BONES

The Customizable Dice Roleplaying Game

BONES

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I like dice. Like many Old Guys who have been playing RPGs for a while, many of my fondest memories of the hobby are early memories of games where the fate of our carefully crafted characters hung by the roll of the dice. While I have written many not-ready-for-prime time games, BONES is the first game that I feel comfortable sharing with the gaming public beyond my own group(s), who traditionally had little choice in the matter.

I wrote BONES for gamers who want to play a game rather than tell a story or improvise a role. The system is designed to be flexible and accommodating, to adjudicate most conceivable situations in an RPG quickly while at the same time permitting complicated actions. The system is designed so that the GM can play, too. Thank you for purchasing this game. I hope that you like it and will play it.

Vincent Raven

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Introduction

Bones is a fantasy RPG based almost entirely around customized dice. Each character is represented by a number of d6 which have been customized with symbols either dictated by character background or chosen by the player. When faced with a task, the character rolls his character dice ("rolls his bones") and counts the number of icons he rolled that apply to the task he is attempting.

Each character die has one face which is marked with a "+", (the icon for universal success) and one face marked with either a triangle (the icon for mental success) or a square (the icon for physical success). The remaining four faces can be customized by the player, as he sees fit. Beginning characters start with four character dice, gain icons and dice as they gain experience and temporarily lose dice when they are injured. Characters roll their bones (dice) once per task they are attempting and compare the number of successes they have rolled to the opposing roll to determine the results of their efforts.

Sidebars

Throughout this book, examples and other useful information will be provided in the sidebars. Many of these will document the continuing saga of our stalwart hero, Generic Bob.

Bob Climbs a Tree

Generic Bob is attempting to climb a tree. The game master("GM") has decided that the climb is easy, which means that the GM will roll two challenge dice against Bob. They throw down - the GM rolls the challenge dice and comes up with a single Null. Bob rolls his 4 bones (character dice), which come up with one Universal success icon (a "+" symbol) and one Maneuver success icon (a "balance" symbol). With two successes, Bob beats the GM's throw and narrates how easily he climbs the tree.

Understanding Bob's Dice

Bob decides that he will be a wizard and creates a character. His first die has one Universal success icon, to which he adds one Mental success icon, a Magic icon (special action), one Missile icon (universal action), a Craft icon (restricted action) and one Scholar icon (restricted action). His second die has one Universal success icon, to which he adds one Physical success icon, one Missile icon, one Magic icon and two Defend icons. His other two starting dice are similar, and Bob's starting character looks like this:

> *1st Die - Universal, Mental success, Magic, Craft, Missile, Scholar*

> *2nd Die - Universal, Physical success, Magic, Missile, Defend, Defend*

> *3rd Die - Universal, Mental Success, Magic, Magic, Scholar, Defend*

> *4th Die - Universal, Physical Success, Magic, Ride, Scholar, Healer*

> *(continued next page)*

Universal Symbol Table

Name	Icon	Description - applies to
Universal Success	✚ (black)	A success at any action or task - one per character die
Physical Success	☐ (black)	A success at any physical task - only one physical or mental success per character die
Mental Success	△ (black)	A success at any mental task - only one physical or mental success per character die
Universal Hindrance	⊘ (red)	Negates one success
Damage	✘ (black)	Causes one damage
Poison	✘ (green)	Hindering symbol - causes one damage
Encumbrance	✘ (brown)	Hindering symbol - cancels one magic, maneuver or stealth success
Flaming	✘ (red)	Hindering symbol - causes one damage

There are three types of actions in Bones; universal actions, restricted actions and special actions:

- **Universal** actions can be attempted by any character, even if they do not have the appropriate icon on any of their dice - universal successes and either physical or mental successes (as appropriate) count as successes without limitation.

- **Restricted** actions can only be attempted by a character with at least one appropriate icon on one of their dice and the total number of potential successes is capped at (their number of appropriate icons x 2).

- **Special** actions can only be attempted by a character with at least one appropriate icon on one of their dice and the total number of potential successes is capped at (their number of appropriate icons).

Tasks

Each roll of the bones represents an attempt to perform a task. Characters (and cast) are limited to performing a single task at any given time. What this means is that (except for hindering dice) any die that lands on an icon that is unrelated to the task being attempted is essentially wasted. Combat is a special case in that both attacking and defending are considered to be related to the single task of "combat".

Success at any task is determined by the results of a throw down, where the GM and the character compare the results of their die rolls - if the character rolls more successes than the GM rolls Nulls, the character succeeds

Master Skill Table

Name	Icon	P/M	Description - applies to
Artisan	✳	M	Fine arts and performing arts skills (restricted action)
Craft	⚒	M	Craft skills (blacksmith, carpenter, etc.) (restricted action)
Defend	⛨	P	Melee and Missile defense (universal action)
Healer	✚	M	Healing skills (restricted action)
Magic	▨	M	Magical powers (special action)
Maneuver	⚖	P	Physical maneuvers (climb/jump/etc.) (universal action)
Melee combat	⚔	P	Melee attack or defense (universal action)
Merchant	$	M	Mercantile skills such as appraisal, haggle, bartering (restricted action)
Missile combat	➶	P	Missile attacks (universal action)
Outdoorsman	🌳	M	Outdoor skills (restricted action)
Perception	👁	M	Observation skills (universal action)
Riding	⌂	P	Riding animals(restricted action)
Sailor	⛵	M	Sailing skills, swimming, etc (restricted action)
Scholar	✿	M	Knowledge skills and book learning (restricted action)
Social	☺	M	Social skills such as diplomacy, persuasion, seduction, etc. (universal action)
Stealth	☾	P	Sneaking around (universal action)
Thief	👓	M	Larceny skills - picking locks, disarming traps, disguise, con, etc. (restricted action)
Unarmed Combat	✊	M	Special action - weaponless attacks, missile and melee defense (restricted action)

Bob's Dice (continued)

When Bob is rolling his bones to attempt a melee attack, he can count any number of Universal successes and Physical successes because, even though he has no Melee icon, Melee is a universal skill. When Bob is attempting to use his Scholar skills, he can count not only his Scholar icons as successes, but also up to six Universal and/or Mental successes because Scholar is a restricted skill and Bob has three Scholar icons. His total number of successes is capped at 6, which is not a problem at this stage because Bob only has four character dice. Finally, when Bob is attempting to use Magic skill (a special action), he is limited to five total successes because he only has five magic icons. Because Bob only has four character dice, this does not present a problem.

Types of Tasks

Tasks fall within two categories, opposed and unopposed. Success in an opposed task is determined by comparing the dice rolls of the opponents, with the higher roll being the successful roll.

Success at an unopposed task is determined by comparing the character's roll with the results of the challenge dice - the player rolls his bones and the GM rolls the challenge dice (a "throw down"), and if the player

Bob Spies a Goblin

Bob is trying to sneak by a goblin guard. Although Bob's bones do not have any Stealth icons, Stealth is a universal skill, which means both that Bob can attempt the task and that all of his Universal successes and Physical successes will count towards his goal. Bob rolls his bones and gets three successes (two Universal icons and one Physical icon) on his stealth task. The GM rolls for the goblin guard (who only has two dice) and manages to roll two successes (one Universal icon and one Perception icon) on the goblin's perception task. With one net success, Bob is successful at sneaking by the goblin and narrates the result, unimaginatively declaring "I sneak by the goblin."

generates a success after subtracting any Nulls rolled on the challenge dice, the character succeeds in performing the task. Each challenge die has the same icons (Null, Null, blank, blank, blank, blank) and every Null rolled on a challenge die negates one of the player's successes. The difficulty of the task sets the number of challenge dice that are rolled

Task Difficulty	Challenge dice
Easy	2
Simple	3
Average	4
Challenging	6
Difficult	8
Almost Impossible	12
Impossible	12 + 2 automatic Nulls

The Single Task Rule

Characters can only perform a single task each time that they roll their bones.

Narrative Control

If the character succeeds at the task attempted, the player narrates the results of the task check and if the character fails the task check, the GM narrates the results.

Hindering Dice

Some dice (e.g. challenge dice, poison and flaming) are called hindering dice. A Null roll cancels a success, but does not damage the character. However, when a character is poisoned (or set aflame), the GM will give him a poison (or flaming) die to add to his bones. An average intensity poison die would have the following faces: Poison, Poison, blank, blank, blank, and blank. Whenever a character rolls his bones to check on a task (or if directed by the GM) and a Poison icon comes up, the character immediately suffers one damage, resulting in the immediate removal of a character die which (if possible) had previously rolled a success. Poison and Flaming dice can only be removed upon the application of the appropriate remedy.

Movement

The standard movement increment is 15 meters (45 feet). Humans (with a movement score of 1) move 15M per round. Horses (with a movement score of 4) move 60M per round. Any character wishing to move faster can choose "movement" as his task and roll his bones - the character's movement increases by 1 (to 2) and for every 2 maneuver successes the move score increases by an additional 1.

Skill Mastery

When a character has at the same basic skill icon on four separate dice, the character is eligible to start taking ***mastery icons*** on subsequent dice. No more than one mastery icon from each skill can be placed on any given die, although mastery icons from separate skills can be placed on the same die (i.e. a character that is eligible to take mastery icons in Melee and Riding can place a single mastery icon from each skill on the same die. The character cannot place two Melee mastery icons on the same die.) Magic skill has no mastery icons.

Dice Logistics -The Riddle of Dice

Probably the biggest logistical concern in running BONES is the creation of the customized dice. While we plan on offering pre-made BONES dice and dice rolling software, you don't have to wait for our dice, or a computer, to play BONES - indeed, we've been playing throughout our play testing with our own home made dice with great results. This is how we do it:

First, you'll need more than a handful of six-sided dice. Most gamers have them by the boatload. While we prefer the blank dice, standard game dice work fine too. We recommend either drawing the simple icons onto Avery labels with colored, permanent markers (and then carefully applying the stickers to the dice) or by printing the labels, cutting them out and affixing the icons to the dice with rubber cement. Either way works fine.

Task Examples

Skill	Difficulty	Example
Artisan	Easy	Keeping a tavern crowd entertained—Dogs Playing Poker
	Average	Keeping a theater crowd entertained—Starry Night
	Difficult	Keeping the King entertained—The Sistine Chapel
Craft	Easy	Making a bookshelf—shoeing a horse
	Average	Building a barn--Forging a sword
	Difficult	Building a shell keep—Tailoring a suit of plate armor
Healer	Easy	Treating a flesh wound—identifying and treating a common disease
	Average	Treating a significant wound--Identifying and treating a common poison
	Difficult	Treating a head wound--stopping the spread of a deadly poison
Maneuver	Easy	Climbing a tree—a two meter running jump
	Average	Climbing a rope—a four meter running jump
	Difficult	Climbing a cliff face—a six meter running jump
Merchant	Easy	Selling water in the desert—valuing common trade goods
	Average	Selling spices in town—valuing foreign trade goods
	Difficult	Selling ice to an Eskimo—valuing enchanted goods
Outdoorsman	Easy	Tracking a man—finding shelter in the woods
	Average	Tracking a rabbit—finding food in the woods
	Difficult	Tracking an owl—finding water in the desert
Perception (usually contested)	Easy	Hearing loud talking from 10 meters away—noticing a concealed sword
	Average	Hearing quiet talking from 10 meters away—noticing a concealed dagger
	Difficult	Hearing a whisper from 10 meters away—noticing a concealed garrote
Riding	Easy	Bringing your horse to a gallop—staying in the saddle of a flying mount
	Average	Getting your horse to jump a fence—getting a flying mount to go where you want it to go
	Difficult	Getting your horse to jump a chasm—getting a flying mount to attack

Task Examples (continued)

Skill	Difficulty	Example
Sailor	Easy	Raising the sails – navigating a river
	Average	Tacking against the wind – navigating a coastline
	Difficult	Weathering a storm – navigating in open seas
Scholar	Easy	Understanding addition and subtraction—speaking the language of the neighboring country
	Average	Understanding geometry—speaking the language of a far away land
	Difficult	Understanding calculus—speaking and reading an ancient, dead language
Social	Easy	Connecting with the bartender—convincing the dragon to eat you last
	Average	Connecting with the Captain of the Guard—convincing the dragon to listen to you before it eats you
	Difficult	Connecting with the Emperor's general—convincing the dragon to let you go
Stealth (usually contested)	Easy	Sneaking by a commoner—palming a coin
	Average	Sneaking by a guard – palming a dagger
	Difficult	Sneaking by a dragon – palming a shield
Thief	Easy	Opening a cross-bar from the outside – running a successful shell game
	Average	Opening a key lock without the key – running a successful protection racket
	Difficult	Opening a puzzle lock – running a successful thief's guild

