an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

A mace with flanges to the sides of the head, optimized to transfer damage through armor

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN
Spiked Mace	S	6	+1	7	-1	9

Offensive Maneuvers require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

Swing DR reduced by -1 against armor.

Additional +1 Shock, +1 Pain, and +1 Blood loss on any wounding Swing.

Due to the surprise element inherent in such an attack, defending against the first thrust with a mace in any given combat requires an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

A mace with spikes for tearing grisly wounds.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	DTN
Ball-And-Chain	M	8	+2	10

Additional +1 Swing DR against armor.

Additional +2 Shock on any wounding Swing.

Blocking the ball-and-chain requires an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

Parrying the ball-and-chain requires an additional 2 MP Activation Cost (minimum 2).

The Hook Maneuver is available with the ball-and-chain.

A stout stick with a single metal ball affixed to its end by a chain of moderate length.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	DTN
War-Flail	VL	7	+2	8

Swing-type Offensive Maneuvers require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

Additional +1 Swing DR against armor.

Additional +2 Shock on any wounding Swing.

Parrying the war-flail requires an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

A long staff with a much shorter, metal-shod stick affixed to its end by a very short length of chain; wielded with two hands.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	DTN
Spiked War-Flail	VL	7	+2	8

Swing-type Offensive Maneuvers require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

Additional +1 Shock, +1 Pain, and +1 Blood loss on any wounding Swing.

Parrying the spiked war-flail requires an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

A war-flail with spikes all around the business end.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Hatchet	H	6	0	8	-1

An axe with a short haft.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Hand-Axe, Axe-**Blade**	S	7	+1	9	0
Hand-Axe, Back-Spike	S	7	+1	9	n/a

Additional Swing DR +1 against armor.

Axe damage is Cleaving, damage from the back-spike existing on some axes is Piercing. Switching between attacking with the axe blade and the back-spike is free in between Rounds, but carries a 1 MP Activation Cost during Rounds.

A hatchet with a longer haft and a slightly bigger axe-head, sometime with a spike opposite the axe-head.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Long-Hafted Axe, One-Handed	M	7	+1	9	+0
Spike, One-Handed	M	7	+1	9	n/a
Long-Hafted Axe, Two-Handed	M	7	+2	7	+1
Spike, Two-Handed	M	7	+2	7	n/a
Long-Hafted Axe, Two-Handed	L	8	+3	8	+2
Spike, Two-Handed	L	8	+3	8	n/a

Additional Swing DR +1 against armor.

Additional +1 Shock on any wound from the axe-blade (not back-spike).

Axe damage is Cleaving, damage from the back-spike existing on some axes is Piercing.

Any switch of grip on the axe, whether one-handed to two-handed, short to long, or between attacking with the axe-blade and attacking with the back-spike is free in between Rounds, but carries a 1 MP Activation Cost during Rounds.

An axe with a much longer handle and a maybe slightly larger axe-head.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Great-Axe, Axe-**Blade**	M	7	+2	7	+1
Great-Axe, Back-Spike	M	7	+2	7	n/a
Great-Axe, Axe-**Blade**	L	8	+4	9	+2
Great-Axe, Back-Spike	L	8	+4	9	n/a

Swing-type Offensive Maneuvers at Reach Long require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

Additional Swing DR +1 against armor.

Additional +1 Shock on any wound from the axe-blade (not back-spike).

Axe damage is Cleaving, damage from the back-spike existing on some rare great-axes is Piercing.

Any switch of grip on the great-axe, whether short to long, or between attacking with the axe-blade and attacking with the back-spike is free in between Rounds, but carries a 1 MP Activation Cost during Rounds.

A long-hafted axe with perhaps a slightly longer haft and a bigger axe-head, to be wielded with both hands.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN
War-Hammer, Hammerhead	S	6	+1	8	-1	9
War-Hammer, Beak	S	7	+1	8	-1	9

Additional Swing DR +1 against armor.

Additional +1 Shock on any wound from the hammerhead (not beak or top-spike).

Hammerhead damage is Blunt, damage from the beak and the top-spike is Piercing.

Switching between attacking with the hammerhead and the beak is free in between Rounds, but carries a 1 MP Activation Cost during Rounds. Thrusts with the top-spike can be delivered from any of the two grips without additional Activation Cost.

A warhammer with a rather small, but powerful head, often with a spike opposite it.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN
Quarterstaff	M, L	6	0	6	0	5
Quarterstaff, sword grip	VL	7	+1	7	0	7

Can equally be used at Medium and Long Reach at the same time.

Thrust-type Offensive Maneuvers require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).This applies not to use with sword-technique.

Quarterstaffs can be wielded like two-handed swords, using the lower set of stats while doing so. Changing between ways of wielding the quarterstaff is free of Activation Cost but can only be done at the very end or beginning of a Round and entails change of the Proficiency used (Polearm to Long-sword or Greatsword).

A stout staff, as tall as its user or slightly taller.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN
Short Spear, One-Handed	M	8	0	7	+1	7
Short Spear, Two-Handed	M	n/a	n/a	6	+1	6

Thrust DR is Piercing, Swing DR is for attacks with the shaft and thus Blunt.

A spear, as tall as its wielder or slightly shorter.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN
Long Spear, One-Handed	L	9	0	8	+1	8
Long Spear, Two-Handed	M, L	n/a	n/a	6	+1	6

Used two-handed it can equally be used at Medium and Long Reach at the same time.

Thrust DR is Piercing, Swing DR is for attacks with the shaft and thus Blunt.

A spear, significantly taller than its wielder.

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN
Halberd, Axe-**Blade**	VL	8	+4	7	+1	7
Halberd, Back-Spike	VL	8	+4	7	+1	7

Offensive and Defensive Maneuvers require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

Axe damage is Cleaving, damage from the spikes opposite the axe-blade and on the top (the thrusting attack) is Piercing. Additional +1 Swing DR against armor.

Switching between attacking with the axe-blade and the spike opposite it is free in between Rounds, but carries a 1 MP Activation Cost during Rounds. Thrusts with the top-spike can be delivered from any of the two grips without additional Activation Cost.

A long spear with additional axe-blade and a spike opposite that.

Weapon	Reach	ATN	DR	DTN	Blunt DR
Poll-Axe, Top-Spike	M	6 (thr)	+1 (p)	6	n/a
Poll-Axe, Axe-Blade	L	7 (sw)	+3 (c)	6	+2
Poll-Axe, Hammerhead	L	7 (sw)	+3 (b)	6	n/a
Poll-Axe, Back-Spike	L	7 (sw)	+3 (p)	6	n/a

Reach is different on thrusting and swung attacks without need to change the grip.

Offensive Maneuvers require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

Additional +1 Swing DR against armor.

Additional +1 Shock on any wound from the hammerhead (not axe-blade or spikes).

All poll-axes feature a spike at the top and an axe-blade, but opposite the axe-blade there is either a hammerhead or a spike, depending on the individual weapon. Switching between attacking with the axe-blade and the hammerhead or spike opposite it is free in between Rounds, but carries a 1 MP Activation Cost during Rounds. Thrusts with the top-spike can be delivered from any of the two grips without additional Activation Cost.

A shorter halberd – about as tall as its wielder or slightly shorter – with a more compact head.

Weapon	Reach	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR
Lance	VL or EL	8	+1

On a mounted charge, DR is based on the mount's full BN, not the half the wielder's BN.

Lances can be either had in VL or EL versions.

These stats are only for couched use on a mounted charge. If used in any other way, use long spear stats instead.

Basically a long spear, often with additions like a guard for the hand.

PUNCHES AND KICKS

Weapon	Reach	Swing ATN	Swing DR	Thrust ATN	Thrust DR	DTN
Punch	H	5	-1	5	-2	6
Kick	H, S	6	0	n/a	n/a	7

Swing-type Offensive Maneuvers with a punch require an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

A kick can equally be aimed at Hand and Short Reach, but requires an additional 1 MP Activation Cost if at Short Reach (minimum 1).

Use of a knuckleduster or an equivalent will increase punch DRs by +1.

Use of metal-capped boots or an equivalent will increase kick DR by +1, but attacking with it requires an additional 1 MP Activation Cost (minimum 1).

When attacking: Common sense is needed in adjucating what body parts can be targets of unarmed attacks. Unless the opponent is in something other than an upright position, kicks can usually not be aimed higher than the hips, and punches cannot usually be thrown lower than the groin.

When defending: Common sense is also needed in adjucating which attacks can be defended against unarmed. Unless the opponent is in something other than an upright position, the leg can usually not parry attacks aimed higher than the hips, and arms cannot usually parry attacks aimed lower than the thighs.

A successful parry with hand or foot against anything other than an unarmed attack will result in damage to the parrying limb.

Against a swung Cleaving attack, the parrying limb suffers a hit as if struck from an attack with *double the QoS the attacker actually achieved, and against all other attack forms one and a half times the QoS the attacker ultimately achieved.*

The final wound to the defender is thus calculated as if the attack had been aimed at the limb to which damage is now inflicted.

Example: *Galba thrusts at unarmed Otho's belly with a dagger. Galba's 8 attack dice yield 5 successes and Otho's 9 parrying dice yield 6 successes, successfully deflecting the belly thrust. To see whether Otho managed to full deflect the dagger, Galba's attack successes are multiplied by 1.5, for a total of 8 successes, from which Otho's 6 parrying successes are subtracted, for a difference of 2 in Galba's favor.*

Adding the dagger's DR (0), Galba's BN (4 halved to 2, for damage purposes, remember?), +QoS of 2 equals 4 total. We then subtract Otho's BN (5 halved to 3) and hand armor (0) leaving us with a level 1 wound to Otho's hand – a small price to pay for averting a knife in the belly.

ANIMAL WEAPONS

Weapon	Reach	ATN	DR	Blunt DR
Medium Fangs	H	5	-3	-5
Large Fangs	H	6	-1	-4

Damage is Cleaving.

Medium fangs are those found on the vast majority of mammals and reptiles. Large fangs are those that seem oversized even in relation to their owner, the incisors of the sabre-tooth being a prime example.

Weapon	Reach	ATN	DR
Medium Claws	H	5	-1
Large Claws	H	5	-1

Damage is Blunt.

Medium claws inflict +1 Blood loss on any wound of Level 3 and above. This does not apply against any type of metal armor.

Large claws inflict +1 Blood loss on any wound. This does not apply against any type of metal armor.

Medium claws are those found on the vast majority of mammals and reptiles. Large claws are those that seem oversized even in relation to their owner; hardly any real animal would qualify for this.

Weapon	Reach	ATN	DR	Blunt DR
Talon	H	5	-3	-5

Damage is Cleaving.

The final Wound Level inflicted cannot be higher than half the attacker's BN.

The talons of birds of prey, used with the Raking Maneuver.

Weapon	Reach	ATN	DR	Blunt DR
Beak	H	5	-2	-4

Damage is Cleaving.

Cannot be used with the Raking Maneuver.

The final Wound Level inflicted cannot be higher than the attacker's BN.

The wicked beak of birds of prey.

Weapon	Reach	ATN	DR
Front Kick	H	6	-2
Back Kick	H, S	6	-1

Damage is Blunt.

Back kicks can be delivered equally at Hand and Short Reach.

Kicks carry an Activation Cost of 2 MP and attack with the Bash Maneuver (see description of animal version of this Maneuver).

Front kicks are rearing attacks with the fore legs striking usually from above and using Swing Target Zones, back kicks are attacks of, usually both hind legs lashing out to the back and use Thrust Target Zones.

Front kicks cause +1 Shock.

Back kicks cause +2 Shock and +1 Knockdown (minimum 1).

The kicks of most types of large hooved animals, usually delivered with much force but little skill.

Weapon	Reach	ATN	Blunt DR	Pierce DR
Horns	H	6	-1	-1

Damage is Blunt or Piercing, depending on the horn.

Butts with horns are delivered with the Bash Maneuver (see description of animal version of this Maneuver).

Horn attacks inflicting Blunt damage cause +1 Shock.

Horn attacks causing Piercing damage have –1 DR against armor.

The horns of many types of animal. Piercing should only be used for the most acutely pointed types of horns; most cattle certainly don't qualify, for example.

MISSILE WEAPONS

Weapon	Point B. TN	Near TN	Medium TN	Far TN	Extreme TN	DR
Dagger	6	7	8	9	n/a	0
Hatchet	6	7	8	9	10	0
Spear	6	7	8	9	n/a	+1
Javelin	6	7	8	9	10	+1

Daggers and spears cannot attain extreme range.

Hatchets cause Cleaving damage, not Piercing damage.

The dagger thrown to deadly effect is a mainstay of the Sword & Sorcery genre, and the stats above reflect this. We strongly recommend that you use those stats for your game of **Blade**, but if you really can't bring yourself to cater to this cliché, you can tone down the thrown dagger by changing its DR to –1.

Weapon	Point B. TN	Near TN	Medium TN	Far TN	Extreme TN	DR
Sling	8	9	10	11	12	+1

Does not use half firer's BN for damage calculation but one third BN instead. As always, round up fractions of 0.50 and above.

Additional +1 DR against armor.

Additional +1 Shock on any wound.

Weapon	Point B. TN	Near TN	Medium TN	Far TN	Extreme TN	DR
Shortbow	6	7	8	9	n/a	+1
Bow	6	7	8	9	10	+1
Longbow	6	7	8	9	10	+1
Composite Bow	6	7	8	9	10	+1

All bows have a BN attribute of their own, one related to their individual draw weight. Half of this BN is used to calculate damage instead of half the user's BN. Nobody can use a bow possessing a higher BN rating than he himself possesses. Maximum BN possible for shortbows is 4, for bows 5, and for longbows and composite bows 6.

Shortbows cannot attain extreme range.

Additional +1 DR for longbow and composite bow against armor.

Weapon	Point B. TN	Near TN	Medium TN	Far TN	Extreme TN	DR
Light Crossbow	6	7	8	9	10	+4
Heavy Crossbow	6	7	8	9	10	+5
Arbalest	6	7	8	9	10	+6

Crossbow damage is not affected by the wielder's BN. Damage is calculated using only QoS + DR.

Additional +1 DR for light crossbow against armor.

Additional +2 DR for heavy crossbow against armor; this bonus cannot exceed the armour's AV.

Additional +4 DR for arbalest against armor; this bonus cannot exceed the armour's AV.

Weapon	Point B. TN	Near TN	Medium TN	Far TN	Extreme TN	DR
Handgun	6	7	8	9	11	+4
Arquebus	6	7	8	9	10	+6

Handgun and arquebus damage are not affected by the wielder's BN. Damage is calculated using only QoS + DR.

Damage is Piercing.

Additional +1 DR against armor.

Additional Shock equal to half the Wound Level inflicted (round up).

Weapon Quality

In **Blade**, different qualities of weapons are not handled with modifications to the weapons' stats, but rather as situational modifiers that come into play when a weapon of better quality opposes one of lower quality. In such cases, the wielder of the better weapon receives a +1 bonus to his MP.

This +1 is sufficient to cover basically all differences in weapon quality, but in those rare cases when the difference seems huge – as for instance in a master weaponsmith's steel sword opposing a bronze sword. In addition, the wielder of the lesser weapon can also be penalized with –1 die to his MP.

Enchanted Weapons

In the Sword & Sorcery genre, magical weapons are exceedingly rare, and most campaigns of *Blade* could be played out without even a single enchanted weapon figuring in them; in any case, there rarely should ever be more than a single magic weapon per campaign.

With enchanted weapons being so scarce, it should be clear that they cannot be treated as mere combat efficiency booster. No, magic weapons in *Blade* are artifacts with a purpose, of a stature on par with Stormbringer or Excalibur.

The recommended way to handle such a powerful artifact is to provide it with its own individual Passion Attribute. At the beginning of every combat Round, the wielder of the weapon may choose whether to add the entire Passion score of the weapon to his MP, or but 1 point. If he decides to add the entire score, the weapon's Passion rating will drop by 1 point, but if he decides to add but 1 point, the rating remains unchanged. Note also that some artifacts are sufficiently willful to withhold use of their full Passion Attribute if currently at cross purposes with the wielder; in that case, only 1 point can be added, period, until the weapon is once again mollified.

How the weapon's Passion Attribute is recharged depends on the purpose of the weapon. As a rule of the thumb, most weapons will regain 1 Passion point every time they slay or maim an opponent, 1 additional point if overcoming this opponent furthers the goal of the weapon, and 1 point every time the wielder does something that furthers the cause of the weapon.

However, some rare artifacts may be willful enough to not only withhold their full benefits but to actually actively oppose their wielder. Such weapons can deduct 1 die from its wielder's MP, but every time it does so, its Passion score drops by 1.

NPCs

The creation table for NPCs is geared towards the creation of characters that are much more capable than common NPCs. Characters created by these mechanics are not representative of the inhabitants of the various game worlds that **Blade** is intended for.

The vast majority of NPCs, including common soldiers and other combat-trained individuals, will be average persons. As such, they should have no more than one or two Attributes with ratings other than 4, and their total number of Attribute points should be as close to 24 as possible, certainly within the 22 to 26 range. Attribute ratings under 3 and over 5 are exclusive to very exceptional individuals and should not occur with the vast majority of common NPCs.

Skills and Proficiencies that are central to an NPC's profession or walk of life should also be at a rating of 4, or very close to it. With Skills and Attributes, anybody with but a single rating above 6 should be very rare, extremely noticeable, and probably also renowned for it. The same holds for Proficiencies above 9.

True to the trope of Sword & Sorcery fiction, members of societies living more rugged lifestyles closer to nature, namely those corresponding to the Hillman/Nomad and especially the Savage cultural archetype, are all around more capable than softer, civilized people and can as a rule be built with slightly higher ratings.

Attributes that are not expressly given in the write-ups are considered to have an average score of 4. Skills listed are only the most important ones for this NPC's walk of life, and those that are likely to be relevant in a game situation. If a Skill isn't listed, this doesn't necessarily mean that the NPC doesn't possess it, but that a referee judgement is called for in assigning further Skills.

Referees should customize these standard NPCs above and beyond any variation already presented in these write-ups. When doing so it may be helpful to keep in mind that a single +/– 1 to either Attribute or Proficiency will result in an individual who is noticeably above or below average to his fellows, and greater than +/– 1 would be even farther outside the norm.

Soldier, Rank-and-file	
Attributes:	BN or DG 5, HT or SY 3
	Ref 4 or 5, **Aim** 3 or 4, **Kdown** 4 or 5, **Kout** 4 or 5
Melee Proficiency	4 or 5
MP	8-10
Key Skills	Soldiering 4

The run-of-the-mill common soldier or guardsman. Melee Proficiency will most often be Sword & Shield, Spear & Shield, or Mass Weapon & Shield.

Soldier, Elite	
Attributes:	DG 5, BN or TY 5, HT or SY 3
	Ref 5, Kdown 5, Kout 5, Move 4 or 5
Melee Proficiency	5 or 6
MP	10 or 11
Key Skills	Soldiering 6

A soldier of a crack unit.

Soldier, Champion	
Attributes:	CG 5, BN 5, DG 5, HT or SY 3
	Ref 5, Aim 4 or 5, Kdown 5, Kout 5, Move 5
Melee Proficiency	7
MP	12
Key Skills	Soldiering 4

The best fighter of the company.

Townsman	
Attributes:	BN 3 or 4, CG 4 or 5
	Ref 4 or 5, Aim 4 or 5
Melee Proficiency	1
MP	5 or 6
Key Skills	6 among Falsehood, Haggling and Information Gathering (maximum 3)

The average city-dweller, who often tends to be a bit soft from living near the flesh-pots of the cities, but frequently more savvy and cunning in return. His melee Proficiency is usually Pugilism & Brawling, or less frequently Dagger.

Country Dweller	
Attributes:	BN 4 or 5, SY 3 or 4
	Kdown 4 or 5, Kout 4 or 5
Melee Proficiency	Melee Proficiency 2; sometimes Missile Proficiency 2
MP	6; sometimes AP 6
Key Skills	

The average rustic inhabiting the rural parts of civilized lands. A bit more rugged and hardy than a townsman, but often less savvy or educated. Their melee Proficiency is frequently related to Polearms, but sometimes Spear & Shield is acquired instead; a few are also familiar with the Sling or Bow Proficiency.

Nomad Raider	
Attributes:	DG 5, CG or BN 5
	Ref 5, Aim 4 or 5, Kdown 5, Kout 4 or 5, Move 5
Melee Proficiency	Melee Proficiency 5 & Bow Proficiency 2 or Melee Proficiency 4 & Bow Proficiency 4
MP	9 or 10, AP (Bow) 6-9
Key Skills	Riding 5, Sneaking 3, Survival 4

Members of a nomad tribe, leading a dual existence as both pastoralist and mounted raider upon his settled neighbours or trespassing merchants. Superb horsemen, they will usually attack from horseback, often by initially circling their opponents and weakening them with harassing arrows. Their Missile Proficiency is invariably Bow, and their Melee Proficiency either Sword & Shield, Cut & Thrust, or Lance, or more rarely Mass & Weapon & Shield.

Barbarian Warrior	
Attributes:	CG 4 or 5, BN 5, DG 5, TY 5
	Ref 5, Aim 4 or 5, Kdown 5, Kout 5, Move 5
Melee Proficiency	Melee Proficiency 5 & Missile Proficiency 4
MP	10, AP 8 or 9
Key Skills	Sneaking 4, Survival 4, Tracking 4; 8 among Climbing, Riding & Swimming (maximum 4)

An average vigorous barbarian from a tribal society. His Missile Proficiency is usually Bow or Spear, and his Melee Proficiency most commonly Sword & Shield, Spear & Shield, or Mass Weapon & Shield.

Bandit	
Attributes:	CG 5, BN or DG 5, HT 3, SY 3
	Ref 5, Aim 5, Kdown 5, Kout 4 or 5, Move 4 or 5
Melee Proficiency	Melee Proficiency 2 & Missile Proficiency 4 or Melee Proficiency 4 & Missile Proficiency 2
MP	7 or 9, AP 7 or 9
Key Skills	Sneaking 4, Survival 4

The common highwayman. His ilk prefers to avoid combat altogether and instead confront his victims with such advantage that resistance seems futile. His Missile Proficiency will be Bow, Crossbow or Black powder Weapon, and his Melee Proficiency usually Cut & Thrust, Sword & Shield, or Mass Weapon & Shield.