Skill Mastery Table

Skill	Mastery Icon	Effect
Artisan	Artiste (blue asterisk)	Counts as two Artisan successes
	Renown (green asterisk)	Counts as either an Artisan success or a Social success
	Inspired (red asterisk)	Counts as an Artisan success or a Magic success if employing art/music in the magic
Craft	Driven (blue hammer)	Decreases item creation time by 25% per extra success over base needed (never lower than 25%)
	Master (green hammer)	Counts as two Craft successes
	Weaponsmith (red hammer)	Can craft weapons/armor with either one extra Melee/ Missile/Defend or one less Encumbrance per two successes
Defend	Endurance (blue shield)	Counts as a Defend success and negates a single Encumbrance result on an armor or shield equipment die
	Turtle (green shield)	Counts as two Defend successes
	Slam (red shield)	Counts as either a Defend or a Melee success
Healer	Medic (blue cross)	Counts as a Healer success and increases the amount of damage healed immediately by one (max 2d)
	Cure (green cross)	Counts as either a Healer success or an Magic success (with respect to healing magics only)
	Empathy (red cross)	Counts as two Healer successes
Maneuver	Acrobat (blue scale)	Counts as two Maneuver successes
	Pyramid (green scale)	Counts as a Maneuver success that can be used for another character
	Swashbuckler (red scale)	Counts as a Maneuver success and a Defend success
Melee combat	Deflection (blue sword)	Can also be used as Missile defend
	Two Weapon (green sword)	Use a second weapon to attack (no shield permitted)
	Riposte (red sword)	Counts as two Melee successes - cannot be used to defend
Merchant	Trader (blue dollar sign)	Counts as two Merchant successes
	Money Talks (green dollar sign)	Counts as one Merchant success or one Social success
	Merchant Prince (red dollar sign)	Has one small asset (shop, caravan, etc) per two Merchant Prince icons
Missile combat	Accuracy (blue arrow)	Counts as one Missile success and negates 40% of cover
	Bow Fu (green arrow)	Can be used as Missile or Melee success
	Gut Shot (red arrow)	Counts as two Missile successes
Outdoorsman	Animal Friend (blue tree)	Counts as an Outdoorsman success or an independent successful command to animal companion. Character is eligible for an animal companion with 1 beast die + 1 additional beast die per Animal Friend icon he possesses.
	Stalker (green tree)	Counts as either an Outdoorsman success or a Stealth success
	One with the Forest (red tree)	Counts as either an Outdoorsman success or a Perception success

Skill Mastery Table(continued)

Skill	Mastery Icon	Effect
Perception	Sharp Eye (blue eye)	Counts as two Perception successes
	Night Vision (green eye)	Counts as a Perception success and cancels out penalty from partial darkness or ½ penalty from total darkness
	Sixth Sense (red eye)	Counts as a Perception Success and cancels out two opposing Stealth successes
Riding	Born to the saddle (blue horseshoe)	Counts as two Riding successes.
	Horseman (green horseshoe)	Can add successes to mount's rolls
	Knight (red horseshoe)	Counts as both a Riding success and a Melee success.
Sailor	Son of a Sailor (blue boat)	Counts as two Sailor successes
	Sea Legs (green boat)	Counts as a Sailor success or a Maneuver success
	Captain (red boat)	Has one small vessel (and crew) per two Captain icons (can trade two small vessels for one large vessel) - can be allocated to the crew as a crew success
Scholar	Sage (blue sun)	Counts as two Scholar successes
	Doktor (green sun)	Counts as a Scholar success or a Healer success
	Arcane knowledge (red sun)	Counts as a Scholar success or a Magic success
Social	Outgoing (blue smiley)	Counts as two Social successes
	Boss (green smiley)	Counts as a Social success or an independent successful command to lackey. Character is eligible for a lackey with 1 character die + 1 character die per Boss icon he possesses.
	Connections (red smiley)	Counts as a Social success or a Scholar success
Stealth	Sneaky (blue moon)	Counts as two Stealth successes
	Guilder (green moon)	Counts as a Stealth success that can be used for another character
	Assassin (red moon)	Can be used as either a Stealth success or a Melee success
Thief	Footpad (blue mask)	Counts as a Thief or a Stealth success
	Burglar (green mask)	Counts as a Thief or a Maneuver success
	Master thief (red mask)	Counts as two Thief successes
Unarmed combat	Crane style (blue hand)	Counts as both a Melee and a Defend success
	Monkey style (green hand)	Can be used as Melee success or Maneuver success
	Tiger style (red hand)	Counts as two Melee successes - cannot be used to defend

Bob Should Stick to Goblins

Bob is Off Stage for the season and has elected to take three actions. First, Bob will write a book on goblinoid cultures to try to establish himself as an authority in the field. The GM and Bob's player discuss the process and decide that Bob is trying both to garner a little renown and to create an asset to make him more valuable on the lecture circuit. The GM decides that writing a worthy book is difficult and consequently throws down 8 challenge dice, rolling three Nulls. Bob rolls his bones and gets two Scholar successes, one Mental success and one Universal success. Because Bob beat the challenge roll, he succeeds and "Bob on Goblins" gains an academic following and makes a name for Bob.

Bob next decides that he will use his Scholar skill to earn a little money by lecturing on his goblin adventures at the University. Bob rolls his bones and gets two successes (one Universal success and one Scholar success). Bob earns 300 coins - 100 coins x (number of successes [two] + assets [1-Bob's book]. Because Bob created this asset, it will only produce for him in a single season - if Bob wants to use his academic muscle to bring in cold hard cash, he must continue to publish, or perish.

Finally, Bob's third Off Stage action in the season is to try to seduce the Duke's daughter. Because the GM knows that she prefers muscular bad boys to studious academics (let's face it, what coed doesn't?), the GM decides that it will be Almost Impossible, and throws down 12 challenge dice, rolling six Nulls. Bob gamely rolls his bones, rolling a single (Universal) success. Bob's roll fails badly and leaves the narration in the hands of the GM, who decides that the girl was so offended that she has her swordsman boyfriend Steve, lay a king size smack down on poor Bob. Bob's season is over.

Actions

In Bones, actions take place either "On Stage" or "Off Stage". On Stage, each roll of the bones resolves a single task that occurs during active role-playing (i.e. "I work in the smithy to forge a sword"). Off Stage, each roll of the bones resolves a strategic action. Off Stage play is divided into seasons (winter, spring, summer and fall), with each character permitted to make up to three strategic actions per season (i.e. "I romance the Queen's maid-in-waiting with gifts and poems"). Generally speaking, On Stage rolls further tactical, short-term goals while Off Stage rolls further strategic, long-term goals.

Generating Income

One acceptable use of a strategic action is to generate income in excess of the cost of living. A character desiring to generate income decides which skill he will use during the season to generate income, describes his efforts, rolls his bones, counts his successes and applies the results to the following table:

Skill	Formula
Merchant	250 coins x (# of successes + assets)
Artisan, Craftsman, Healer, Magic, Scholar, Thief, Sailor	100 coins x (# of successes + assets)
Other skills	50 coins x (# of successes)

Depending on the world system, one coin is generally equal to $10 in current value.

Other Off-Stage Actions

Some examples of other Off-Stage actions include:
- Building and furthering social relationships
- Travel
- Acquiring hirelings
- Acquiring property
- Obtaining information
- Creating items
- Creating temporary assets

Spiffs

A spiff is a brownie point earned by a player that can be cashed in to allow the player to modify the campaign and/or the player's task rolls. Spiffs (which can be represented by poker chips, pennies or notations on a character sheet) can be earned in the following manner:
- Writing a good back-story - 1 spiff
- Writing a great back-story - 2 spiffs

- Keeping an informative campaign log - 1 spiff per session logged
- Character or cast portraits - 1 spiff
- Assisting in campaign development (i.e. making maps and other tasks that help the GM) - 1-3 spiffs
- Good role-playing/characterization in a session - 1 spiff
- A funny, in character moment that makes the GM laugh - 1 spiff

Spiffs can be spent in the following ways:

- To reroll a single die in a task check - 1 spiff
- To generate a single additional success on a task check - 2 spiffs
- To soak one damage - 2 spiffs
- To modify the story in a minor way ("my old friend Ragnar works in this tavern as the bouncer") - 1 spiff
- To modify the story in a meaningful way ("my old friend Ragnar is one of the Evil Overlord's guards") - 2 spiffs
- Without GM approval, spiffs cannot change the major plot elements ("my old friend Ragnar is the Evil Overlord")
- To miraculously survive death (with a plausible explanation) - 5 spiffs

Spiffs cannot be stacked, meaning that a player can't soak more than one damage or re-roll more than one die. The GM can veto any use of spiffs.

Improvement

Characters improve in Bones by adding icons to their character dice and by consequently adding character dice to their total. Starting characters begin with four dice with all die faces covered with icons. As characters gain experience, they gain additional icons (and, consequently, additional dice). A character gains a new die whenever the character earns a single icon and all of his current dice are filled. The character gains immediate use of the new die as soon as its first icon is earned - the new die will have the chosen icon, a Universal icon and either a Physical or a Mental success icon. The remaining blank faces have no effect on play.

Characters earn new icons of their choice as follows:

Character's current die	Number of play sessions for each icon
Fourth and Fifth	One
Sixth and Seventh	Two
Eighth and Ninth	Three
Tenth	Four
+1 automatic success	Ten

After the character earns his tenth character die, for every ten play sessions the character earns one automatic success on any die check. Automatic successes cannot be usd to soak damage.

Badass Bob

Bob finds himself in a crossbow firefight with a goblin sniper. Bob rolls his 4 bones (plus the crossbow item die) and gets one Universal success, one Physical success, one Missile success and one Defend success. The goblin rolls his two bones (plus his crossbow item die) and rolls one Universal success and one Missile success.

In comparing combat successes, the character always goes last. The goblin must allocate his Missile success to attack (because Missile successes can't be allocated to defense) - he can allocate the Universal success to either attack or defense. Being nameless cannon fodder, the goblin goes all out and allocates both of his successes to attack. Bob must allocate his Missile success to attack, his Defend success to defend and has the option of applying his Universal success and his Physical success to either attack or defend. Because Bob doesn't like being hurt, he chooses to defend with his Universal success and attack with his Physical success, giving him two attack and two defend successes.

Bob's defend successes cancel out the goblin's two attack successes, meaning that Bob takes no damage. On the other hand, the goblin has no defend successes, meaning that Bob's two attack successes cause the goblin two damage. Characters lose one character die for each damage that they take. Thus, the goblin loses two dice - since the goblin only had two dice, he is down to zero, incapacitated and at Bob's mercy.

Steve?

Unfortunately for Bob, his romantic rival Steve survived his unexpected trip to the Goblin Front and has returned to town more than a little miffed at Bob. Bob soon finds himself on the wrong end of Swordmaster Steve's temper and has decided that discretion is indeed the better part of

Combat

Combat is a task, meaning that characters engaged in combat can engage in no other activity. All parties declaring attacks and/or defends during a given round are engaged in the combat task that round, regardless if they are fighting each other.

Combat and Damage

For every point of damage taken, the character loses one character die (and therefore becomes less effective). When the character is down to zero dice, he is incapacitated. Characters die when the reach a negative die total equal to their total dice or when a coup de grace is administered to an incapacitated character.

Healing and Recovery

Characters heal at the rate of one die per week of rest. This rate can be accelerated with medical attention or healing magic. Characters receiving medical attention heal one die per two Healer successes and heal remaining damage at the rate of one die per (7 minus the number of Healer successes) days.

Other Skills in Combat

In some cases, participants may want to use non-combat skills in a combat task. The GM should compare the adversary's die rolls and adjudicate the results accordingly.

Mounted Combat

A combatant on a war-trained mount who has the Riding skill is at an advantage over a combatant on foot. If a mounted character is engaged in a combat task with an unmounted character, the character on foot must assign his dice first, even if the mounted party is a cast member and the character on foot is a character. Mounts are beasts which can also engage in combat separately from their rider.

Combat Against a Horde

Occasionally characters will be fighting a large group of opponents who seek to overwhelm them in combat with an onslaught rather than making individual strategic combat decisions. These opponents (whether a swarm of bees or a mass of trollkin) are referred to as a Horde. Rather than having individual dice assigned to the members of the horde, the entire group is represented by a number of horde dice, which are rolled and applied to each character separately. A horde die consists of the following icons: Melee, Melee, Melee, Blank, Blank, Regenerate. The

number of horde dice in a horde depends on the nature of the threat that the horde presents:

Number of Horde Dice	Example
Two	Nuisance - a swarm of bees
Three	Threatening - a pack of dogs
Four	Dangerous - a mob of peasants
Five	Deadly - a gang of trollkin
Six	Overwhelming - a cohort of legionnaires

Mounted Combat

A combatant on a war-trained mount who has the riding skill is at an advantage over a combatant on foot. If a mounted character is engaged in a combat task with an unmounted character, the character on foot must assign his dice first, even if the mounted party is a cast member and the character on foot is a character. Mounts are beasts which can also engage in combat separately from their rider.