Pirate	
Attributes:	CG 5, BN or DG 5, HT 3, SY 3
	Ref 5, Aim 5, Kdown 5, Kout 4 or 5, Move 4 or 5
Melee Proficiency	Melee Proficiency 2 & Missile Proficiency 4 or Melee Proficiency 4 & Missile Proficiency 2
MP	7 or 9, AP 7 or 9
Key Skills	Seamanship 4

A raider of coastal settlements and the sea lanes alike. Like the bandit he much prefers surprising his victim with such advantage that an actual fight is not necessary. His Missile Proficiency is Bow, Crossbow or Black powder Weapon, and his Melee Proficiency usually Cut & Thrust, Sword & Shield, or Mass Weapon & Shield.

Whore	
Attributes:	CG or HT 5, BN 3
	Ref 4 or 5, Aim 4 or 5
Melee Proficiency	Dagger Proficiency 2 or 3
MP	(Dagger) 6-8
Key Skills	Dancing 3, Seduction 3; sometimes Pick Pockets 3

The classic, ubiquitous, common prostitute, tavern wench, streetwalker, or bordello bird. Saucy and pretty in a cheap way. Sometimes with a heart of gold, sometimes with sticky, money-grubbing fingers, but always with a hidden knife to stick in pesky customers.

Pimp	
Attributes:	CG 5, HT 3 or SY 3
	Reflex 5, Aim 5
Melee Proficiency	Dagger Proficiency 4
MP	(Dagger) 9
Key Skills	Trailing 3

One of the usually unpleasant fellows living off prostitutes working the streets and taverns of cities. For enforcers at brothels the Bouncer/Enforcer template below is more appropriate.

Courtesan	
Attributes:	HT 5, CG or SY 5
	Ref 4 or 5, Aim 5
Melee Proficiency	Dagger Proficiency 3; sometimes Thrown Dagger Proficiency 3
MP	(Dagger) 7 or 8; sometimes AP (Thrown Dagger) 8
Key Skills	Dancing 6, Etiquette 3, Falsehood 5, Information Gathering 3, Music 3, Seduction 6

A high-class courtesan for high-class customers either set up independently in a house of her own, or some brothel's crown jewel. She knows men like the back of her hand, and controls them with ease. And of course she's ravishing.

Bouncer, Enforcer	
Attributes:	BN 5, SY 3
	Kdown 5, Kout 5
Melee Proficiency	8 or 9
MP	(Dagger) 7 or 8; sometimes AP (Thrown Dagger) 8
Key Skills	Negotiation 3

"Muscle" employed at brothels, certain taverns and similar establishments to keep rowdy customers in hand; also the rank-and-file of many a gang terrorizing the cities. The melee Proficiency of these usually big intimidating guys is either Pugilism & Brawling or Mass Weapon & Shield, the latter mostly for use with clubs and saps.

Thug, Bully, or Mugger	
Attributes:	BN 5, HT or SY 3
	Aim 3 or 4, Kdown 5, Kout 5
Melee Proficiency	4
MP	8
Key Skills	Sneaking 4 (if mugger)

The kind of scum populating dingy taverns and dark back alleys. Proficiency is mostly Dagger, but might also be Pugilism & Brawling or Cut & Thrust.

Slaver	
Attributes:	CG 5, HT 3
	Ref 5, Aim 5
Melee Proficiency	3
MP	8
Key Skills	Falsehood 4

A common nasty slaver, more proficient in abducting the unsuspecting or terrorizing helpless folk in chains, than honest fighting. Melee Proficiency will usually be Sword & Shield, Cut & Thrust, or Dagger.

Cultist	
Attributes:	CG 5, one Attribute 3
	Ref 4 or 5, Aim 4 or 5
Melee Proficiency	Dagger Proficiency 2 or 3
MP	(Dagger) 6-8
Key Skills	Falsehood 4, Sneaking 2, Theology 2

The rank and file of any one of the many unwholesome secret cults. Secrecy and deception is their second nature, but they have no real combat fighting training – their Proficiency is usually Dagger, for those fanatically (but ineptly) brandished knives.

Gladiator, Pit Fighter	
Attributes:	BN 6 & DG 5 or DG 6 & BN 5, CG 5, SY 3
	Ref 5 or 6, Kdown 5 or 6, Kout 5, Move 5
Melee Proficiency	7
MP	12 or 13
Key Skills	Acting 3, Healing 2

Gladiatorial shows are a feature in many worlds of Sword & Sorcery, and this is the staple of these shows' protagonists: A very athletic man or woman highly trained in both weapons and showmanship, one of the deadliest single combatants still "common" to any degree. Their melee Proficiency can vary widely.

Pickpocket	
Attributes:	CG 5, TY 3
	Ref 5, Aim 5
Melee Proficiency	2
MP	7
Key Skills	Falsehood 3, Pick Pockets 4 or 5, Sneaking 3, Trailing 3

A weasel of a man (or woman), the common pickpocket takes no chances. He preys only upon those whom he judges to be safely inattentive and unlikely to become dangerously violent; sober and conscious PCs are therefore definitely not among the victims chosen by the average pickpocket. His melee Proficiency is usually either Dagger or Pugilism & Brawling, but he will of course fight only as a last resort.

Street Urchin	
Attributes:	BN 3
Melee Proficiency	2
MP	6
Key Skills	Falsehood 3, Information Gathering 3, Trailing 3

The big cities' ubiquitous guttersnipes. Either a poor child with a heart of gold underneath all the grime, or else a little bastard whom the harsh necessities of surviving on the street have inured against all softer human emotions. His melee Proficiency is usually Dagger, but can be Pugilism & Brawling instead.

Finally, a few sample NPCs who are far from being average or common in any way. Each one of these badasses should provide a tough challenge to most PCs.

High-Class Bodyguard	
Attributes:	BN 5, DG 6, TY 5, SY 5, CG 5
	Ref 6, Aim 5, Kdown 6, Kout 5, Move 5
Melee Proficiency	Sword & Shield Proficiency 9, Bow Proficiency 5
MP	(Sword & Shield) 15, AP (Bow) 10
Key Skills	Healing 3, Riding 5, Sneaking 4, Soldiering 4, Survival 4

The personal bodyguard and part-time enforcer employed by a ranking nobleman or other person of great wealth and power. He has lead an adventurous life as soldier of fortune, sellsword, mercenary, and bandit before ending up in his present position.

Fanatical Assassin	
Attributes:	BN 5, DG 6, TY 6, SY 5, CG 6
	Ref 6, Aim 6, Kdown 6, Kout 6, Move 6
Melee Proficiency	Cut & Thrust Proficiency 10, Dagger Proficiency 10, Crossbow Proficiency 8, Thrown Dagger Proficiency 8
MP	(Cut & Thrust, Dagger) 16, AP (Crossbow, Thrown Dagger) 14
Key Skills	Acting 4, Apothecary 3, Climbing 6, Customs 4, Disguise 4, Etiquette 4, Falsehood 6, Information Gathering 5, Lock Picking 4, Riding 4, Sneaking 6, Survival 4

A powerful death cult's fanatical assassin. He was kidnapped as a child, raised by the cult, and received years of intense training until he became the utterly devoted agent of the cult he is today.

Gladiatorial Champion	
Attributes	BN 7, DG 6, TY 5, CG 5
	Ref 6, Aim 5, Kdown 7, Kout 6, Move 6
Melee Proficiency	Mass Weapon & Shield Proficiency 10, Pugilism & Brawling Proficiency 8
MP	(Mass Weapon & Shield) 16, (Pugilism & Brawling) 14
Key Skills	Acting 3

A veteran of a city's gladiatorial arena and one of its most popular and famous champions.

Sorcerer	
Attributes:	DG 5, TY 7, SY 6, CG 5
	Ref 5, Aim 6, Kdown 5, Kout 6, Move 5, Power 7
Melee Proficiency	Dagger Proficiency 3
MP	(Dagger) 8
Key Skills	Ancient Language 5, Apothecary 4, Decipher 4, Detect Sorcery 5, Occultism 6, Precognition 4
Mysteries	Cursing Mystery 3, Prophecy Mystery 3, Enslavement Mystery 5, Scrying Mystery 3, Witchfire Mystery 4
SP	(Cursing) 10, SP (Prophecy) 10, SP (Enslavement) 12, SP (Scrying) 10, SP (Witchfire) 11

This sinister sorcerer is not a dry and weak old man, but barely approaching his middle age, in good shape, and not shrinking back from leading – and enjoying – a physical life. He is already deeply steeped in gruesome arcane secrets, and is still delving deeper greedily, standing at the very threshold of the greatest sorcerous mysteries. And he will stop at nothing to cross this threshold, nothing at all.

Beasts

After humans and before supernatural creatures, beasts are the second most common enemies battled by protagonists of Sword & Sorcery, and thus of course **Blade**.

Beasts are lacking both the HT and the SY Attribute. This is not to say that they are neither smart nor social, but merely that these traits of them cannot be reasonably put in relation to a human scale. Instead of SY, CG is used, for example for the purpose of Stealing Initiative, and for the rare Check that might become necessary.

Animals don't have an Aim Attribute, and they are both fast and hard to knock out; their Reflex and Knockout Attributes are calculated as normal, but receive a +1 bonus. Most beasts' Move are calculated as (Cunning + Daring + Daring)/2, though some animals are faster or (rarely) slower, depending on their build. In their case, a bonus or penalty is given with the Move score, which is already calculated into this score.

Usually, creatures do not have many points of "Proficiencies"; their MPs are usually not much higher than their Reflex Attribute.

Warhorse	
Attributes:	BN 7 or 8, DG 5, TY 5, CG 5
	Ref 6, Kdown 6 or 7, Kout 7 or 8, Move 10 (+2)
MP	(Kick) 7

Large animal – Wound Levels to torso halved after AV has been applied.

This encompasses battle-hardened horses of the largest and fiercest type available in any given setting. Earlier, smaller warhorses ("chargers") have BN 7, later, more massive ones ("destriers") BN 8.

Canine, Medium	
Attributes:	BN 4, DG 6, TY 4, CG 6
	Ref 7, Kdown 5, Kout 5, Move 11 (+2)
MP	(Medium Fangs) 8

This encompasses common watch dogs and strays as well as jackals and other canines large enough to pose a danger to humans. They can come in packs.

Canine, Large	
Attributes:	BN 5, DG 6, TY 4, CG 6
	Ref 7, Kdown 6, Kout 6, Move 9
MP	(Medium Fangs) 9

Wolves, attack-trained warhounds, hyenas, or any other really big and really mean dog – you name it. In the wild they usually form packs.

Canine, Monstrous	
Attributes:	BN 7, DG 6, TY 5, CG 6
	Ref 7, Kdown 7, Kout 7, Move 9
MP	(Medium Fangs) 11

Large animal – Wound Levels to torso halved after AV has been applied.

No earthly animal this, but instead an enormous canine the size of a tiger or small pony. It might have shaggy fur protecting it with an AV equivalent to a gambeson's (AV 1 Piercing, AV 2 Blunt & Cleaving).

Feline, Medium	
Attributes:	BN 6, DG 7, TY 4, CG 7
	Ref 8, Kdown 7, Kout 6, Move 11
MP	(Medium Fangs & Claws) 10

Any large and dangerous cat from the size of a cheetah to about the size of a jaguar, encompassing leopards, panthers, pumas, lionesses, etc. Even if they do hunt in packs, they still do rarely employ pack combat tactics.

Feline, Large	
Attributes:	BN 7 or 8, DG 6, TY 5, CG 7
	Ref 8, Kdown 7, Kout 7 or 8, Move 10
MP	(Medium Fangs & Claws) 11

Large animal – Wound Levels to torso halved after AV has been applied.

Really big cats like tigers and male lions. They rarely hunt in packs, and they almost never employ pack combat tactics.

Feline, Monstrous	
Attributes:	BN 10, DG 6, TY 5, CG 7
	Ref 8, Kdown 8, Kout 9, Move 9 (-1)
MP	(Medium Fangs & Claws) 13

Large animal – Wound Levels to torso halved after AV has been applied.

Any outlandishly huge feline, around the size of a horse. In some settings, such creatures might even serve as horses for select heroes. Such a beast might have shaggy fur protecting it like a gambeson (AV 1 Piercing, AV 2 Blunt & Cleaving).

Sabretooth

Sabretooths are a mainstay of Sword & Sorcery. For a "realistic" sabretooth, base it on the Large Feline with large instead of medium fangs. If you really want to go for it, base it on the Monstrous Feline instead.

Bear, Medium	
Attributes	BN 7, DG 6, TY 4, CG 6
	Ref 7, Kdown 7, Kout 7, Move 9
MP	(Medium Fangs & Claws) 10

One of the smaller bears dangerous to man, like a brown bear. If a slightly cinematic bent is desired, it can also use the Constricting Offensive Maneuver.

Bear, Large	
Attributes	BN 9, DG 6, TY 5, CG 6
	Ref 7, Kdown 7, Kout 7, Move 9
MP	(Medium Fangs & Claws) 11

Large animal – Wound Levels to torso halved after AV has been applied.

A bear the size of a grizzly or polar bear. Usually has shaggy fur protecting it like a gambeson (AV 1 Piercing, AV 2 Blunt & Cleaving). May at the referee's discretion use the Constricting Maneuver to attack with a bear hug.

Bear, Monstrous	
Attributes	BN 11, DG 6, TY 6, CG 6
	Ref 7, Kdown 9, Kout 10, Move 9
MP	(Medium Fangs & Claws) 12

Large animal – Wound Levels to torso halved after AV has been applied.

A larger bear than exists on earth, about half again as big as a polar bear. It has shaggy fur protecting it like a gambeson (AV 1 Piercing, AV 2 Blunt & Cleaving) and may possibly use the Constricting Offensive Maneuver.

Crocodile, Large	
Attributes	BN 7, DG 6, TY 5, CG 6
	Ref 7, Kdown n/a, Kout 7, Move 8* (-1)
MP	(Medium Fangs) 10*

On dry land: Move 4, MP 8, may use tail for Take Down Maneuver.

Large animal – Wound Levels to torso halved after AV has been applied.

The larger specimen of crocodile, measuring over 5 m from snout to tail. It can use the Worrying Maneuver, and its tough hide protects it with the equivalent of leather armor (AV 1 Blunt, AV 2 Piercing & Cleaving).

Crocodile, Monstrous	
Attributes	BN 10, DG 6, TY 6, CG 6
	Ref 7, Kdown n/a, Kout 9, Move 7* (-2)
MP	(Medium Fangs) 10*

On dry land: Move 3, MP 8, may use tail for Take Down Maneuver.

Large animal – Wound Levels to torso halved after AV has been applied.

A huge crocodile of the kind extinct nowadays, measuring some 10 to 12 m. It can use the Worrying Maneuver, and its tough hide protects it with the equivalent of hardened leather armor (AV 3 Piercing, AV 2 Blunt & Cleaving).

Poisonous Snake	
Attributes	BN 2, DG 7, TY 3, CG 6
	Ref 8, Kdown n/a, Kout 4, Move 4 (-6)
MP	(Medium Fangs) 11

Injects poison upon any bite whose Impact Rating surpasses victim's AV.

Snakes like cobras, mambas, rattlesnakes, horn vipers, etc.

Constricting Snake, Large	
Attributes	BN 5, DG 6, TY 4, CG 6
	Ref 7, Kdown n/a, Kout 7, Move 3 (-6)
MP	(Medium Fangs, Constricting) 10

Piercing Wound Levels to anywhere but the head are halved after AV has been applied.

Pythons, anacondas and similar constricting snakes large enough to be dangerous to a human, that is measuring about 7 to 9 m.

Constricting Snake, Monstrous	
Attributes	BN 8, DG 6, TY 5, CG 6
	Ref 7, Kdown n/a, Kout 8, Move 3 (-6)
MP	(Medium Fangs, Constricting) 12

Piercing Wound Levels to anywhere but the head are halved after AV has been applied.

A truly gargantuan constricting snake, well over half again as long as the largest earthly specimens.

Great Ape	
Attributes	BN 9, DG 7, TY 5, CG 6
	Ref 8, Kdown 8, Kout 8, Move 9 (-1)
MP	(Fist, Medium Fangs) 11

Large animal – Wound Levels to torso halved after AV has been applied.

A carnivorous ape similar to a gorilla, but at least a quarter again as tall. It might very well have shaggy fur protecting it like a gambeson (AV 1 Piercing, AV 2 Blunt & Cleaving). Another Sword & Sorcery favorite!

Spider, Monstrous	
Attributes	BN 6, DG 8, TY 4, CG 5
	Ref 8, Kdown 7, Kout 7, Move 12 (+1)
MP	(Medium Fangs) 10

Injects poison upon any bite whose Impact Rating surpasses victim's AV.

Not an earthly spider, but one with a body at least the size of a large pumpkin. It is has a chitinous exoskeleton that protects it like hardened leather (AV 3 Piercing, AV 2 Blunt & Cleaving). Its murderous poison has a progression rate of a few minutes, and requires a QoS 4 to succeed at the Progression Check. Take care: This is a PC-killer!

Dinosaur	
Attributes	BN 12, DG 6, TY 6, CG 5
	Ref 7, Kdown 9, Kout 10, Move 9
MP	(Medium Fangs & Claws) 12; may use tail for Take Down Maneuver

Huge animal – all Wound Levels are halved after AV has been applied.

In remote places of quite a few worlds of Sword & Sorcery, remnants of an earlier age can still be encountered. This one here looks like a tyrannosaur, but is only about two thirds its size. It is still massive enough to engage two PCs during their respective Limelights, as per the rule on huge creatures, using his bite on one and his kick and maybe tail on another. Tail and claws can only be defended against by Evasion, but both Evasion and Block are possible against the bite; Parry is not a viable defence against any of the dinosaur's attacks. It's tough hide protects it with the equivalent of hardened leather armor (AV 3 Piercing, AV 2 Blunt & Cleaving).

Supernatural Menaces

Demons, undead, and other supernatural beings are the toughest opponents the PCs can face. If such creatures appear, they will invariably be the center of the adventure, and the object of the adventure will be as frequently about avoiding them as overcoming them.

Supernatural menaces are rarely specimens of a kind, but usually single, unique creatures. As such, they will usually have a number of special powers requiring special rules.

Vampire	
Attributes	BN 10, DG 8, TY 7, SY 7, HT 7, CG 9
	Ref 9, Aim 8, Kdown 9, Kout 9, Move 9, Power 9
Weapon Proficiencies	Melee (all) 13, Missile (all) 10
MP	22
AP	18
Mysteries	Cursing Mystery 6, Enslavement Mystery 9, Mending Mystery (Pain) 6
SP	SP (Cursing) 15, SP (Enslavement) 18, SP (Mending [Pain]) 15

A cruel fiend that has lived through eons, one part man, the other part demon, or maybe undead. It feeds on the life essence in the blood of man, having to kill every time it feeds, and has drunk dry entire nations. Its outward form may appear pleasing, but Detect Sorcery will identify it as sorcerous, and with a high QoS even reveal its true form: That of an emaciated, barely human fiend with fangs, talons, leathery skin and bat-like wings sprouting from under his arms. It can also assume this form openly, in which case it can fly.

The vampire is nocturnal and sees perfectly in even the tiniest bit of residual light; daylight irritates it, and all its TNs are at +2 if in direct sunlight, or +1 if in deep shade. In addition, all his TNs are at cumulative +1 for every day he fails to drink dry a human being.

The vampire can be destroyed by burning (though it does not burn any better than a human, that is, practically not at all) or by clean decapitation, though knowing this requires a Check of Occultism of Legendary Challenge Level. All other wounds the vampire suffers, including non-decapitating ones to the head, heal almost instantly, including growing back severed limbs: Every single wound's Pain and Blood Loss are reduced by 1 at the start of every Combat Round.

Earthbound Demon	
Attributes	BN 12, DG 6, TY 7, SY 3, HT n/a, CG 8
	Ref 7, Aim 6, Kdown 9, Kout 10, Move 9, Power 8
MP	(Tentacles, Medium Fangs, Medium Claws) 14
SP	(Cursing) 14, SP Mending [Pain] 12

Huge – all Wound Levels are halved after AV has been applied.

A huge beast, sized between a hippopotamus and an elephant, and looking like a monstrous cross between toad, lizard, and snail, its clammy flesh part scaled, warty, and entirely gooey rubber, oozing of into semi-material shadowstuff. Several tentacles of different length and girth sprout asymmetrically from its flanks, their surfaces broken in seemingly random places by many tiny blood-sucking maws. The entire maddening demon is composed of matter not entirely from this world; random parts of it seem at times to shift into immaterial darkness, and its bloated shape is in constant, pulsating flux.

The beast is primitive and in a way rather simple, but definitely capable of speech, and devilishly cunning. It might very well be venerated or appeased as a god.

In combat, the creature can use the Pounce Maneuver, and it can use its tentacles to constrict or bash at any Reach of up to EL, its longue tongue to constrict at any Reach up to EL, its fangs to bite, and its powerful legs to kick with medium claws. It can engage a maximum of three PCs at the same time, acting on each of their Limelights. This insane abomination's moist, rubbery skin protects it with a gambeson's equivalent (AV 1 Piercing, AV 2 Blunt & Cleaving).

If this demon were to be used as a summoned one, he would have a hefty 7 dice to Oppose the sorcerer's Coercion or Banishment Checks (3 for low Attribute of 3, +1 each for the special powers of being huge, knowing the Cursing Mystery,

knowing the Mending Mystery, and being able to engage on a third Limelight).

Were-Tiger	
Animal Form	
Attributes	BN 9, DG 6, TY 6, SY 5, HT n/a, CG 7
	Reflex 8, Kdown 8, Kout 9, Move 10
MP	(Medium Fangs & Claws) 18
SP	(Cursing) 14, SP Mending [Pain] 12
Large animal – Wound Levels to torso are halved after AV has been applied.	
Hybrid Form	
Attributes	BN 8, DG 7, TY 6, SY 5, HT n/a, CG 7
	Reflex 7, Aim 5, Kdown 8, Kout 7, Move 7
MP	(Medium Fangs & Claws) 17
Can attack with claws equally at Hand and Short Reach.	
Human Form	
Attributes	BN 7, DG 7, TY 6, SY 5, HT 5, CG 7
	Reflex 7, Aim 6, Kdown 7, Kout 7, Move 7
Melee Proficiency	Brawling Proficiency 10, Pole-arm Proficiency 8, Javelin Proficiency 8
MP	(Brawling) 17, (Pole-arm) 15
AP	(Javelin) 14
Key Skills	Animal Ken 8, Animal Mimicry 8, Climbing 8, Detect Sorcery 6, Precognition 6, Light Step 8, Sneaking 8, Survival 8, Tracking 8

A powerful were-beast at home in hot and humid jungles. Its human aspect is that of a powerful warrior, but can at will assume the form of either a well over 2 meters tall, ferocious human-tiger hybrid, or of a very large tiger, these changes taking no longer than a single Combat Round. In both of the latter aspects it has a tiger's superb senses, including smell, hearing, and vision.