Falling Down

Characters who fall onto a hard surface take one damage for each five meters fallen after the first five meters (ie. A character who falls 15 meters takes two damage). Reduce the damage by one for falling onto a yielding surface. Reducing the damage from a fall is a Maneuver task - for every two Maneuver successes, the character suffers one less damage.

The Importance of Good Posture

Characters who are not upright are easier to hit in melee combat and are less effective at attacking. An upright attacker adds one free Melee success against a prone opponent and a prone attacker loses one Melee success when attacking an upright defender. In addition, the prone combatant must declare his dice first, even if the upright combatant is a cast member and the prone combatant is a character.

valor. Steve has drawn his sword and is in the process of running Bob through - rather than mix it up with Steve, Bob declares that he will leap up on the table and swing from the chandelier through the window (a Maneuver action) to escape Steve. Steve's chosen task is combat (in further of his goal of separating Bob from his kidney).

The GM decides that the chandelier swing is Average and throws down four challenge dice, rolling two Nulls. The adversaries roll their bones. Bob generates three successes (two Universal successes and one Physical success - he can count all of his rolls because Maneuver is a universal skill) and Steve generates four Melee successes.

Comparing Steve's successes to Bob's successes and counting Bob's maneuver successes defensively because he was trying to escape Steve (don't try this with Scholar skill), Steve is the net winner by one success, meaning that Bob took one damage from Steve's sword swing and loses one of his dice. However, because Bob's maneuver was successful (he beat the challenge dice), he swings on the chandelier out the window and Steve won't get another whack at him.

If Bob had rolled four or more successes, he would have avoided damage altogether, and if he had rolled only two successes he would have taken two damage and failed his maneuver check, leaving him on his back lying on the bar floor.

While his friend Ragnar mixes it up with a trio of goblins, Bob readies his crossbow and prepares to even the odds. Across the field, a goblin archer waits with similar intent. When Bob fires into the swirling melee, he will subtract one of his missile successes to account for the fact that he doesn't want to hit Ragnar (who might get mad). The goblin archer must subtract three missile successes from his roll to avoid hitting his three fellow goblins.

Cover and Darkness in Combat

Opponents behind cover are harder to see and harder to hit. Generally, each 20% of cover that the target has subtracts one attack success from each attacker. In addition, melee combatants are considered to have cover against missile fire from forces friendly to one of the combatants - each figure in the melee friendly to the missile attacker subtracts one missile success.

Disparities in size can negate the effects of cover - if the target is twice as large as the friendlies, the effects of the cover are halved (round down) and if the target is at least four times as large as the friendlies, the cover is entirely negated.

Darkness is a form of cover - partial darkness cancels out 2 attack successes and total darkness cancels out 4 attack successes.

An attacker in missile combat with a prone defender subtracts one attack success.

Distance and Perception

Over open terrain, every 50 meters subtracts one Perception success from the searcher's total. Over broken or wooded terrain, ever 20 meters subtracts one Perception success from the searcher's total.

Equipment

Some (but not all) pieces of equipment are represented by item dice. For example, a carpenter's tool kit is not represented by an item die - however, it would make any craft task harder if the character did not possess the appropriate tools. All weapons and armor are represented by item dice. For example, a dagger item die is as follows: Melee, Melee, Missile, Missile, blank, blank - thus, two of the dagger's die faces can add one success to a melee attack while four of the faces simply have no result in melee and two of the dagger's faces can add one success to a missile attack (at the cost of throwing the dagger) while the other four faces have no result. The item die for leather armor looks like this: Defend, Encumber, blank, blank, blank, blank - thus, one of the item's die faces can add one defend success, one can result in an encumber (which cancels out a maneuver, stealth or magic success) and the other four (blank) faces have no effect.

Each magic item is represented by an item die. For example, the item die for Boots of Stealth would look like this: Stealth, Stealth, Stealth, blank, blank, and blank.

Item dice cannot generally be used to absorb damage. The exception to this rule is that armor and/or shield dice can be used to absorb damage - if they are so used, the armor/shield is considered ruined and the die is discarded.

Basic Weapons and Armor

Melee Weapons	1	2	3	4	5	6	*Range Increment
Dagger/Knife	Melee	Melee	Missile	Missile	blank	blank	10M
Sword/mace/club/battle ax/ 1 handed melee	Double Melee	Melee	Melee	Melee	Missile	blank	5M
Spear	Double Melee	Melee	Melee	Missile	Missile	blank	15M
Great sword/Maul/ great ax/ 2 handed melee	Triple Melee	Double Melee	Melee	Melee	Melee	blank	
Missile Weapons							
Javelin	Missile	Missile	Missile	Melee	blank	blank	20M
w/thrower	Double Missile	Missile	Missile	Missile	blank	blank	30M
Short bow/Light Crossbow	Double Missile	Missile	Missile	Missile	blank	blank	30M
Sling	Missile	Missile	Missile	blank	blank	blank	25M
Longbow/Heavy Crossbow	Triple Missile	Double Missile	Missile	Missile	Missile	blank	50M
Shield							
Buckler	Defense	Enc	Defense	blank	blank	blank	
Full Shield	Double Defense	Defense	Enc	Double Enc	Defense	blank	
Tower Shield	Triple Defense	Double Defense	Defense	Enc/ Defense	Double Enc	Triple Enc	
Armor							
Light (leather)	Defense	Enc	Defense	blank	blank	blank	
Medium (chain)	Double Defense	Defense	Enc	Double Enc	Defense	blank	
Heavy (plate)	Triple Defense	Double Defense	Defense	Enc/ Defense	Double Enc	Triple Enc	

* Where missile weapons are concerned, the attacker subtracts one Missile success for every range increment beyond the first
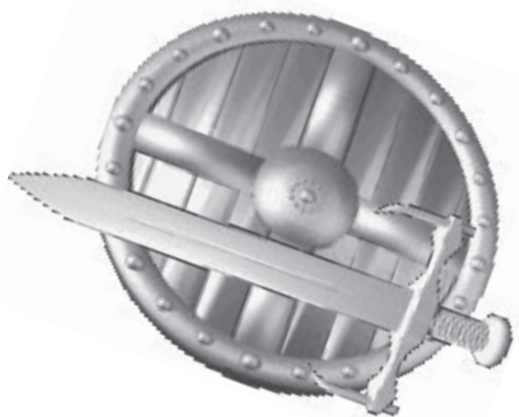
Magic is Immediate

Bob's Magic theme is Fire Magic. Bob decides to create a wall of flame to defend him against missile fire. Each combat turn that Bob wants his wall to burn, he must perform the Magic task. When Bob devotes his attention to a different task, the wall disappears.

Magic is Hard

Bob decides to break down a door with mighty gout of flame. If someone were physically trying to break the door down, it would be a challenging task. Because Bob is using magic, the GM treats it as a difficult task.

Magic has a Price

Bob (who has five Magic icons on his bones) is in a firefight with a squad of goblin archers who are upset with him over their shabby treatment in his book. For five turns, Bob blasts them with withering bolts of flame until only three are left. Not having his crossbow, Bob blasts away again in turn six, slaying a goblin. Because he only has five Magic icons on his character dice, Bob must subtract one success from his roll. He succeeds anyway, and emboldened by his success, blasts away in turn seven. Although Bob must subtract two successes from his total this time, he still succeeds in flaming another goblin. Unfortunately, next time he uses magic without resting, Bob must subtract three successes from his roll.

Bob doesn't care and blasts away again in turn eight. This time, Bob fails and takes one damage, a problem compounded when the last goblin also injures him and he suffers another damage. Down to two character dice and out of mojo, Bob is sucking wind.

Where's Ragnar when you need him?

THE UNIVERSAL RULES OF MAGIC

All magic is governed by the three Universal Rules of Magic:

MAGIC IS IMMEDIATE This rule means that, while the effects of magic may be lasting (e.g. a fire ignited by a fireball burns even after the magic is gone), magic itself is normally instantaneous. Thus, there are no lingering effects, and if a magic wielding character wants a magic effect to continue, he must continue to devote himself to the task which created the magic effect or make the appropriate sacrifice to obtain a lasting effect. Magic can affect the body and the mind, but it cannot affect the soul.

MAGIC IS HARD Generally speaking, achieving a result by magic (with respect to unopposed tasks) is one level harder than achieving that result by mundane means.

MAGIC HAS A PRICE To call upon magic requires a concentrated, overt effort. In any four hour period, a character may use magic a number of times equal to the total number of Magic icons that he has on his character dice (his "safe level" of usage). If he exceeds his safe level of usage, he becomes fatigued and subtracts one success from his total for each use of magic beyond the safe level, and if (after applying the penalty) the character fails to generate any successes, he suffers one damage. A character recovers from fatigue after four hours of full, inactive rest.

Magic

In Bones, Magic is a special skill represented by the Magic icon. The system has no set spells, or even types of magic. Rather, a character's use of magic and the theme for the character's magic are defined by the player in a manner consistent with the Universal Rules of Magic. As long as the character's use of magic falls within both the character's theme and is allowed by the Universal Rules, the character can use his magic as he sees fit.

Magical Themes

Each character who wields magic must pick a single theme for his magic and define the parameters of that theme. Characters may choose a second theme when they have a magic icon on at least five separate character dice and may choose a third theme when they have a magic icon on at least ten separate character dice. After choosing a Theme, the character must define the Effect and describe the Limitations of his magic.

Bob's Theme

Bob has made the Theme of his magic "Fire Magic" and has defined the Effect of his magic as being "Creating and manipulating the element fire." Bob describes the Limitation on his magic as being "restricted to manipulation and creation of fire."

Bob's friend Father Joe, a Roman Catholic priest, defines the Theme of his magic as being "Miracles of Faith" and describes the Effect of his magic as being "benefiting the faithful and combating Satan." Father Joe describes the Limitation of his magic as being "restricted to the service of the Lord."

Mind-affecting magic

Some magic affects the mind instead of the body. Magics that affect the mind (seeking to fool or control the target) are resisted by Universal and Mental successes (and by any Racial Icon) - if the magic wielder does not overcome the target's resistance by generating net successes, the magic fails. If the magic wielder does generate any net successes, the degree of control over the target is determined on the following scale:

Net Successes/ Magnitude of Success	Degree of control
One	Target would have done it anyway
Two	Target might have done it anyway
Three	Target does not feel strongly about it
Four	Target would not have done it anyway
Five	Target would rather die than do it

Each time the target is given an order requiring a magnitude of success greater than three, the target may roll to resist the command. The target's initial and subsequent resistance rolls are independent actions that are not considered tasks and are resolved with a separate roll of the target's bones

Magic in Combat

Because magic takes time and the Single Task Rule limits characters to a single task in any given turn, using magic in combat is risky. Provided that the character's magic includes an appropriate effect, the character can use his magic to generate attack and/or defend successes in combat. The Magic is Hard Rule does not apply to combat.

Bob is Smitten

Wicked Wanda decides to use a love charm on poor, hapless Bob to steal his affections from the duke's daughter. She rolls her bones and generates five successes (three Magic, one Universal and one Mental) - Bob rolls his bones and generates two successes (one Universal and one Mental). Wanda has three net successes, meaning that her love charm can influence Bob to do things that he does not feel strongly about - Bob will buy her flowers at her urging, but he will not befriend any goblins just yet.