A were-tiger's wounds heal preternaturally fast. It's Blood Loss and every single wound's Pain ratings are reduced by 1 at the start of every Limelight.

Walking Dead (Sample Animated Corpse)	
Attributes	BN 6, DG 5, TY 1, SY 1, HT 1, CG 4
	Ref 7, Aim 6, Kdown 9, Kout 10, Move 9, Power 8
Melee Proficiency	4
MP	9
AP	3

All Wound Levels from Piercing attacks are halved after AV has been applied.

Suffer only half Shock from any wound received.

Walking Dead (Sample Animated Skeleton)	
Attributes	BN 5, DG 5, TY 1, SY 1, HT n/a, CG 4
	Ref 5, Aim 3, Kdown 5, Kout n/a, Move 4
Melee Proficiency	4
MP	9
AP	3

Immune against damage from Piercing attacks.

The Impact Rating from Blunt and Cleaving wounds suffered is not reduced by half BN, but only by one quarter BN.

Suffer only quarter Shock from any wound received.

These are two sample animated dead created with the Arcane Secret of that name, one of a fresh (soldier's) corpse, the other that of a (soldier's dried) skeleton. A mere three casting successes are assumed, buying an additional +1 BN and +4 Proficiency (see Animate the Dead). Instead of dead animated by use of this – sublimely rare – Arcane Secret, walking dead might also occur as minions of demons, the results of curses, or for other reasons.

Both types of walking dead feel no pain, but are merely hindered by the dismembering effects of wounds; instead of by TY, any Pain from wounds they suffer is reduced by 10. Animated dead cannot be killed, only damaged sufficiently to cease to function properly. This is achieved by wounding them sufficiently that their wounds' cumulative Pain, after 10 has been subtracted from each single wound's, equals or exceeds their MP – literally hacking them to pieces.

Bibliography

Sword & Sorcery is one of the oldest sub-genres of fantasy, perhaps even its oldest one, emerging as it did during the 1920s. Its popularity has waxed and waned over the decades, as has the quality of what was being published. Here is a personal selection of authors and books that we consider well worth checking out, and not only just for inspirational reading!

1. The Precursors

Not exactly Sword & Sorcery fiction, but early literary works containing elements of what was to become Sword & Sorcery.

Anonymous, Epic of Gilgamesh; 2000 BC

A Babylonian king and half-god wrestling with his own mortality.

Homer, Iliad & Odyssey; 750 BC

The tale of great, but flawed heroes in a tragic war, and of a cunning trickster making his long way back home through a world populated by monsters, sorceresses, and hostile deities.

Anonymous, Beowulf; 900 AD

A horror tale of nightly hauntings and a great hero setting out to end them.

Anonymous, The Nibelungenlied; 1200 AD

Migration Age Germanic knights in a brutal tale of great larger-than-life heroes and villains, treachery and unprecedented slaughter. Everybody dies.

2. The Pioneers

Not yet writers of proper Sword & Sorcery, but rather immediate forerunners of the genre and great influences upon the writers who really created it.

Edgar Rice Burroughs, 1875 – 1950

Much of his fiction, foremost which are his tales of John Carter of Mars, but also of Tarzan, display many traits of what was to become S & S.

Lord Dunsany, 1878 – 1957

Dunsany's prolific literary output is mostly of a fantastic bent, and his blend of dreamlike mythological sketches and fairy tales such as those collected in Time and the Gods exerted great influence on later writers.

Talbot Mundy, 1879 - 1940

Apart from adventure tales of the British Empire, Mundy also wrote some earlier historical swashbuckling adventures with a certain S & S flair, foremost among it Tros of Samothrace and its sequels.

Harold Lamb, 1892 – 1962

Historical adventure fiction of fighting men with a raw edge to it. For S & S, his crusade and oriental tales are particularly noteworthy, even though they do not sit squarely within the emerging genre.

3. The Founding Fathers

These writers, largely of the so-called "Golden" era of the pulp magazines of the late 1920s and early 1930s, were the ones to amalgamate earlier influences and their own creative energies with often considerable literary talent into full-fledged Sword & Sorcery. While some later writers certainly pushed the boundaries of the genre and added interesting facets of their own, none come close to the strength of prose and the freshness of creative vision as those in this group. It is the founding fathers of the genre who find themselves emulated practically to the present (though less frequently today), but sadly all too often by authors who merely repeat the formula of their precursor's writing, without the soul, strength, or creativity of these giants.

Clark Ashton Smith, 1893 – 1961

One of the most important formative influences of S & S, those of Smith's stories that fall within the strictures of S & S are characterized by florid, poetic language and a languid, exotic, decadent, and sometimes outright defeatist atmosphere. His protagonists often being at the mercy of forces beyond their control, atmosphere is what his stories are all about; spades of it.

Manly Wade Wellman, 1903 – 1986

An undeservedly forgotten writer who counts tales of S & S among his output both prolific and excellent, namely those of the Stone Age chieftain Hok the Mighty, mankind's first hero. Wellman was, together with Leiber and Kuttner below, among those later founding fathers of the genre, but his stories about Hok are all original creations and a far cry from carbon copies.

Robert E. Howard, 1906 - 1936

The Man himself. In his short but very prolific career, Howard, a born storyteller if ever there was one, largely defined the conventions of the genre, and wrote stories of high adventure with a raw electric power that few could match. He created unforgettable heroes of Sword & Sorcery like Conan, King Kull, Solomon Kane, Bran Mak Morn, Cormac MacArt, Black Vulmea, Turlough O'Brien, El Borak, Kirby O'Donnell, and Cormac FitzGeoffrey, each one of them an undaunted fighting man. Practically all of his writings, save maybe his boxing and Wild West tales, are cornerstones of the genre. Pick up any, and you're in for a ride.

Fritz Leiber, 1910 - 1992

Leiber created the most memorable pair of rascals in all of S & S, the northern barbarian Fafhrd and the southern, city-bred trickster Gray Mouser, rogues, thieves, and unscrupulous sell-swords both of them, if ever there were any. Leiber not only created many of the conventions of city-bound S & S tales, but was also a superb stylist who could have turned a laundry list into an absorbing read; maybe the best pure writer of prose in this compilation.

Catherine Lucille Moore, 1911 - 1987

Even if Moore's S & S tales about the swordswoman Jirel of Joiry were not enjoyable in themselves, they would still be important in paving the way for more S & S heroines, and also in establishing many of the tropes governing female protagonists of the genre for many decades.

Henry Kuttner, 1915 – 1958

Kuttner wrote in many fields, touching upon S & S with his stories about Elak of Atlantis, which are at least decent, though not up to par with the others in this group.

4. The Emulators

The writers in this group are largely honest fans of the source material that did at the very least produce faithful emulations, some of them of actual high quality. There is also however a great many emulators who produced soulless carbon-copies of the source material, populated by loincloth-clad, psychopathic barbarian jocks solving their conflicts by brute force of arms. Those copycat-authors who don't have the ability to draw characters who are even slightly three-dimensional or create plots that are anything but a string of combats, are still included in the list below, but the finger shall be pointed at two especially shameful ones from among their number: John Jakes and John Norman. Avoid them like the plague.

Norvell Page, 1904 – 1961

His two short novels Flame Winds and Sons of the Bear God about the hero Wan Tengri are a historical S & S take on the legendary Prester John set in central Asia. The novels are rather unremarkable, but seem to have served as models for many later S & S writers of decidedly inferior talent.

Lyon Sprague de Camp, 1907 – 2000

Most of de Camp's numerous writings are clearly outside the genre, and his Conan pastiches fall very short of the mark, but his Pusadian series is decent S & S, with tongue slightly in cheek.

Gardner Fox, 1911 - 1986

Fox was a very prolific writer of both comics and novels. Of the latter, those about the heroes Kothar and Kyrik are S & S, and while largely for the dedicated fan of the genre, they are still important, and Kyrik – not Moorcock's Elric – has the distinction of being the first sorcerer-hero of the genre.

Philip José Farmer, 1918 – 2009

A noteworthy author of fantasy and science fiction who also wrote two very decent tales of S & S: Hadon of Ancient Opar and its sequel Flight to Opar, set during the Ice Age among lost African civilisations.

David Mason, 1924 – 1974

Mason's novel The Sorcerer's Skull is a little-known, but very good specimen of a S & S quest; well worth checking out.

Poul Anderson, 1926 – 2001

Poul Anderson, one of the great names of speculative literature, wrote in many fields, S & S among them. He pulled off one of the few Conan pastiches that work, Conan the Rebel, and also wrote three rousing novels of Viking-flavoured S & S, The Broken Sword, Hrolf Kraki's Saga and War of the Gods.

Lin Carter, 1930 – 1988

Lin Carter did invaluable work as editor, but his original contributions to the field of S & S are much less noteworthy. His Conan pastiches, co-created with Lyon Sprague de Camp, are nothing to write home about, but his tales about Thongor of Lemuria are at least half decent.

Andrew J. Offutt, born 1934

A sadly under-recognized writer of S & S. He has written several novels of pastiches of Howard's heroes Conan and Cormac Mac Art, of which especially the latter are among the best ones ever done, and also at least one decent novel about an original creation of his, My Lord Barbarian.

Michael Crichton, 1942 – 2008

Among his prolific output of bestsellers is also a historical adventure novel that can be counted among the S & S genre, Eaters of the Dead, a take on the Beowulf myth.

Glen Cook, born 1944

Much of Glen Cook's work in the field of fantasy falls outside the genre, but his early tales about the Dread Empire can be termed S & S of a sometimes slightly experimental type.

David Drake, born 1945

Drake is nowadays known best for his military science fiction, but early in his career he also wrote S & S. His short stories about the Roman officer Vettius, handily collected in Vettius and His Friends, are noteworthy, as is his novel The Dragon Lord, set in a low-fantasy version of Migration Age Britain, and the novel Killer, co-authored with Karl Edward Wagner.

Keith Taylor, born 1946

His novels about the Irish bard Felimid mac Fal are S & S of a raw Celtic flavour, without any New Age stuff. He also co-wrote two Howard pastiches with Andrew J. Offutt, which are nothing if not excellent, The Tower of Death and When Death Birds Fly.

Robert Holdstock, 1948 – 2009

Though known mainly for his mythological fantasy, Holdstock also wrote a few short novels of S & S, using the pseudonym Richard Kirk. Raven: Swordmistress of Chaos and its sequels are half-decent at best, but of interest for their warrior woman-heroine who is gustily enjoying all life has to offer instead of denying it, as so many S & S heroines seem to do.

David C. Smith, born 1952

A faithful emulator of Robert E. Howard, Smith has not only collaborated with Richard L. Tierney on several decent pastiches, but also written a surprisingly fun one of his own, For the Witch of the Indies, featuring Howard's pirate protagonist Black Vulmea. Among his own tolerably good S & S saga revolving around the barbarian hero Oron, the two novels Oron and The Sorcerer's Shadow stand out as well worth reading.

Tim Lukeman, born 1954

Lukeman's two short novels Rajan and Koren are S & S with an East Asian flavour. Nothing special in themselves they are still of interest for being among the few S & S novels using this setting.

John C. Hocking, born 1960

This writer has published very little, but he is still notable for being one of the very few authors to have pulled off a successful Conan pastiche. Those who can't get enough of the barbarian should find his Conan and the Emerald Lotus pleasing, even though hardly great literature.

Howard Andrew Jones, born ca. 1970

His The Desert of Souls is fine S & S with a classical Arabian Nights backdrop, though filled with overly virtuous protagonists and more psychology than usual.

5. The Defenders

Conan was, beginning in the early 1970s, made exceedingly popular by Marvel's travesty of Conan comics, book covers drawn to a rather un-Conanesque icon by Frank Frazetta, and the movies of Arnold Schwarzenegger. Many third-rate writers tried to milk the golden cow, with the result that their hack efforts killed the poor beast. Some writers – largely numbered in the previous section – managed to maintain a certain standard, but by and large, S & S was killed ignobly by those attempting to capitalize it.

There were however a few writers whose efforts in the genre stand out as worthy attempts to both return to the roots of the original source material and to push the boundaries of S & S. But with those defenders of S & S either abandoning the genre, failing to receive fitting recognition and thus contracts with publishers, or else outright dying early deaths, the original voices with true creative vision are as of now all silenced.

Brian Lumley, born 1937

Known mainly for his horror writings, Lumley has, early during his career, written a S & S novel set in an early, fictionalized Egypt: Khai of Khem.

Richard L. Tierney, born 1936

Apart from authoring, together with David C. Smith, six half-decent Red Sonja novels and the Robert E. Howard pastiche For the Witch of the Mists (featuring Bran Mak Morn), has also successfully combined the Cthulhu Mythos with S & S and historical fiction in his tales about Simon of Gitta.

Michael Moorcock, born 1939

Only a small part of this prolific and somewhat controversial writer's output is S & S, but his influence on the genre is nonetheless an important one. It was after all he who turned the previous tropes of the genre upside down by creating a physically weak sorcerous protagonist from an evil and decadent people – Elric of Melniboné. Especially the early novels and tales of Elric are first-rate S & S.

Michael Shea, born 1943

Shea's work in the field of S & S, his tales of the roguish trickster Nifft the Lean, are an excursion into the slightly decadent, slightly humorous, and most definitely the picaresque.

Karl Edward Wagner, 1945 – 1994

Wagner is notable not only for writing the probably best Conan pastiche, Conan and the Road of Kings, and another Howard pastiche, Legion from the Shadows (featuring Bran Mak Morn), but mainly for his own anti-hero, Kane. The stories revolving around Kane, a cursed immortal warrior, sorcerer, and murderer inspired by the biblical Cain, are very original and questionably the best, but certainly the deepest prose S & S has to offer.

Charles Saunders, born 1946

Saunder's hero Imaro, a black outcast and warrior blazing his way through a fantasy version of Africa, is a fine S & S protagonist who deserves to be more widely recognized. They are currently collected in Imaro, The Quest for Cush and The Trail of Bohu.

Tanith Lee, born 1947

Before Lee turned to writing adolescent fantasy, she was working well within the field of S & S. Her Tales From The Flat Earth and the novels Volkhavaar, Birthgrave, Kill the Dead, and especially Cyrion are all well worth checking out for great S & S of an often exotic and decadent bent.

David Gemmell, 1948 – 2006

Practically all of this writer's output is rousing, gritty fighting fantasy, but his three novels about his indomitable protagonist Druss the Legend stand out as particular fine examples of modern S & S: Legend, The First Chronicles of Druss the Legend, and The Legend of Deathwalker.

Jessica Amanda Salmonson, born 1950

Salmonson's three novels Tomoe Gozen, The Golden Naginata, and Thousand Shrine Warrior are set in S & S version of feudal Japan and chronicle the adventures of a haunted and driven female samurai.

Darrell Schweitzer, born 1952

This author's The White Isle and We Are All Legends might be among the most unusual S & S ever written, reading much like dark legends or even fairy tales.

-SL-

Glossary

Aim	Combined Attribute, determines a character's ability with ranged weapons. Consists of SY+CG/2.
AP	see Archery Pool.
Arcane Secrets	rituals, spells and invocations known to very few sorcerers, more powerful and rare than what any single Mystery can muster.
Archery Pool	the amount of dice used for attacking with ranged weapons. Consists of Aim + Ranged Proficiency currently used.
Armor Value	a measure of how much any given attack will be weakened by a given piece of armor, e.g. garment, harness, or barding.
Assets	advantages, flaws and quirks of a player character, such as being uncivilized, short-sighted, or especially polite.
ATN	Attack Target Number, the TN for offensive moves with a given weapon. Usually broken down into Swing ATN and Thrust ATN.
Attributes	the core defining qualities of a player character, broken down into Basic, Combined, and Passion Attributes.
AV	see Armor Value.
Blood Loss	the amount to which a given wound weakens a character's metabolism by shedding his or her lifeblood, may lead to unconsciousness and even death.
Botch	any roll that fails badly, will lead to Complications.
Casting Check	a roll made to determine the success of an attempt to work magic, paid for with dice from the Sorcery Pool.
Complications	plot twists and unfortunate developments which happen as the result of a Botch.
Containment Check	a roll made to determine the success of an attempt to ward off Taint, paid for with dice from the Sorcery Pool.
DR	see Damage Rating.
Damage Rating	a measure of how physically harmful some weapons are compared to others, added to an attack's QoS to determine its IR.
Drama	allows players to influence direction or details of the story as communally told through the game. Can be used to change or invent aspects of the game world, actions of its fictional inhabitants, or the outcome of events described by the Referee.
DTN	Defense Target Number, the TN for defensive moves with a given weapon.
Encumbrance	a measure of how weighed-down characters are by the equipment they carry around; can cause them to move about more clumsily or slowly.
Exchange	the smallest meaningful unit of time in a combat situation, two Exchanges complete a Combat Round, and typically several Combat Rounds complete a Limelight.
Impact Rating	the sum of the power, finesse, and luck with which an attack connects. Put together from the accuracy of the attack, the attacker's strength, and the size and viciousness of the weapon used. IR = QoS + BN/2 + DR.
Initiative	a measure of who goes first in combat situations, and also a way of determining who attacks and who defends at any given time during melee.

IR	see Impact Rating.
Karma	a rating given to the player, not to his or her character, which measures how experienced that player's characters are and have been. Used to improve the numerical values for a new character when one is eventually made by that player.
Knockdown	a Combined Attribute used to avoid being knocked prone, falling off cliffs, or dropping one's weapons. Consists of BN+DG/2.
Knockout	a Combined Attribute used to avoid losing consciousness as a result of grievous injuries. Consists of BN+TY/2.
Limelight	the figurative spotlight resting on a player while he or she describes the actions of their character. Moves from player to player in varying, dramatically appropriate intervals.
Maneuvers	moves, techniques and tricks performed in combat in order to overcome opponents. Divided into offensive and defensive Maneuvers, and paid for with dice from the MP.
MP	see Melee Pool.
Melee Pool	the amount of dice used for attacking and defending with melee weapons. Consists of Reflex + Melee Proficiency currently used.
Mounted Combat	any violent conflict conducted from atop a riding animal or vehicle of any kind. Can be both Melee and Ranged Combat, and follows many of the same basic mechanisms as these, but also has its own specific rules as well.
Move	a Combined Attribute used to abstractly gauge how fast a character can move on foot during one Limelight. Consists of BN+CG+DG/3.
Mystery	a school of arcane lore, general area of supernatural influence, or tradition of specific rituals followed, taught and learned by sorcerers of all stripes.
Pain	the amount to which a given wound distracts a character, diminishing his or her full ability to act to full potential due to debilitating effect of the injury.
Passion	a motivation, drive, belief or plan of a player character, and more importantly, a way for the player to signal to the group what he or she desires the game to be about for his or her player character.
Power	a sorcerer's innate ability to work with supernatural forces, calculated from SY, TY, BN and the number of Mysteries known to the character.
Proficiency	a combat capability, the learned ability to wield weapons such as longswords, axes, bows, or one's own fists.
QoS	see Quality of Success.
Quality of Success	denotes an action's net degree of success after all modifiers have been applied. For example a defender's 3 successes subtracted from an attacker's 5 successes yields a QoS of 2.
Ranged Combat	any violent conflict conducted with thrown, cast, or launched weapons beyond melee range. Has many of the same basic mechanisms as Melee Combat, but also has additional different rules as well.
Reflex	a Combined Attribute used to determine a character's MP and thus his ability with melee weapons. Consists of CG+DG/2.

Scene Framing a technique employed by the referee to help the gaming group narrate the story unfolded in the course of the game. Not playing out every moment in the characters' fictional lives in great detail, the "juicy bits" are instead fast-forwarded to, in order to keep things interesting and well-paced.

Shock the amount to which a given wound stuns a character, making him or her momentarily unable to take actions.

Skills abilities and training useful outside of combat, they allow a character to do things such as healing, climbing or haggling exceptionally well.

Sorcery Pool the amount of dice used for creating sorcerous effects and avoiding Taint. Consists of Power + Mystery currently used.

SP see Sorcery Pool.

Stances body postures signalling a combatant's intentions, but affording dice pool bonuses if subsequently pursued.

Success each die in any given roll which shows a result that meets or exceeds the required TN for that roll.

Taint the eldritch stench exuded by all things supernatural, also infesting practitioners of the arcane arts. Cripples a sorcerer's ability to interact socially, and can cause further unpleasant consequences as well.

Talents the priorities of capability chosen for each player character at the beginning of the character creation process, such as Culture, Attributes, Skills, and so on.

Target Number the result on a D12 that must be met or exceeded on a roll in order to count that roll as a Success. Usually a static TN 7, but may also be another number.

Target Zone an area on the human (or animal, or monstrous) body where an attack can be aimed at, such as arms, torso, or lower legs. Number and details vary between swings, thrusts and ranged attacks.

Terrain Check a dice roll made to determine a character's ability to successfully move thru the fictional environment, such as when jumping over things, crossing difficult ground, or avoiding multiple opponents.

TN see Target Number

Weapon Reach a metric of the advantage or disadvantage a combatant has when fighting someone wielding a shorter or longer weapon, for example a dagger vs. a spear.

WL see Wound Level.

Wound Level a measure of how detrimental any given injury is to the physical well-being of a character. Derived from the attack's Impact Rating, the victim's toughness, and his or her armor. WL = IR – BN/2 – AV.

Wound Types injuries in **Blade** may be either of the Cleaving, Piercing, or Blunt variety. Each of these types has a number of defining qualities differentiating it from the other types, such as Blunt Wounds causing more Shock than other wound types.