Fried Goblin

Bob decides to burn two of his goblin rivals with a fireball. Combat ensues and Bob rolls 4 successes (2 Mental successes and two Magic successes). Because Bob is using his fire magic to attack at range, he may treat his successes as missile successes, and Bob elects to apply one of them against the first goblin (who has no defend successes) and three of them against the second goblin (who has one universal success allocated to defense - being cast members and not characters, the goblins had to allocate their dice first).
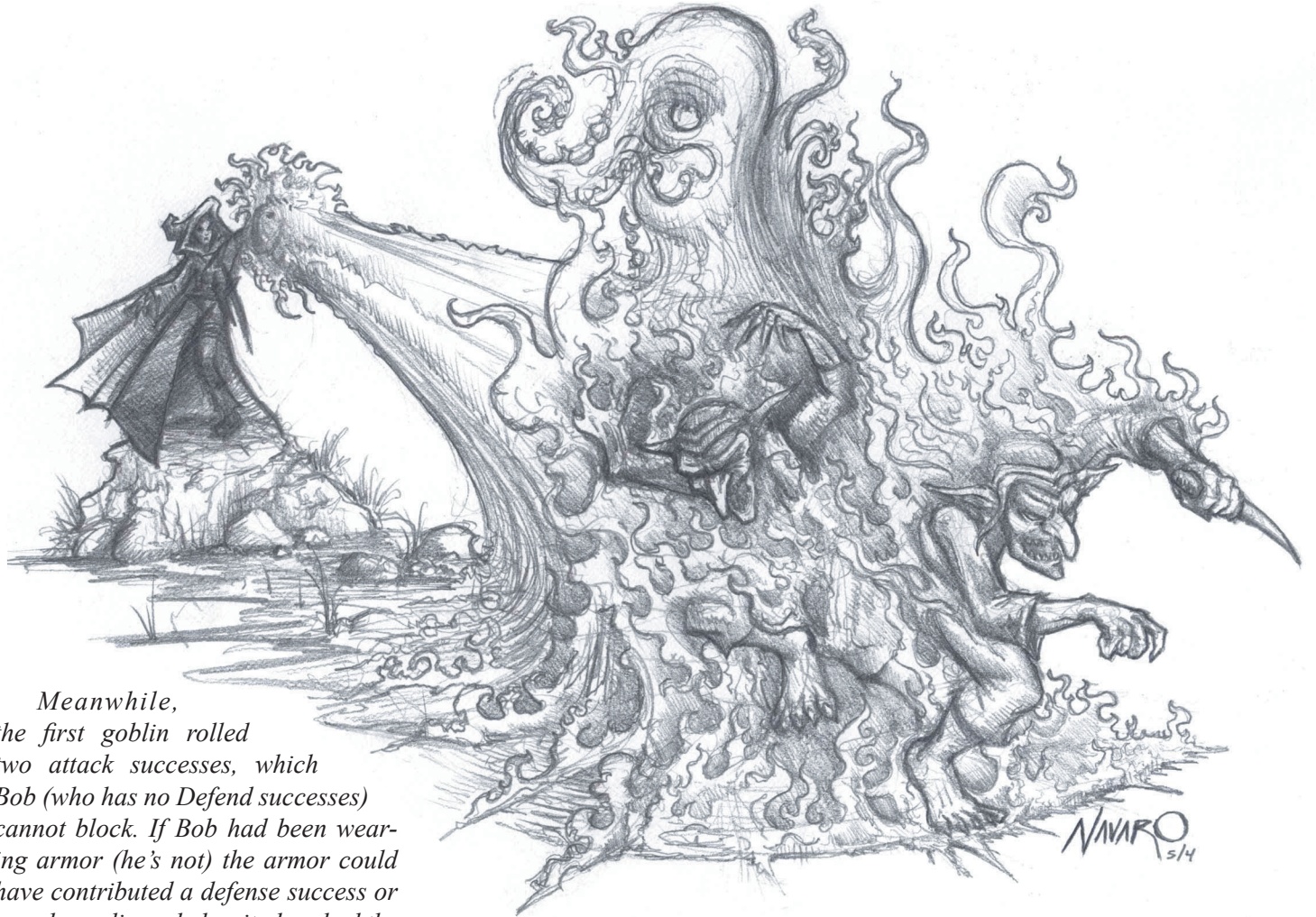
The first goblin takes one damage and loses one of its character dice. Because the goblin was injured by flames, the GM decides to also award the goblin a Flaming hindrance die. After subtracting the second goblin's Universal success from Bob's three attack successes, the second goblin takes two damage - because the second goblin only has two character dice, it is incapacitated (or in this case, smoked).

Meanwhile, the first goblin rolled two attack successes, which Bob (who has no Defend successes) cannot block. If Bob had been wearing armor (he's not) the armor could have contributed a defense success or even been discarded as it absorbed the damage. Instead, Bob loses two character dice to injury

Bob next decides to use his elemental magic to form a wall of fire surrounding him to protect him from damage and injure opponents who strike him. The burning goblin elects to attack again (goblins are like that). The goblin rolls one attack success and his Flaming die rolls a blank face. Bob rolls his two remaining bones and gets a Universal success and a Magic success. Bob decides to allocate one of his successes to defense (his shield flares and blocks the goblin's blow) and one to attack. Because the goblin has no way to defend against Bob's success, Bob's flaming shield fries the remaining goblin to a crisp.

Sacrifice and lasting effects

If a magic wielding character wants to maintain a magical effect without continuing to perform the appropriate task, he can make the effect a lasting effect with the appropriate sacrifice. There are three types of sacrifice; health sacrifices, value sacrifices and blood sacrifices.

A caster makes a health sacrifice by accepting one damage (and losing one character die to injury) for each effect that the character wants to maintain. The injury will not heal unless the character chooses to release the effect, and the effect will continue until it is countered (by a successful resistance, an opposing spell, etc.) or until the character chooses to heal. A caster makes a value sacrifice by destroying a natural object of value (typically a gem) in the casting, which will extend the duration of the effect by one round for every 10 coins in value sacrificed. A caster can also maintain an effect with a blood sacrifice by slaying an intelligent being with a soul as part of the creation of the effect. An effect maintained by a blood sacrifice lasts until it is countered.

Meanwhile, in the Boneyard

Wishing to consecrate a graveyard to prevent a necromantic rival from creating an army of zombies, Father Joe calls upon his faith, undergoes a ceremony of consecration and rolls his bones. He rolls four successes and decides to sacrifice his health to maintain the effect until the full moon has waned. He accepts an injury that won't heal (and loses a character die) until he chooses to release the consecration.

The elven necromancer Manbane arrives the night of the full moon and immediately begins a fell ritual designed to raise an army of rotting corpses and ravage the countryside. She has brought along an unfortunate villager that she has captured to use as a blood sacrifice to maintain her rotting minions. The GM declares that raising an entire graveyard of zombies is a difficult task and throws down eight challenge dice, rolling four Nulls. Manbane sneers and rolls her bones, rolling six successes. Normally, this would succeed - however, the GM then subtracts Father Joe's four successes for the consecration, leaving Manbane one success, short of accomplishing her goal. Her spell fails, and she must obtain another villager to try again.

Manbane returns the next night intent on overcoming Father Joe's magic. This time, she sets her sights on merely desecrating the cemetery to counter Father Joe's consecration. She again begins her fell magics and, rolling her bones, gets five successes. This overcomes Father Joe's four successes in the consecration, undoing the effect.

In his church, Father Joe awakens, knowing that his blessing has been countered. He will now heal normally from the injury he took as the health sacrifice to maintain the effect.
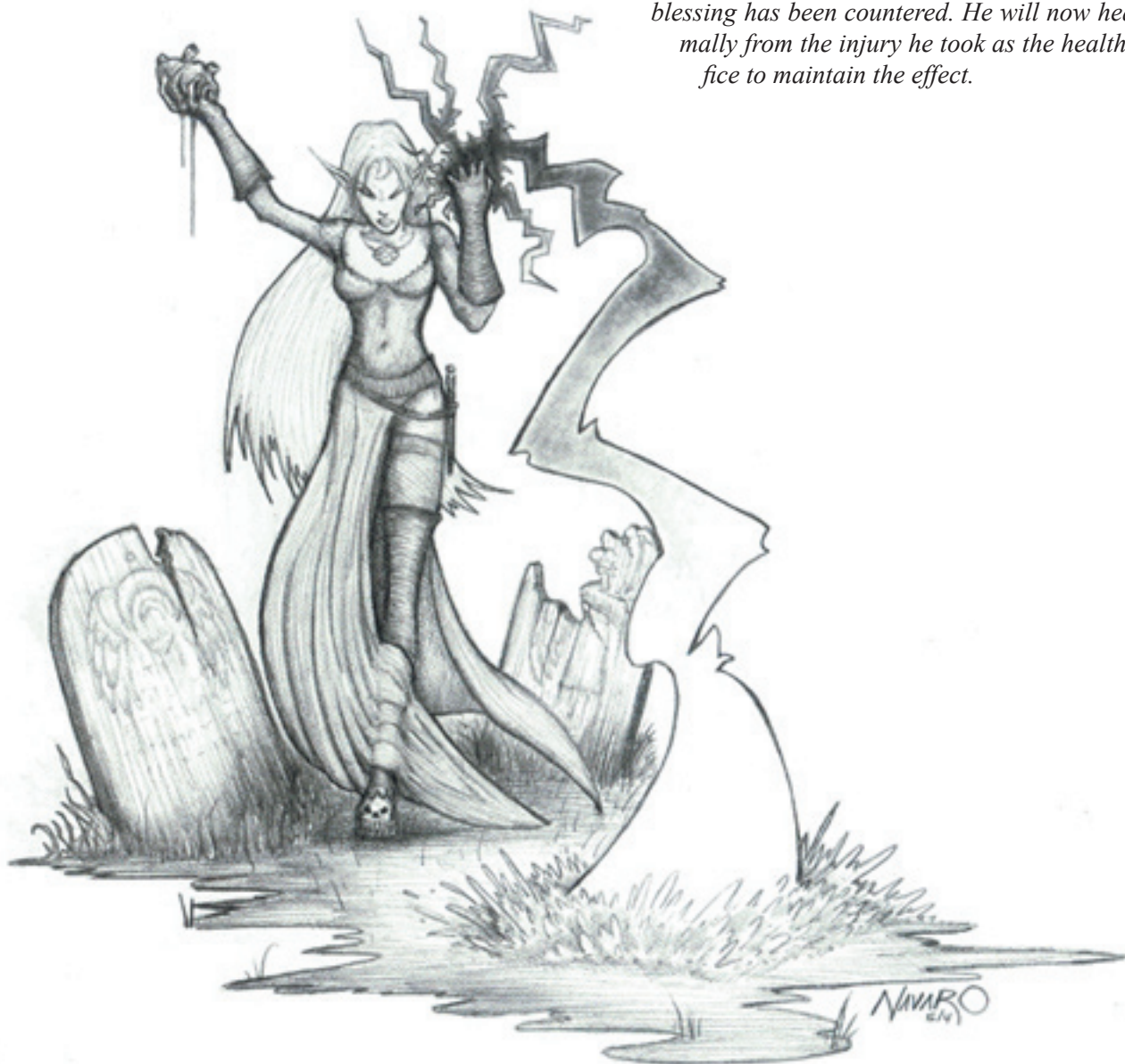
Standard Beast Dice

Although many beasts will have unique custom dice (like characters), in most cases most of a given beast's dice will be standard beast dice. The sidebar lists common modular dice used for creating beasts.

Armored

Universal
Defend
Double Defend
Double Defend
Double Defend
Triple Defend

Behemoth

Universal
Melee
Melee
Defend
Defend
Defend

Demonic

Universal
Fear Caster
Hoar Frost
Regenerate
Prickly
Poison(melee)

Flier

Wing
Wing
Wing
Wing
Wing
Wing

Giant

Universal
Double Defend
Double Defend
Double Defend
Double Melee
Double Melee

Herbivore

Universal
Perception

Bones Bestiary

In Bones, beasts both mundane and magical are treated the same as any other character, with two exceptions - beasts do not have Physical or Mental success icons available on their dice and beasts can have special abilities. Special abilities, like normal Bones skills, are represented by icons on the beast's bones (dice). For a beast to use a special ability, the appropriate icon must appear when the beast rolls its bones - otherwise, the special ability either doesn't function or the beast isn't using that ability. If the beast loses all dice with the appropriate ability icon, the beast can no longer use that ability, even with a universal success. For example, if a griffon loses all of its dice with the Flight icon, it can no longer fly (and if it was flying, it will plummet to the ground). Independent special abilities function whenever their icon is rolled and are not subject to the single task rule.

Beast Special Abilities

Ability	Icon	Description
Fear caster	(green underline)	Acts as a defend and an independent hindering result to all within 10M.
Fire Breathing	(red underline)	Target damaged by attack also gains flaming die
Flight	(black)	Allows flight (independent)
Hoar Frost/ Flaming	(red underline)	Acts as a Defend or as an independent melee attack against all within 3M (unaffected by armor)
Incorporeal	(blue underline)	Acts as an independent defend against all attackers, permits beast to move through obstructions
Poison	or (green underline)	Target damaged by attack also gains Poison die
Prickly	(yellow underline)	Acts as a Defend and as an independent Melee against all melee attackers
Regenerates	(yellow)	Independent - heals one die of damage
Swim	(blue underline)	Gives freedom of movement in water-- Independent

Sample Beasts

Following are some sample beasts:

Barrow Wight - 6D: d1 through d2- Fighter, d3 through d4- Undead, d5 through d6 Spirit • Move 1

Basilisk - 4D: d1 through d2 Predator, d3 through d4- Universal, Fear Caster, Poison (missile), Poison (missile), Poison (melee), Poison (melee) • Move 1

Cobra - 5D: d1-Stalker, d2-Pouncer, d3-Predator, d4 and d5-*Universal, Poison, Poison, Poison, Defend, Defend* • Move 2

Cow - 3D: d1 through d3- Herbivore • Move 1

Falcon - 2D: d1- Flyer, d2- Raptor • Move 1 (flying 8)

Fire Drake - 15D: d1-through d3-Flight, d4 through d8-Giant, d9 through d11- *Universal, Fire Breathing, Fire Breathing, Fire Breathing, Perception, Perception*, d12 through d15-*Universal, Fear Caster, Double Defend, Double Defend, Fire Breathing, Flaming* • Move 2 (flying 16)

Ghost - 5D: d1- Flight, d2- Undead, d3 through d5- *Universal, Incorporeal, Incorporeal, Incorporeal, Fear Caster, Hoar Frost* • Move 1 (flying 2)

Griffon - 7D: d1-Flight, d2-Flight, d3-Behemoth, d4-Behemoth, d5-Behemoth, d6-Predator, d7 Predator • Move 2 (8 flying)

Grizzly Bear - 6D: d1-Predator, d2-Predator, d3-Behemoth, d4-Behemoth, d5-Behemoth, d6-Behemoth • Move 1

Harpy - 4D: d1- Flight, d2 Raptor, d3 through 4 -Universal, Flight, Fear Caster, Fear Caster, Melee, Defend • Move 1 (flying 4)

Manticore - 8D: d1- Flight, d2 through d3- Behemoth, d4 through d5- Raptor, d6 through d8- Universal, Flight, Prickly, Missile, Missile • Move 2 (flight 6)

Tiger - 6D: d1- Stalker, d2 through d3- Predator, d5 through d5- Raptor, d6- Pouncer • Move 2

Velociraptor - 5D: d1 Behemoth, d2 Predator, d3 Raptor, d4 Stalker, d5 Pouncer • Move 2

Wolf - 3D: d1-Stalker, d2-Predator, d3-Pouncer • Move 2

Zombie - 2D: d1 through d2- Undead • Move .5
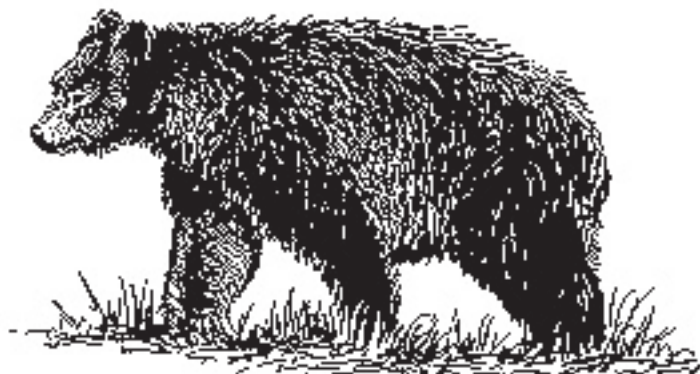
Perception	
Defend	
Blank	
Blank	
Pouncer	
Universal	
Maneuver	
Maneuver	
Stealth	
Stealth	
Melee	
Predator	
Universal	
Stealth	
Perception	
Stealth	
Melee	
Melee	
Raptor	
Universal	
Perception	
Perception	
Maneuver	
Melee	
Melee	
Spirit	
Universal	
Defend	
Incorporeal	
Incorporeal	
Fear Caster	
Hoar Frost	
Stalker	
Universal	
Stealth	
Stealth	
Stealth	
Perception	
Perception	
Undead	
Universal	
Defend	
Defend	
Defend	
Melee	
Fear Caster	

Cast Members

Non-player characters in *Bones* are called cast members. Other than having to declare their dice in combat before the player/character, cast members follow the same rule that govern characters. The power of a cast member can be determined by the total number of character dice that he/she has:

Number of character dice	Power level
Two	Average peasant
Three	Experienced commoner (gate guard)
Four	Professional (guard captain, merchant)
Five-Six	Experienced (guard leader, master thief)
Seven-Eight	Elite (emperor's champion, merchant prince)
Nine-Ten	Legendary (Lancelot, The Grey Mouser)

Ideally, all cast members would be represented by individually customized dice in the same fashion as characters. However, it is probably not feasible for the GM to customize every single cast member in a campaign. The sidebar lists modular dice that can be used to quickly create cast member.

Example

The GM needs a quick rake to challenge Ragnar in a bar fight. The GM decides that the rake is experienced, and will have three character dice. Being the fourth son of a minor noble, the first die selected is Aristocrat. Next, because the rake has taken lessons in the arts of war, a Fighter die is chosen. Finally, because the rake has been hanging out with a bad element, the GM selects a Criminal die. Our cast member is complete.

Sample Cast Members

Assassin - 6D: d1 through d2- Sneak, d2 through d4- Criminal, d5 through d6- Killer

Bartender - 2D: d1- Commoner, d2- Merchant

Doctor - 4D: d1 through d2- Sage, d3 through d4 - Universal success, Mental success, Healer, Healer, Social, Perception

Entertainer- 3D: d1 Commoner, d2 through d3- Universal, Mental success, Artisan, Artisan, Social, Social

Footpad - 3D: d1- Criminal, d2- Sneak, d3-Thug

Fur Trader - 3D: d1 through d2- Primitive, d3- Merchant

Hedge Wizard- 3D: d1 Commoner, d2 through d3- WizardKnight- 5D: d1- Aristocrat, d2 Fighter, d3 through d5 - Cavalry

Mercenary - 4D: d1 through d4 - Fighter

Priest 4D: d1 Sage, d2 Wizard, d3 through d4- Universal, Mental success, Social, Social, Merchant, Perception

Ship's Captain - 6D: d1 through d4- Sailor, d5 through d6- Universal Success, Mental Success, Merchant, Sailor (Captain), Melee, Social

Swordmaster - 6D: d1 through d2- Fighter, d3 through d4- Killer, d5- Universal Success, Physical Success, Melee (Riposte), Defend (Turtle), Maneuver, Social, d6- Universal success, Physical success, Melee (Two Weapon), Defend (Turtle), Social, Maneuver

Townsperson - 2D: d1 through d2-- Commoner

Archer	Fighter	Sage
Universal	Universal	Universal
Physical	Physical	Mental
Missile	Melee	Scholar
Missile	Defend	Scholar
Missile	Missile	Healer
Perception	Maneuver	Social

Cavalry	Killer	Sailor
Universal	Universal	Universal
Physical	Physical	Mental
Ride	Melee	Sailor
Ride	Melee	Sailor
Melee	Missile	Sailor
Missile	Defend	Maneuver

Commoner/Townsfolk	Merchant	Sneak
Universal	Universal	Universal
Mental	Mental	Physical
Craft	Merchant	Stealth
Perception	Merchant	Stealth
Craft	Perception	Stealth
Merchant	Social	Perception

Craftsman	Patrician/Aristocrat	Thug
Universal	Universal	Universal
Mental	Mental	Physical
Craft	Social	Melee
Craft	Social	Unarmed/Cmbt
Craft	Merchant	Defend
Artisan	Scholar	Maneuver

Criminal	Primitive/Savage	Wizard
Universal	Universal	Universal
Physical	Physical	Mental
Stealth	Outdoors	Scholar
Thief	Stealth	Perception
Perception	Perception	Magic
Maneuver	Missile	Magic

Example

Grumpy the dwarf is fighting a goblin. He rolls his bones and one die rolls a D, the dwarven racial icon. Grumpy can use this result as a Defend(slam) or a Craft or a Perception success. Doing his best to avoid being injured, he wisely chooses Defend (slam).

Other Character Races

Although the core BONES rules envision human characters, it is certainly possible to play characters of other races. The key difference as far as character creation is concerned is that characters (and cast members) of other races have a racial icon instead of a Physical/Mental success icon. Racial icons typically represent a set of skills associated with the race in question. When a racial icon comes up when the bones are rolled, the character may choose only one of the skills associated with that racial icon to apply to his roll.

Normally, fantasy races and racial icons are setting-specific -- the Alfar of the COLD IRON setting are very different from the elves that inhabit the Westlands of Terry Brooks' outstanding world of Shanarra. However, for purposes of the "standard" fantasy campaign world (if there is such a thing), the racial icons for "standard" fantasy races include:

Race	Icon	Skills(master skill)
Elf	"E" (green)	Artisan (inspired), Perception (sharp eye), Magic
Dwarf	"D" (brown)	Craft(master), Defend(slam), Perception (night vision)
Halfling	"H" (green)	Maneuver (swashbuckler), Missile (accuracy), Stealth (sneaky)
Orc	"O" (red)	Defend (endurance), Melee, Maneuver

Cheeseburger in Paradise

A sample BONES adventure.

Synopsis

The characters have been captured by a tribe of primitive proto-humans. Unless they can escape, the best fate that they can hope for is to end up in the tribal cooking pot.

Back-story:

Isolated in a desolate corner of the world, the Eaters of Men are a race apart from humanity that evolution somehow missed. Centuries of inbreeding with a single tribal mother, and a recent rotting disease, have made the tribe a small band of deformed degenerates led by a few powerful warriors subject to the whims of the all powerful (and magically adept) Matron, the only female member of the tribe.

The tribe fills its ranks by capturing men and breeding them to the corpulent tribal mother, after which they are eaten. Captured women are simply eaten, arguably the kinder fate. Generations of hiding from the world of men have made the Eaters of Men both cunning and stealthy. Many have been taken captive - none have survived.

Location

The adventure takes place entirely in the festering catacombs of the tribe. The characters were brought in unconscious and do not know where they are.

Starting in Media Res

The characters wake up in the bottom of a deep pit, battered and wounded (1 damage). The floor of the pit is covered in almost half a meter of water and has a meter-deep layer of refuse, bones and rubbish. The smell is almost overpowering. Magic using characters also find their hands bound with rusting iron shackles which will increase the difficulty of any magic they use by two levels. (The Matron sensed their magic and

had them shackled.)

The characters should be prepared to answer the following questions:

- How were you captured?

- Where were you when you were captured?

- Where were you going/what were you doing when you were captured?

Vital Statistics

Tribal Warrior (four + one per character)

Dice

4D: d1 Primitive, d2 Sneak, d3 Fighter, d4 Universal Success, Physical Success, Regenerate, Melee, Melee, Stealth.

Equipment

Two standard spears, any light or medium armor taken from characters.

Appearance

Muscular, but deformed, coarse hair sprouts from odd places at odd angles all over their bodies. Rotting ears, yellow, runny eyes and a scent like ripe, road kill skunk. Faster than they look. Imagine the Rock with leprosy.

Tribal Dregs (four + two per character)

Dice

2D: d1 Primitive, d2 Sneak

Equipment

One handed club

Appearance

Similar to the warriors, but skinny, undernourished and slowly rotting away.

The Tribal Matron (one)

Dice

6D: d1 Primitive, d2 through d3 Universal success, Physical success, Social, Magic, Defend, Regenerate, d4 through d5 Universal success, Mental success, Magic, Defend, Melee, Fear caster, d6 Universal success, Mental Success, Defend (Turtle), Magic, Melee

Magic (two themes)

Theme - Domination of the will
• Effect - Pheromones dominate the will of her target and control his actions
• Limitations - Only works on males, target must be able to smell her musk

Second Theme - Illusion
• Effect - Can make target see things differently than they are

• Limitations - Only visual effects

Appearance

Once at least presentable, now a half ton of gristle, flabby white flesh and decaying features. She can move, but not from place to place. Her legs are vestigial, but her arms hide tremendous muscle within their flab.

Key to the Caves

A.   A narrow, winding tunnel that heads up to the surface in the side of a dry riverbed. Still slippery with mud and refuse, it is an <u>average</u> task to ascend the tunnel to the surface. Failure deposits the character back at the Guard Area.

- A character who succeeds at a <u>challenging</u> Perception check will find a small locket that has been pressed into the sloppy mud floor. The locket is silver and the chain broken. It can be forced open with an <u>average</u> Craft check or opened via the hidden mechanism with an <u>average</u> Thief check. If the locket is opened, it will reveal a small, but detailed family portrait and contain a few wisps of hair. If it is forced open, the hair will be lost. A <u>challenging</u> Merchant check reveals that the locket is the recent work of a master craftsman long thought dead.

B.   A longer and gentler slope up to the surface, this tunnel is largely unused because it has become infested with extremely aggressive rats (Level 2 Horde). The rats generally keep to their tunnel, only occasionally sneaking out to snatch a morsel of food from the tribe, which catches and eats as many rats as it can.