Index

Abomination, 148-149

Abrasive, 41

Absent Minded, 41

Abstracted Combat Environment, 97

Acting, 8, 27, 31, 50, 56, 88, 145

Addiction, 17, 41, 202

Aggressive, 28, 42, 89, 111-112

Aim, 9, 18-19, 43, 105-107, 140, 145

Ambidextrous, 42

Ancient Languages, 27, 80

Animal Ken, 16, 28, 47, 56

Animal Maneuvers, 114

Animal Mimicry, 4, 28

Animals in Combat, 111

Animate the Dead, 149-150

Apothecary, 28, 32, 127

Arcane Secrets, 132-133, 147-148, 154, 188

Archery Pool, 4, 19, 61, 105, 140

Armor, 53, 68-69, 93-94, 103-105, 110-111, 114, 118-119, 123, 145, 149, 151, 180, 193, 197

Armor Types, 103

Armor Value, 93, 103

Arrogance, 21, 42

Assets, 17-21, 24, 41, 80

ATN, 42, 63-65, 68-70, 91, 114, 116, 118-119

Attack Target Number, 63-64, 91

Attribute Checks, 3

Attributes, 3, 6-9, 13, 17, 20-21, 23, 34, 39, 56, 75-76, 78-79, 133, 144, 149, 171-172

AV, 63, 69, 93, 103, 111-112, 114-115, 118-119, 126, 141, 145, 155

Baiting, 55, 117

Banishing, 144

Barding, 110-111

Bash, 61, 63, 69, 114

Basic Attributes, 6, 9, 17, 79

Battlefield Tactics, 28-29

Beat, 43, 55, 58-61, 63-64, 72-73, 102, 169, 172

Berserk, 42-43

Bind & Strike, 58, 61-62, 64, 70

Bind the Soul, 150

Bite, 69, 114-117, 137, 191

Blight, 151-152

Block, 43, 58-63, 68, 70-71, 73, 102, 107, 109, 119

Blocking, 64, 71, 102-103, 116, 140

Block Open & Strike, 43, 61-62, 71

Blood Loss, 93, 95-96, 114, 117, 120, 125, 149, 151

Blunt, 51-53, 55, 63, 67, 69, 73, 94, 97, 103, 111, 114-115, 126, 149

Botch, 5, 98, 101, 107, 139

Botching in combat, 92

Bow, 29, 61, 101, 123, 190

Bowyer - Fletcher, 29

Brawler, 43

Brawling, 58-62, 67, 149

Brawn, 6, 9, 16-18, 21, 51-55, 60, 166

Break, 64, 67, 76-78, 93, 114-115, 123, 138, 174, 197, 200

Break Out, 67

Brigandine, 104, 111, 193

Buckler, 58, 103

Cannibalism, 44, 182, 200

Casting Check, 133, 135-140, 142-144, 146, 150-152

Cautious, 21, 42, 44, 56

Challenge Level, 36-39, 57, 81, 97, 100, 105-106, 109, 115-116, 127, 153

Chanfron, 111

Character, 1-3, 6-9, 13-23, 27-58, 62, 66, 69, 73, 75-81, 86, 88-90, 93-101, 103, 105-106, 108-110, 124-127, 133-138, 141, 167, 171-172, 181, 202

Character Progression, 75

Charioteering, 40, 110

Checks, 2-5, 7, 15, 27-31, 33-34, 36-38, 41-57, 63, 67-68, 90, 94, 96-98, 100, 108, 116, 118, 125-127, 133-134, 136, 138-140, 145, 149-150, 154-155, 157-158, 173-174

Check, 44, 133

Civilized, 12, 16, 19, 49, 122, 180-187

Claw, 85, 114, 116, 149

Cleaving, 52, 60, 64, 68, 73, 94-95, 97, 103, 108, 111, 114, 118-120, 141, 149

Climbing, 6, 16, 21, 30, 48, 50, 52, 95

Clinch, 66-67, 114-117

Coercion, 142-145

Combat Round, 42-43, 61, 67, 85-86, 88-90, 93, 95, 97, 100-101, 106, 108, 119-120, 135, 151, 155

Combined Attributes, 9, 17

Complications, 5, 6

Connection, 6, 16, 44

Connections, 23

Constricting, 114

Containment Check, 133, 137, 144-145

Counter, 59-62, 68, 71-73, 109, 119

Cover, 9, 20, 37, 39, 58, 101, 106-108, 279

Criniere, 110

Crossbow, 61, 87, 101, 103, 105-106

Croupiere, 111

Cuissart, 111

Culture, 15-16, 18-20, 23, 30-31, 34, 80, 134, 180, 186-187

Cunning, 3-4, 6, 9, 16, 18, 21, 27, 39, 81, 85, 117, 166, 182-183, 193

Curse Rating, 15, 134-136

Cursing, 134-135, 138, 151, 156-157

Customs, 30-31, 40, 50

Cut, 12, 21, 58-65, 67, 69, 73, 80, 85-87, 93-95, 102-103, 118-119, 128, 199

Cut & Thrust, 21, 58-62, 67, 80, 102

D6, 2, 67, 74, 93-95, 106, 118-119, 126, 190

D12, 2, 44, 47, 51, 119, 126, 139

Dabbler, 15, 55, 133

Dagger, 26, 35, 58-62, 67, 92, 102, 107, 132, 140

Damage, 6, 36, 39, 44, 52, 60, 63-64, 67-68, 88, 91-94, 96, 103, 108-109, 111-112, 114-118, 125-126, 133-134, 140-141, 145, 155-156, 158

Damage Rating, 93-94, 140

Dancing, 30, 48, 50

Daring, 6, 9, 16, 18, 21, 42, 53

Decadent, 16-17, 20-21, 49, 162, 170, 179-187

Decipher, 31

Defense, 42, 63-65, 67-69, 71-74, 89-92, 97, 101-102, 109, 114, 117, 119, 140, 156

Defense Target Number, 71, 91, 102

Degenerate, 17, 184, 186

Demon, 113, 142-145, 188

Desire, 1, 12, 18

Detached, 45, 132

Dice, 1-5, 7-8, 52, 63-74, 77-78, 85, 89, 91-96, 98-102, 105-108, 113-120, 133-137, 139-140, 142, 151, 154-157, 174

Dice Pool, 2-3, 5, 7, 95, 135

Difficult Ground, 98

Disarm, 43, 58-62, 64

Disguise, 21, 27, 31, 45-47, 56

Dishonest, 45

Dislodge, 99

Distinctive, 45, 162, 184

Doomed, 14-15

Doppelhander, 58

Double Attack, 64

DR, 63, 68-69, 93, 103, 114-115, 118-120, 145, 149

Drama, 5, 7-9, 17, 76-78, 81, 86-87, 98, 123

DTN, 42, 64, 68, 70-71, 73, 91, 101-103, 118-119

Duck & Weave, 43, 101, 109, 117

Dwarf, 45, 181, 189

Easygoing, 45

Encumbrance, 73, 100-101, 108, 124

Enlightened, 16, 49, 184

Enslavement, 15, 135-137, 151, 156-157

Etiquette, 21, 30-31, 40, 46, 50, 54, 56

Eunuch, 46

Evasion, 47-50, 58-62, 69-70, 72-74, 92, 101-102, 109, 113, 115-116, 140, 149

Evasive Attack, 43, 49-50, 60, 64, 73, 113-114

Exchange, 13, 34, 63-64, 66-74, 78, 85, 88-90, 92, 95, 101-102, 108, 116-117, 119-120, 155-157

Expulsion, 59-60, 72-73

Faith, 15, 163

Falsehood, 21, 32, 48, 56

Farsighted, 47

Fatigue, 54, 100, 202

Feint & Cut, 65

Feint & Thrust, 65-66

Flanchard, 111

Focused, 17, 35, 47, 85

Foreign Languages, 32

Full Evasion, 74, 92, 101

Gambeson, 103-105

Giant, 26, 47, 112, 160, 182, 184, 188, 190-192

Goety, 142-143, 145-146, 148-149, 151-152, 156

Grapple, 43, 55, 58-60, 62, 66-67, 114-115

Haggling, 32, 44, 48, 52, 56

Half-Sword, 59-60, 68, 72-73, 92

Hallucinations, 47, 164, 202

Hand of Doom, 151

Hard of Hearing, 48

Hardy, 48

Healing, 32-33, 56, 95, 125, 127, 138

Health, 93, 123, 125

Heart, 6, 12-13, 16, 21, 27, 32, 44, 84, 87, 130, 144, 160, 171-172, 175, 200

Heroes, 2, 50, 85, 163, 165-173

Hideous, 48

Higher footing, 99

Hillman, 16

Honest, 32, 48, 56, 123

Hook, 43, 61, 68, 174

Hunchback, 48

Immobilize, 67, 114, 143

Impact Rating, 93-94, 119-120, 126, 141, 155-156

Inattentive, 49

Information Gathering, 21, 33, 40, 46, 53, 56, 197

Inhuman, 17, 49, 149, 164, 182

Initiative, 53, 63-64, 68-74, 88-90, 101, 114-118, 155-156

Javelin, 61, 101

Jousting, 60, 109

Karma, 78-79

Knockdown, 9, 18, 51, 53, 55, 64, 68, 94, 97, 111-112, 115-117, 120

Knockout, 9, 18, 97, 117, 126-127

Lame, 49-50

Lamellar Armor, 104

Lance, 59-60

Launched Missiles, 140

Leather Armor, 111

Lecherous, 50

Legendary Beauty, 50

Light Step, 33, 48, 50

Limelight, 9, 31, 77, 85-88, 96, 98, 100, 105, 113, 125-126, 139, 151, 174

Line of Sight, 105, 107

Literacy, 27, 50

Lithe, 51, 183, 186

Lock Picking, 4, 6, 21-22, 33

Longsword, 58-62, 66-67

Loot, 19, 32, 57, 80-81, 171, 182

Lost Love, 51

Magic, 4, 14, 132-133, 147, 163-165, 170

Maille, 104-105, 110-111

Mass Weapon & Shield, 58-62

Master-Strike, 43, 68-69, 73

Master the Beast, 151-152

Melee Combat, 53, 63, 85-86, 101-102, 105-106, 109, 114, 118, 126, 154

Melee Pool, 4, 19, 52, 58, 85, 88-89, 91, 149

Mending, 135-136, 138-139, 148-149, 152, 155, 157

Missing Arm, 51-52

Missing Hand, 51-52

Mould the Flesh, 151

Mounted Archery, 110

Mounted Combat, 108

Move, 5, 9, 18-19, 22, 28, 33, 37, 41, 43, 45, 54, 97-99, 105, 107, 118, 123, 137, 149, 160, 181

Multiple opponents, 100

Mundane, 14-15, 123, 133, 138, 141, 145, 172

Murder Stroke, 60, 69

Muscle-bound, 52

Music, 34, 50

Mysteriarch, 15, 133

Mystery, 15, 26, 31, 55, 133-141, 146-148, 150, 153-155, 157-158, 192

Navigation, 34

Nearsighted, 41, 52

Necromancy, 142, 145-146, 149-152, 155, 157

Necrophilia, 17, 52

Negotiation, 34, 41, 45, 48, 54, 56

Night-sighted, 52

Occultism, 15-16, 34, 141-142, 144, 153-154

Omen rating, 139

Omen Reading, 34, 202

Opposed Checks, 4-5, 150

Overconfidence, 52

Overrun, 43, 58-62, 73

Pack Tactics, 117

Pain, 33, 43, 48-49, 54, 94-95, 111, 117, 120, 125, 127-128, 137-139, 143, 149, 151, 157-158

Panther Reflexes, 53

Parry, 6, 58-64, 69-74, 102, 109

Parrying, 61, 64, 70-71, 102, 116

Partial Evasion, 70, 73-74, 101, 109

Passion Attributes, 7-9, 17, 20, 75-76, 78, 171-172

Peytral, 111

Pick Pockets, 5, 21, 35

Piercing, 94-95, 97, 103, 111-112, 114, 118, 142, 149, 186

Plate armor, 104-105

Plodding, 53, 95

Plucky, 54

Poison, 6, 28, 35, 56, 126-127, 149, 197

Pole-arms, 58-62, 68, 92, 118

Polite, 54

Pouncing, 114-115

Power, 9, 23, 29, 54, 60, 63-64, 93, 109, 130-137, 139, 141-145, 147-156, 161-164, 188, 193-194, 196, 201-202