- A <u>challenging</u> Outdoorsman check can control the rats and keep them from attacking.

1.   Guard Area   A single tribal warrior is always on guard here. Given the tight quarters, absent a good plan, he gets one free success to notice people sneaking past him.

2.   Living Area   The dregs of the tribe live in putrid squalor in this area in a single rancid nest of rags, rotting fur and decaying matter. They spend most of their time sleeping and squabbling among themselves for morsels of food or (rarely) artifacts from the outside. About once a month one of them is brought before the queen to be eaten or sacrificed to extend her magic.

- A <u>challenging</u> Perception check or an <u>average</u> Magic check will note a single intact garment among the rags. While filthy in its current state, if this enchanted vest is cleaned off and worn, it will provide its wearer with protection against magic - it automatically cancels one success achieved by a hostile spell caster against the wearer.

3.   Captives   The tang of copper and the slowly pooling, sticky accumulations of blood are readily apparent when entering this area. There are two sets of rusty shackles imbedded in the wall (an <u>impossible</u> Physical task to break free, otherwise the same shackles as in the Pit Room), both of which are in use. The first pair holds a human carcass suspended from the wall - once a muscular man, the body has obviously been partially butchered, with only the top half bearing any semblance of humanity. The second pair of shackles holds a naked man with a vacant expression and glazed eyes.

- It is an <u>average</u> Healer task to determine that he seems to be in some sort of shock, but appears to be otherwise healthy.

- It is an <u>almost impossible</u> Social task to get him to talk - if the characters succeed in doing so, he will keep repeating "The horror, the horror---don't touch me!"

- It is a <u>challenging</u> Magic task to determine that he is under some sort of enchantment and a <u>difficult</u> Magic task to ascertain that he is under the domination of the Queen and is currently serving as her mate (Ewww!).

- If the characters free him without breaking the Queen's magical domination (she had three successes), he will flee to warn the guards at the first opportunity.

- If freed from compulsion, he can be talked into aiding the characters (a <u>challenging</u> Social task). His name is Tomas, and he has 2D, one Commoner and one Fighter.

4.   Pit Room   In the center of this room is a great pit in which captives are kept until such time as they meet their fate. The pit is ten meters deep, with the bottom two feet filled with stagnant water and refuse. There is sometimes a dreg or two around the pit hoping to feed on the vermin that crawl up its walls.

When the characters were tossed in the pit two days ago, there were two fellow captives already there, one of whom (a balding human male, age 40+) is either dying or dead. The other captive, a 12 year old girl (Clarisse) with matted long blond hair, is hysterical and on the verge of going into shock.

- Talking Clarisse back into reality is a <u>challenging</u> Social task. She and her father were captured

while they were traveling through the outlands looking for a rare herb to treat Clarisse's mother, who is desperately ill. Her father is a physician and healing mage named Karl.

- Climbing out of the pit without gear is an <u>almost impossible</u> Maneuver task.

- Mixed among the debris in the pit is a rusty, but serviceable dagger that can be found with a <u>difficult</u> Perception check.

- Removing the shackles is an <u>almost impossible</u> Physical task, a <u>difficult</u> Craft task or a <u>challenging</u> Thief task. Fabricating a crude set of lock picks from bits of the refuse (a <u>challenging</u> Craft task) makes the job of removing the shackles an <u>average</u> Thief task.

5. **The Concealed Pits** The Queen has used her illusions to conceal a series of small pits to guard her chamber. Absent detecting and evading the pits, it is impossible to avoid falling in to at least one of them as the characters approach the Queen's chamber. Falling in a pit does one damage. There are several ways that the pits can be circumvented.

- Detecting the illusion magic is a <u>challenging</u> Magic task. If detected, a mage can slowly (move ½) lead the group safely past the pits. Dispelling the illusion will require four successes.

- If a character starts falling, it is a <u>difficult</u> Maneuver task to grab the edge to keep from falling all the way.

- It would be a <u>challenging</u> Outdoorsman task to safely follow the tracks of the tribesmen to avoid the pits.

- It would be a <u>difficult</u> Thief task to detect and avoid the pits.

6. **The Throne of Bone** In this chamber the odious Queen sits on a throne made of the cracked skulls and splintered bones of the tribes' victims. There are always at least one warrior and two dregs present in this room to attend the Queen. There is a 4 meter diameter iron cooking pot in the center of the chamber bubbling with a foul mixture of human flesh and a rare cheese sauce. Three wagon wheels of cheese sit approximately 5 meters from the pot.

- Her throne appears to be accessible from all sides - in reality, her illusion magic conceals the pits (similar to the pits in area 5) on all sides of the throne except the front.

- She may bargain with the characters for their freedom, depending on how strong they appear. Any bargaining that does not involve the characters leaving at least one mate behind adds one success to her total.

- She has a one-handed battle ax captured from a mighty warrior next to her that is exceptionally balanced (Double Melee, Melee, Melee, Melee, Missile, Missile), but her first recourse in combat will be to attempt to dominate the character who appears to be the strongest warrior and have him join her cause - she will sacrifice one of her dregs to make the effect lasting.

- If slain, the Queen will slowly dissolve into a putrefying mess of goo. Characters searching her ramshackle throne will discover gold coins amounting to 100 coins per Perception success.

- It is a <u>difficult</u> Merchant task to identify the cheese as rare Rauchambeau sharp. Intact, each wheel is worth 500 coins. Two of the three wheels are intact. It would be a <u>difficult</u> Thief task to make the third wheel appear to be intact.

In the know

Characters may also apply their Knowledge skills to try to evaluate the situation. Some potential Knowledge tasks include understanding that:

1. The tribe is matriarchal, which is unusual. The matriarch must be both charismatic and capable of defeating males in combat in order to stay in charge -- <u>average</u>.
2. The tribe appears to be heavily inbred, which has taken its toll on the intelligence and longevity of its members. The oldest members appear to be the warriors and the youngest appear to be the dregs - <u>average</u>. Dregs do not grow into warriors - <u>challenging</u>. The warriors seem to have some type of common mutation that promotes rapid healing - <u>difficult</u> Knowledge or <u>challenging</u> Healer.
3. All of the tribal males appear to be eunuchs - <u>challenging</u>. It appears that the tribe looks
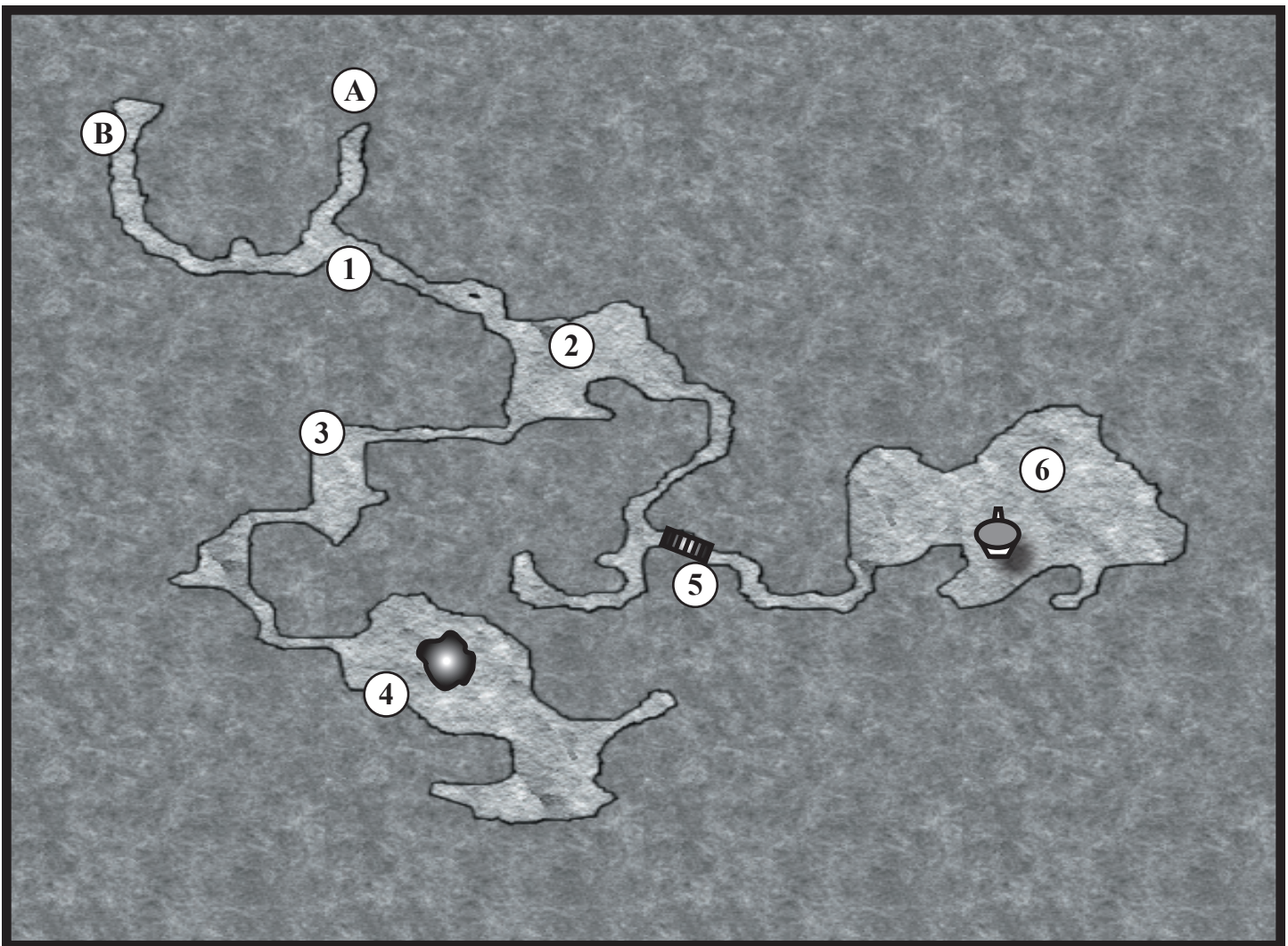
outside its membership for breeding stock - <u>difficult</u>. All of the male tribesmen appear to be the offspring of a single female - <u>challenging</u>.

4. The tribe's diet appears to be exclusively meat - <u>average</u>. The dregs eat whatever protein they can find while the warriors dine exclusively on men (and dregs) - <u>difficult</u>.

Timetable

Unless the characters intervene, events will follow this timetable:

Day 1

1. Early morning - a dreg will look into the pit and then urinate over the edge - he believes that it provides a tasty sauce for the coming feast(s).

2. Late morning - There will be a horrible scream and cries of help followed by a cacophony of hooting and chanting - the tribe is butchering the hapless guard found in Area 3.

3. Early afternoon-- Karl dies and Clarisse goes into shock.

4. Evening - The characters hear piteous cries that end abruptly. The Queen is again mating with the living captive in Area 3. Afterward, the tribe feasts, with the sickly smell of meat (and cheese?) wafting throughout the caverns.

Day 2

1. Early morning - The dreg returns and urinates into the pit.

2. Afternoon - Two warriors peer down into the pit. They toss stones at Karl to see if he's still alive.

The tribe has better days.

3. Evening - The smell of meat and cheese again pervades the caverns as the tribe finishes the remains in Area 3. The mating ritual is again repeated with the living captive.

Day 3

1. Early morning - The dreg pays his usual visit.

2. Afternoon - Four warriors come for Karl, who will be tonight's main course. If they succeed in taking him, his daughter will go mad - it is an <u>impossible</u> Social or Healer task to prevent this from happening. If the warriors are repulsed, they will return with four dregs and begin stoning the characters until they behave.

3. Evening - Dinner for the tribe features Karl *au jus*.

Day 4

1. Early Morning - The dreg returns and does his business. Shortly thereafter, two warriors appear at the edge of the pit and study the characters intently, hooting to each other. It is a <u>challenging</u> Knowledge task to figure out that they are picking out a new "consort" for their Queen.

2. Afternoon - The tribe butchers the remaining captive in Area 2. He dies without making a sound, and will provide the tribe's nightly repast.

3. Evening - The chosen character is fished out of the pit (with as much force and stoning as necessary) and brought before the Queen. If she successfully dominates him, she sacrifices a dreg to extend the effect, mates with him and he is moved to Area 2 and shackled to the wall. Successfully faking domination is an <u>almost impossible</u> Social task. If he resists her domination, he is beaten (one damage) and shackled to the wall in Area

Day 5

1. Early Morning - The dreg is back again.

2. Afternoon - The characters begin to feel the effects of deprivation. It is a <u>difficult</u> Physi-

cal task to avoid taking one damage. Clarisse faints - it is a <u>challenging</u> Healer task to revive her.

3. Evening - The character chained in Area 2 is brought back to the Queen for domination. If he succeeds in avoiding domination (and is not successful at faking it), he is brought back to Area 2 and again shackled to the wall.

Day 6

1. Early morning - The urination routine continues.

2. Afternoon - If the character selected as the Queen's consort has been dominated (or has successfully faked domination), nothing happens. If the prospective consort has avoided domination, he is killed and butchered as tonight's feast and another character is selected.

3. [From this point on, events from Days 5 and 6 repeat themselves until the characters either escape or suffer an ignoble end.]

Epilogue

If the characters escape, they can either decide to help Clarisse obtain her mother's cure or simply get the hell out of Dodge. If the characters have saved Clarisse, give them each one spiff, and if they earnestly agree to help her save her mother, give them a second spiff. If Karl somehow survives, give each character an extra spiff, and if Tomas survives, give each character an additional spiff.

Cold Iron Campaign Setting

Introduction

The Alfar are eternal. Sometimes called elves by humans (and other inferior races), an Alfar who is not slain in combat or by happenstance will live forever. Although births among the Alfar are rare, Alfar deaths in times of peace are rarer still. Resistant to the elements and to disease, only in times of war does the Alfar population decrease.

Alfar civilization reached its peak before men could speak or make tools of their own. Loosely governed by the Elf King from the isle of Alfheim (later to be called Iceland), the Ljosalfar (light elves) and Dokalfar (dark elves) dominated both the peoples of man and the less numerous trollkin for millennia. Masters of magic and martial prowess, the alfar ruthlessly censored magic among the lesser races and suppressed the discovery and use of iron, a metal that was anathema to them.

The Alfar Empire began to contract when the savage trollkin openly revolted and violently threw off the alfar yoke. Alfar retaliation was swift and brutal, and trolls died by the thousands. Still, their numbers were too great and they slew more elves than could be replaced for thousands of years. The alfar ended their war, although their last raid resulted in the capture of the troll king's daughter. During the struggle, the men of the north (the Norsemen) briefly allied with the trolls and also won freedom for their lands. This alliance of convenience ended when the alfar withdrew and the trolls turned on the men and attempted to subjugate them - the Norsemen proved more than able to defend themselves and a state of war between man and trolls rages to this day.

The Alfar suffered a second blow when Roman metallurgists finally overcame elven efforts to suppress iron. The touch of iron burns the alfar, and although a single alfar warrior was normally more than a match for one hundred men, arming those men with iron weapons and armor dramatically improved their odds. Only the elven monopoly on magic remained to assure their dominance.

Feeling the nearly irreplaceable losses of the troll wars, the alfar decided to add to their numbers by creating elite servants. The alfar had long practiced selective breeding with their slaves, often with mixed results - their fierce helhounds and frightening helkites were an awesome force in war, but their efforts with men were less than successful. However, one strain of man (mixed with a touch of fey) showed promise - the servants that the alfar had called their sidhe were clearly magically and martially gifted, second only to the alfar themselves. Determined to swell their ranks with numbers sufficient to exterminate the hated trollkin, the alfar magically awakened the sidhe, provided them with tokens of power and established them on the neighboring island of Eire (Ireland). The sidhe lost no time in subjugating the native Celts and turning them into a powerful, if undisciplined, war machine. The sidhe also wasted little time in breaking faith with their alfar masters and teaching the more promising of their Celtic servants (who would later be called druids) the art of magic.

Although they did initially war upon the trolls and the Norsemen, ultimately the sidhe themselves rebelled against their masters and, with the aid of the celts, drove the alfar from Eire. Again, the alfar fell back to Alfheim, fewer than when they had started - too few, in fact, to continue to extinguish the flame of magic that grew in men.

First with iron, Rome quickly moved to fill the void left by the withdrawing alfar. Conquering Greece, Gaul and Egypt in quick succession, the Roman Empire assimilated those it conquered and continued to grow until it reached the Moors, who were expanding from the other direction from their capitol of Baghdad.

The Moors were a people divided, with half following the Great Prophet Mohammed and the other half united by a single god, the Destroyer, who supposedly granted his children the destiny of conquest. The Moors find themselves in the unenviable position of being one growing empire in between two other growing empires. To the east, the Han Empire (supported and sponsored by the great celestial dragons) continued its own expansion. Added to the mix were the Nubians of the Dark Continent, the Rus of eastern and central Europe, the Saxons and Scots whose island bordered Eire and the fierce Norsemen whose lands bordered the trolls.

Chronology

The chronology of Cold Iron is expressed in two datelines, [YEAR] D, which signify events occurring during the Alfar Domination and [YEAR] AD, which signifies events occurring After (the) Domination.

5000 D • In the late Stone Age man and trollkin are thralls of the alfar. Recorded human history begins.

3500 D • Men and trolls enter the bronze age. The alfar begin monitoring and suppressing technological innovation.

3000 D • The Ljosalfar subjugate the Dokalfar, claiming them to be inferior.

2500 D • The alfar civil war begins as the Dokalfar reject their second class status. The Ljosalfar, who possess the most powerful magic, sweep to victory and the remaining Dokalfar flee underground or over the seas.

2000 D • The Dokalfar reject their magical heritage and embrace artificing. Their rejection of magic allows them to tolerate iron.

1500 D • The Dokalfar and their creations war on the Ljosalfar. The Ljosalfar barely prevail, but only by spending tens of thousands of human and trollkin lives.

1000 D • The Purge. The Ljosalfar utterly destroy the island of Atlantis (which has progressed too far magically and technologically for alfar comfort) and slaughter every man and troll showing a touch of magic in their soul.

750 D • The dragons, formerly allied with the Ljosalfar, abandon the alliance to make their own way in the world.

600 D • The peoples of the East eject the alfar with the aid of many of the great dragons. Facing war with the dragons, the alfar withdraw without a serious struggle. The Great Dragon Toshi Han founds the Han Empire as she forms an imperial government.

500 D • The trollkin and their norse allies rebel. The Roman Empire is born on the Italian peninsula.

400 D • The trollkin and norsemen cause enough attrition in the alfar ranks to force the alfar to withdraw. The trolls then turn on the norsemen, who subsequently repel the trolls from their lands.

350 – 300 D • Rome discovers iron and expands its Empire through Greece. The Moorish Empire begins to coalesce from numerous sheikdoms. The alfar increase their breeding of helhounds and helkites to make up for losses suffered in the Troll Wars.

290 D – 240 D • Rome expands again, conquering Gaul and defeating an alfar host to conquer Egypt. The Ljosalfar awaken the sidhe.

225 D – 200 D • The sidhe conquer the celts and establish themselves on Eire.

100 D • The Cult of the Destroyer is founded, with its founder reputed to be a living god.

80 D • The Han drive the Mongols from their Empire.

75 D – 50 D • The Han Empire begins to expand into India. The Moors begin to unite to contest the expansion.

35 D • The White Christ is born in the Roman Empire.

5 D • The White Christ is slain by the Romans.

1 AD • The Alfar withdraw to Alfheim, ending their direct role in the world of men.

A Taste of Cold Iron

What follows is a small sample of the COLD IRON campaign setting, the first campaign setting for the BONES RPG. COLD IRON is a fantasy setting based around an alternate history of the dark ages in which humankind has only recently thrown off the yoke of the hated Alfar, a race that can be described as a cross between Moorcock's Melniboneans and Tolkien's elves. COLD IRON is a relatively realistic, low fantasy setting that incorporates not only European mythology, but Asian, African, and Middle Eastern mythology as well.

Ragnar's Story

Ragnar's player decides that he wants to play a character who hails from a primitive culture and becomes a warrior to be feared. He elects Gaul as his starting point because it fits his vision for the character and completes his first character die, the Gaul Culture Die:

1. *Universal success*
2. *Physical success*
3. *Outdoorsman*
4. *(choice) Craft or Riding or Outdoorsman - Ragnar chooses Riding to enable him to get from place to place.*
5. *(choice) - unrestricted - Ragnar chooses Melee because he wants to develop the ability to whup ass from the onset.*
6. *(choice) - unrestricted - Ragnar chooses Defend for a similar reason - while he wants to whup ass, he does not want his ass whupped.*

Being from Gaul, Ragnar could come from either a Villager or a Hunter/Gatherer background. Not wanting to be civilized in the least, Ragnar picks Hunter/Gatherer for his

Cold Iron Character Creation

In the Cold Iron campaign setting, starting Bones characters are created one die at a time. First, the character selects a culture (which represents the character's birthplace and roots) and finalizes his first die, called his culture die. Next, the character chooses a background (which represents the character's upbringing and initial place in society) and finalizes his second die, called his background die. A character's culture will limit his choice of backgrounds - for example, there are no Roman nomads.

After a character has selected his culture and background, he may build his character by adding additional background and/or culture dice (from the same background and culture that he started with) or he may choose an initial and second occupation die (which may be the same). Again, culture and background will limit the character's choice of initial occupation (there are no Norse villager students) and a character's initial occupation may limit his choice of a second occupation - a Mongol man-at-arms might become a cavalry rider, but he cannot switch to sage.

Character generation summary

1. Pick a starting culture
2. Finalize the culture die (1st die)
3. Pick a starting background
4. Finalize the background die (2nd die)
5. Pick an initial occupation (or continue with either starting background or culture)
6. Finalize the third die
7. Pick another occupation (or starting culture/background) die
8. Finalize the fourth die
9. List starting equipment and finalize sheet
10. Write character back story.

Starting Cultures

Roman - Rome is the center of a civilized empire that includes Egypt, Greece and Gaul as recent conquests. Available backgrounds include citizen, villager, noble, slave and criminal.

1. Universal success
2. Mental success
3. (choice) Craft or Artisan or Scholar
4. (choice) Merchant or Social or Craft or Artisan
5. (choice) - unrestricted
6. (choice) - unrestricted

Greek - Once the cradle of civilization, Greece is now a client state of Rome. Greece is a society where discourse and learning are highly valued. Backgrounds include citizen, sailor, villager and criminal.

1. Universal success
2. Mental success
3. (choice) Scholar or Social or Sailor

4. (choice) Scholar or Social or Merchant or Sailor
5. (choice) - unrestricted
6. (choice) - unrestricted

Egyptian - Steeped in ancient learning and tradition, the land of the Pharaohs was also recently conquered by Rome. Available backgrounds include citizen, slave, noble and criminal.

1. Universal success
2. Mental success
3. (choice) Craft or Healer or Artisan
4. (choice) Scholar or Social or Healer
5. (choice) - unrestricted
6. (choice) - unrestricted

Gaul - Only partly civilized, Gaul is little more than a group of loosely affiliated tribes and villages that was surprisingly difficult for Rome to conquer. Available backgrounds include villager and hunter/gatherer.

1. Universal success
2. Physical success
3. Outdoorsman
4. (choice) Craft or Riding or Outdoorsman
5. (choice) - unrestricted
6. (choice) - unrestricted

Backgrounds

Hunter/Gatherer - Semi-nomadic, Hunter/Gatherers survive by locating and acquiring naturally-occurring foodstuffs. Available careers for Hunter/Gatherers include Armsman and Hunter.

1. Universal success
2. Physical success
3. Outdoorsman
4. Perception or Stealth
5. (choice) - unrestricted
6. (choice) - unrestricted

Occupations

Armsman - Common in all cultures, Armsmen have basic training in fighting and warfare. They are the grunts of armies, militia and guards.

1. Universal Success
2. Physical Success
3. Melee
4. Defend
5. choice - Melee or Missile
6. choice - unrestricted

Background Die:

1. *Universal success*
2. *Physical success*
3. *Outdoorsman*
4. *Perception or Stealth - Ragnar chooses Perception because he's not as interested in sneaking up on people as he is in preventing people from sneaking up on him.*
5. *(choice) - unrestricted - Ragnar again chooses Melee.*
6. *(choice) - unrestricted - Ragnar again chooses Defend.*

Next, Ragnar chooses his Occupation Dice - because he is a starting character, Ragnar will have a total of four character dice. He could choose more Culture or Background dice, but because he wants to focus on being a warrior, Ragnar elects to take two identical Armsman Occupation dice as his last two dice:

1. *Universal success*
2. *Physical success*
3. *Melee*
4. *Defend*
5. *(choice) Melee or Missile - Because it might come in handy, Ragnar elects to add Missile to his repertoire of warrior skills.*
6. *(choice) - unrestricted - In order to aid him in getting around, Ragnar adds Maneuver as the last skill icons on his two Occupation Dice.*

Ragnar is now a complete new character. He and the GM will discuss starting equipment, etc. and he will be ready to begin play.