Precognition, 35, 141

Prestidigitation, 35

Proficiencies, 13, 18, 21, 23, 37-38, 58, 61, 63, 66, 79, 133

Proficiency Checks, 3-4

Prophecy, 135, 139, 152, 155, 157

Quality of Success, 3, 5, 64, 68-71, 73-74, 91, 93, 97-100, 106

Quick Draw, 58-59

Race, 20, 23, 49, 51, 53, 55, 184-185, 187

Raking, 114-115

Range, 4, 27-28, 44, 47, 59-61, 64, 66-67, 71, 74, 92-93, 105-107, 111, 116, 140, 183, 199

Ranged Combat, 100, 105

Reckless, 54

Reflex, 9, 18-19, 48, 51, 66, 70, 86, 89-90, 117-118, 149

Relentless, 54

Rideby Melee Attacks, 108

Riding, 36, 54, 56, 95, 108-110, 183

Roleplaying Game, 1

Rota, 59-62, 73

RPG, 2, 103, 174

Saddle, 54, 95, 111, 126

Saddleborn, 54

Sadism, 17, 54-55

Sagacity, 5-6, 9, 16, 18, 21, 32

Savage, 16, 19, 43, 120, 167, 179, 192

Scale Armor, 104

Scene Framing, 123

Scene Requests, 123

Scrying, 31, 135, 139-140, 152, 155

Seamanship, 37

Seduction, 37, 44, 46, 50-53, 56

Shake the Bones of the Earth, 152

Shock, 43, 63, 69, 73, 94-95, 97, 117-118, 120, 137, 149, 151

Simultaneous Block, 43, 58, 60-62, 68, 70, 73, 102

Skill Checks, 2-3, 7, 27-29, 31, 36, 108

Skill Level, 27, 80

Skills, 3, 8, 13, 18, 21, 23, 27, 31, 39-40, 48, 50, 80, 133, 173

Skinny, 55

Sling, 103, 106

Sneaking, 6, 21, 37, 92, 196

Social, 6, 15, 21, 23, 30-31, 42, 44, 46-50, 52, 54-56, 134

Soldiering, 29, 37-38

Sorcerer, 15, 131-158, 164

Sorcery, 2-4, 9, 13-16, 18-20, 23, 31, 34-35, 55, 76, 81, 85, 94, 111-112, 126-127, 131-136, 138, 140-142, 144, 147-148, 150, 152-155, 157, 161-169, 171-174, 188, 191

Sorcery Pool, 4, 19, 133, 144, 153

SP, 95-97, 100, 125, 133-134, 142-143, 146, 154-157

Spear, 59-62, 68, 94, 106, 118-120, 180

Spear & Shield, 59-62, 118

Specialized, 27, 34, 55, 73, 194

Spell-gifted, 55

Stampede, 115-116

Stances, 88-89, 91, 101, 118-119

Status, 16, 23, 186

Stop Short, 43, 49-50, 58-61, 70

Stout, 55

Streetwise, 40

Success, 1, 3-5, 28, 31-35, 37, 39, 42, 63-64, 68-71, 73-74, 77-78, 90-91, 93, 95-100, 106, 112, 116, 118-119, 125, 133-134, 137-138, 140, 142-144, 146, 149-152, 157

Summoning, 142-143, 145-146

Supernatural, 14, 16, 23, 31, 34, 44, 111, 131, 134, 137, 140, 142, 163-164, 168-170, 188

Surprise, 5, 35, 44-45, 47-48, 51, 53, 56, 70, 86, 88-90, 115, 141, 154, 164, 168

Survival, 5, 16, 20, 38, 47, 77-78, 122, 168, 173

Suspicious, 22, 32, 39, 45, 56

Swarming, 117

Swimming, 38

Swooping, 116

Sword & Shield, 59-62

Sword & Sorcery, 2, 13-16, 76, 81, 111-112, 127, 138, 161-169, 171-173

Taint, 17, 133-134, 142-145, 154-155

Take Down, 69, 116, 173

Talents, 3, 13, 20

Target Number, 3, 63-64, 71, 91, 102-103

Target Zones, 90-91, 94, 108

Tenacity, 6, 9, 16-18, 21, 33, 37, 41-44, 48, 50, 52, 54-56, 128

Terrain, 28, 38, 47, 54, 69, 97-100, 105-108, 116, 118, 120, 124, 174, 185, 199

Terrain Check, 47, 69, 98-100, 105-108, 116, 118, 120, 124

Theology, 39

Throw, 53, 67, 70, 76, 85, 106, 114, 135, 162, 164, 172

Thrown Weapons, 61, 101, 103

Thrust, 21, 58-62, 65-70, 73-74, 80, 85, 91, 94, 97, 102, 108, 118-120, 122

Timed Checks, 5, 47, 49

TN, 3-5, 15, 32-34, 38, 41-57, 66-67, 90, 101-102, 111, 114-118, 120, 125, 127-128, 133-134, 136, 139, 141, 143, 154-157

Torpid, 56

Toss, 43, 58, 70

Tracking, 5, 28, 33, 39, 47, 56, 148

Trailing, 39, 41

Transitional Scenes, 123

Trapping, 27, 39

Travel, 34, 38, 123, 139, 143-144, 179

Uncivilized, 19, 56, 192

Victim, 14-15, 37, 55, 94, 115, 117, 126, 134-139, 150-151, 157

Villains, 2, 85, 166, 169, 172-174, 179

Visibility, 92

Wastrel, 56-57

Weapon Reach, 64, 92, 101

Whisper My Name in Fear, 152

Winding & Binding, 43, 59-60, 62, 73-74

Worrying, 114, 116-117

Wound Level, 43, 77, 93-95, 103, 114-115, 117, 119-120, 125, 149

Wound Types, 94

Wrestling, 55, 58-62, 66-67, 114, 117

Character Record Sheet

Blade of the Iron Throne

Character Information

Character Name:			
Culture:		Nationality:	
Sex:	Height:	Weight:	Hair/eyes:
Appearance:			
Loot Level:	Contacts:		

Priorities

Sorcery	
Culture	
Attributes	
Skills	
Proficiencies	
Assets	

Attributes

Combined

CG+DG/2	(SY+CG/2)	(BN+DG/2)	(BN+TY/2)	(BN+CG+DG/3)
REFLEX	AIM	KNOCKDOWN	KNOCKOUT	MOVE

Skills

Skill name	Def.	Att.	LVL

Assets

Asset:	Type:
Description:	
Asset:	Type:
Description:	
Asset:	Type:
Description:	
Asset:	Type:
Description:	

Passion Attributes

Attribute	Description	Val

Character Record Sheet

Proficiencies

Offensive Maneuvers

Defensive Maneuvers

Pools

Formula	MELEE		
Ref + Wpn Prof.	Mods		
Formula	**ARCHERY**		
Aim + Missile Prof.	Mods		
Formula	**SORCERY**		
SY+TY+BN+Bonus/3	Mods	Mystery	

Melee Weapons

Weapon	Reach	Cleaving		Piercing		DTN	Blunt
		ATN	DR	ATN	DR		DR

Shields

Type	Melee DTN	Thrown DTN	Missile DTN

Missile Weapons

Weapon	Point B. TN	Near TN	Medium TN	Far TN	DR

Wounds

Zone	Type	Level	Effect

Armor

Armor/Protective Item	Zones	Value vs Weapon Types: AV vs Piercing	AV vs Blunt	AV vs Cleaving

Condition Tracking

Blood Loss	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
Shock	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
Pain	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
Fatigue	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

MELEE
(Areas 1-14)

RIGHT | LEFT

RANGED
(roll 2d6)

(*) for a result of 3,4, or 12, randomly determine which limb is affected: 1-3 right, 4-6 left

RIGHT | LEFT

Blade of the Iron Throne

Blade of the Iron Throne

Blade of the Iron Thone is the RPG of blood-red sword and sorcery adventure, inspired by the pulp era tales of Robert E. Howard and Clark Ashton Smith.

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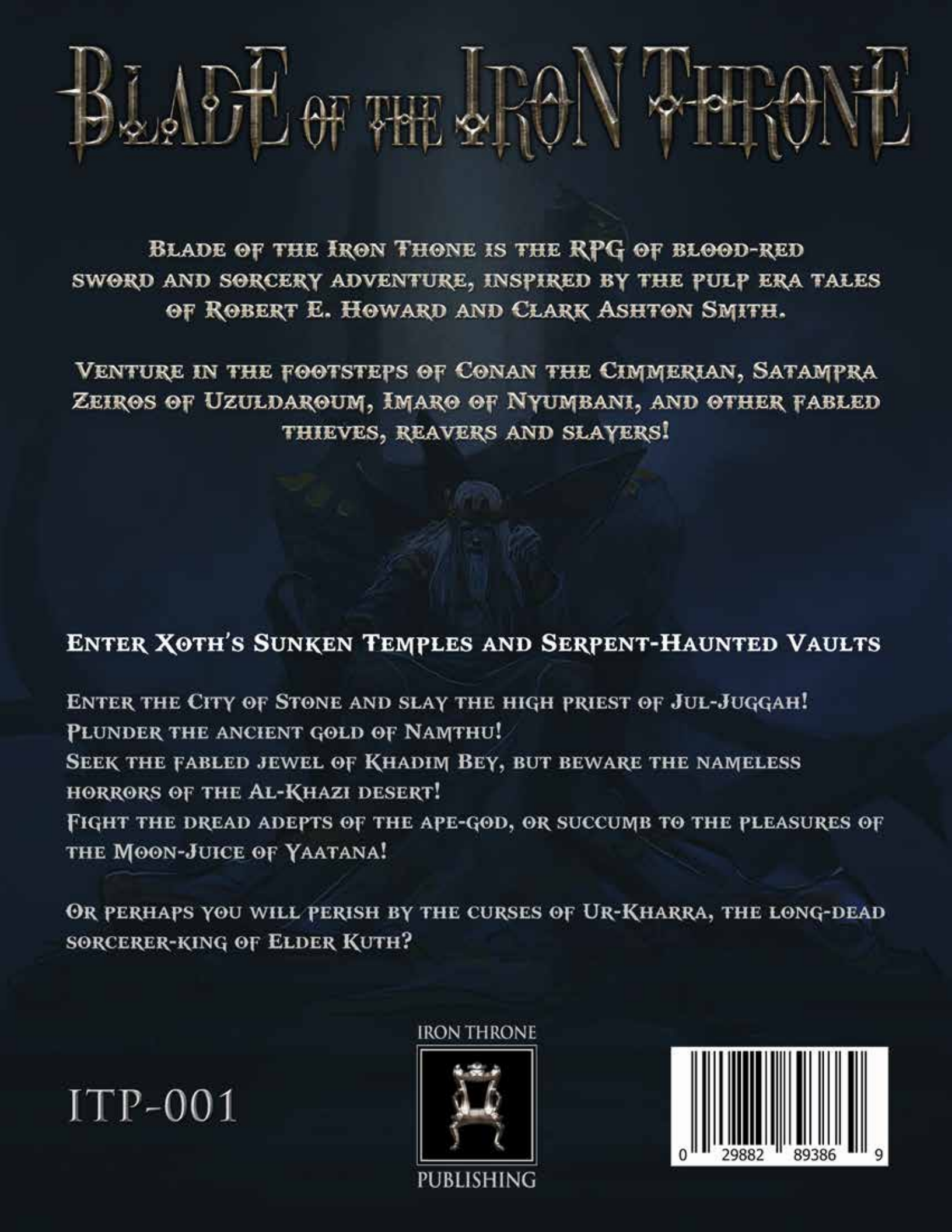

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