BONES

Name:	Age:	Backstory:
Race:	Gender:	

Description:

Character Dice (check box if injured)

	☐ **Die 1**	☐ **Die 2**	☐ **Die 3**	☐ **Die 4**	☐ **Die 5**
1	Universal	Universal	Universal	Universal	Universal
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
Note					

Character Dice (continued)

	☐ **Die 6**	☐ **Die 7**	☐ **Die 8**	☐ **Die 9**	☐ **Die 10**
1	Universal	Universal	Universal	Universal	Universal
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
Note					

Equipment Dice

Item:				
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
Note:				

Spiffs
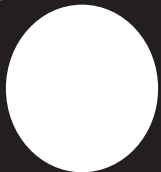
Finances:

Other Equipment:

Magic	Examples of Magical Effects
Theme:	
Effect:	
Limitation:	

Magic	Examples of Magical Effects
Theme:	
Effect:	
Limitation:	

Connections and Contacts

Name	Location	Description

Assets

Type	Description	Location

Other Notes

Master Skill Table

Name	Icon	P/M	Description - applies to
Artisan	✳	M	Fine arts and performing arts skills (restricted action)
Craft	🔨	M	Craft skills (blacksmith, carpenter, etc.) (restricted action)
Defend	🛡	P	Melee and Missile defense (universal action)
Healer	✚	M	Healing skills (restricted action)
Magic	⬡	M	Magical powers (special action)
Maneuver	⚙	P	Physical maneuvers (climb/jump/ etc.) (universal action)
Melee combat	⚔	P	Melee attack or defense (universal action)
Merchant	$	M	Mercantile skills such as appraisal, haggle, bartering (restricted action)
Missile combat	➶	P	Missile attacks (universal action)
Outdoorsman	🌳	M	Outdoor skills (restricted action)
Perception	👀	M	Observation skills (universal action)
Riding	⋒	P	Riding animals (restricted action)
Sailor	⚓	M	Sailing skills, swimming, etc (restricted action)
Scholar	✿	M	Knowledge skills and book learning (restricted action)
Social	☺	M	Social skills such as diplomacy, persuasion, seduction, etc. (universal action)
Stealth	☾	P	Sneaking around (universal action)
Thief	⚬	M	Larceny skills - picking locks, disarming traps, disguise, con, etc. (restricted action)
Unarmed Combat	✊	M	Special action - weaponless attacks, missile and melee defense (restricted action)

Improvement

Character's current die	Number of play sessions for each icon
Fourth and Fifth	One
Sixth and Seventh	Two
Eighth and Ninth	Three
Tenth	Four
+1 automatic success	Ten

Getting Spiffs

- Writing a good back-story - 1 spiff
- Writing a great back-story - 2 spiffs
- Keeping an informative campaign log - 1 spiff per session logged
- Character or cast portraits - 1 spiff
- Assisting in campaign development (i.e. making maps and other tasks that help the GM) - 1-3 spiffs
- Good role-playing/characterization in a session - 1 spiff
- A funny, in character moment that makes the GM laugh - 1 spiff

Spending Spiffs

- To reroll a single die in a task check - 1 spiff
- To generate a single additional success on a task check - 2 spiffs
- To soak one damage - 2 spiffs
- To modify the story in a minor way ("my old friend Ragnar works in this tavern as the bouncer") - 1 spiff
- To modify the story in a meaningful way ("my old friend Ragnar is one of the Evil Overlord's guards") - 2 spiffs
- Without GM approval, spiffs cannot change the major plot elements ("my old friend Ragnar is the Evil Overlord")
- To miraculously survive death (with a plausible explanation) - 5 spiffs

Basic Weapons and Armor

Melee Weapons	1	2	3	4	5	6	*Range Increment
Dagger/Knife	Melee	Melee	Missile	Missile	blank	blank	10M
Sword/mace/club/battle ax/ 1 handed melee	Double Melee	Melee	Melee	Melee	Missile	blank	5M
Spear	Double Melee	Melee	Melee	Missile	Missile	blank	15M
Great sword/Maul/ great ax/ 2 handed melee	Triple Melee	Double Melee	Melee	Melee	Melee	blank	
Missile Weapons							
Javelin	Missile	Missile	Missile	Melee	blank	blank	20M
w/thrower	Double Missile	Missile	Missile	Missile	blank	blank	30M
Short bow/Light Crossbow	Double Missile	Missile	Missile	Missile	blank	blank	30M
Sling	Missile	Missile	Missile	blank	blank	blank	25M
Longbow/Heavy Crossbow	Triple Missile	Double Missile	Missile	Missile	Missile	blank	50M
Shield							
Buckler	Defense	Enc	Defense	blank	blank	blank	
Full Shield	Double Defense	Defense	Enc	Double Enc	Defense	blank	
Tower Shield	Triple Defense	Double Defense	Defense	Enc/ Defense	Double Enc	Triple Enc	
Armor							
Light (leather)	Defense	Enc	Defense	blank	blank	blank	
Medium (chain)	Double Defense	Defense	Enc	Double Enc	Defense	blank	
Heavy (plate)	Triple Defense	Double Defense	Defense	Enc/ Defense	Double Enc	Triple Enc	

Skill Mastery Table

Skill	Mastery Icon	Effect
Artisan	Artiste (blue asterisk)	Counts as two Artisan successes
	Renown (green asterisk)	Counts as either an Artisan success or a Social success
	Inspired (red asterisk)	Counts as an Artisan success or a Magic success if employing art/music in the magic
Craft	Driven (blue hammer)	Decreases item creation time by 25% per extra success over base needed (never lower than 25%)
	Master (green hammer)	Counts as two Craft successes
	Weaponsmith (red hammer)	Can craft weapons/armor with either one extra Melee/ Missile/Defend or one less Encumbrance per two successes
Defend	Endurance (blue shield)	Counts as a Defend success and negates a single Encumbrance result on an armor or shield equipment die
	Turtle (green shield)	Counts as two Defend successes
	Slam (red shield)	Counts as either a Defend or a Melee success
Healer	Medic (blue cross)	Counts as a Healer success and increases the amount of damage healed immediately by one (max 2d)
	Cure (green cross)	Counts as either a Healer success or an Magic success (with respect to healing magics only)
	Empathy (red cross)	Counts as two Healer successes
Maneuver	Acrobat (blue scale)	Counts as two Maneuver successes
	Pyramid (green scale)	Counts as a Maneuver success that can be used for another character
	Swashbuckler (red scale)	Counts as a Maneuver success and a Defend success
Melee combat	Deflection (blue sword)	Can also be used as Missile defend
	Two Weapon (green sword)	Use a second weapon to attack (no shield permitted)
	Riposte (red sword)	Counts as two Melee successes - cannot be used to defend
Merchant	Trader (blue dollar sign)	Counts as two Merchant successes
	Money Talks (green dollar sign)	Counts as one Merchant success or one Social success
	Merchant Prince (red dollar sign)	Has one small asset (shop, caravan, etc) per two Merchant Prince icons
Missile combat	Accuracy (blue arrow)	Counts as one Missile success and negates 40% of cover
	Bow Fu (green arrow)	Can be used as Missile or Melee success
	Gut Shot (red arrow)	Counts as two Missile successes
Outdoorsman	Animal Friend (blue tree)	Counts as an Outdoorsman success or an independent successful command to animal companion. Character is eligible for an animal companion with 1 beast die + 1 additional beast die per Animal Friend icon he possesses.
	Stalker (green tree)	Counts as either an Outdoorsman success or a Stealth success
	One with the Forest (red tree)	Counts as either an Outdoorsman success or a Perception success

Skill Mastery Table(continued)

Skill	Mastery Icon	Effect
Perception	Sharp Eye (blue eye)	Counts as two Perception successes
	Night Vision (green eye)	Counts as a Perception success and cancels out penalty from partial darkness or ½ penalty from total darkness
	Sixth Sense (red eye)	Counts as a Perception Success and cancels out two opposing Stealth successes
Riding	Born to the saddle (blue horseshoe)	Counts as two Riding successes.
	Horseman (green horseshoe)	Can add successes to mount's rolls
	Knight (red horseshoe)	Counts as both a Riding success and a Melee success.
Sailor	Son of a Sailor (blue boat)	Counts as two Sailor successes
	Sea Legs (green boat)	Counts as a Sailor success or a Maneuver success
	Captain (red boat)	Has one small vessel (and crew) per two Captain icons (can trade two small vessels for one large vessel) - can be allocated to the crew as a crew success
Scholar	Sage (blue sun)	Counts as two Scholar successes
	Doktor (green sun)	Counts as a Scholar success or a Healer success
	Arcane knowledge (red sun)	Counts as a Scholar success or a Magic success
Social	Outgoing (blue smiley)	Counts as two Social successes
	Boss (green smiley)	Counts as a Social success or an independent successful command to lackey. Character is eligible for a lackey with 1 character die + 1 character die per Boss icon he possesses.
	Connections (red smiley)	Counts as a Social success or a Scholar success
Stealth	Sneaky (blue moon)	Counts as two Stealth successes
	Guilder (green moon)	Counts as a Stealth success that can be used for another character
	Assassin (red moon)	Can be used as either a Stealth success or a Melee success
Thief	Footpad (blue mask)	Counts as a Thief or a Stealth success
	Burglar (green mask)	Counts as a Thief or a Maneuver success
	Master thief (red mask)	Counts as two Thief successes
Unarmed combat	Crane style (blue hand)	Counts as both a Melee and a Defend success
	Monkey style (green hand)	Can be used as Melee success or Maneuver success
	Tiger style (red hand)	Counts as two Melee successes - cannot be used to defend

Universal Symbol Table

Name	Icon	Description - applies to
Universal Success	✚ (black)	A success at any action or task - one per character die
Physical Success	▢ (black)	A success at any physical task - only one physical or mental success per character die
Mental Success	△ (black)	A success at any mental task - only one physical or mental success per character die
Univesal Hindrance	⦸ (red)	Negates one success
Damage	✗ (black)	Causes one damage
Poison	✗ (green)	Hindering symbol - causes one damage
Encumbrance	✗ (brown)	Hindering symbol - cancels one magic, maneuver or stealth success
Flaming	✗ (red)	Hindering symbol - causes one damage

Healing and Recovery

Characters heal at the rate of one die per week of rest. This rate can be accelerated with medical attention or healing magic. Characters receiving medical attention heal one die per two Healer successes and heal remaining damage at the rate of one die per (7 minus the number of Healer successes) days.

Task Difficulty	Challenge dice
Easy	2
Simple	3
Average	4
Challenging	6
Difficult	8
Almost Impossible	12
Impossible	12 + 2 automatic Nulls

Number of Horde Dice	Example
Two	Nuisance - a swarm of bees
Three	Threatening - a pack of dogs
Four	Dangerous - a mob of peasants
Five	Deadly - a gang of trollkin
Six	Overwhelming - a cohort of legionaires

Cover and Darkness in Combat

Opponents behind cover are harder to see and harder to hit. Generally, each 20% of cover that the target has subtracts one attack success from each attacker. In addition, melee combatants are considered to have cover against missile fire from forces friendly to one of the combatants - each figure in the melee friendly to the missile attacker subtracts one missile success.

Disparities in size can negate the effects of cover - if the target is twice as large as the friendlies, the effects of the cover are halved (round down) and if the target is at least four times as large as the friendlies, the cover is entirely negated.

Darkness is a form of cover - partial darkness cancels out 2 attack successes and total darkness cancels out 4 attack successes.

An attacker in missile combat with a prone defender subtracts one attack success.

Distance and Perception

Over open terrain, every 50 meters subtracts one Perception success from the searcher's total. Over broken or wooded terrain, ever 20 meters subtracts one Perception success from the searcher's total.

Net Successes/ Magnitude of Success	Degree of control
One	Target would have done it anyway
Two	Target might have done it anyway
Three	Target does not feel strongly about it
Four	Target would not have done it anyway
Five	Target would rather die than do it

The Universal Rules of Magic

All magic is governed by the three Universal Rules of Magic:

Magic is immediate   This rule means that, while the effects of magic may be lasting (e.g. a fire ignited by a fireball burns even after the magic is gone), magic itself is normally instantaneous. Thus, there are no lingering effects, and if a magic wielding character wants a magic effect to continue, he must continue to devote himself to the task which created the magic effect or make the appropriate sacrifice to obtain a lasting effect. Magic can affect the body and the mind, but it cannot affect the soul.

Magic is hard   Generally speaking, achieving a result by magic (with respect to unopposed tasks) is one level harder than achieving that result by mundane means.

Magic has a price   To call upon magic requires a concentrated, overt effort. In any four hour period, a character may use magic a number of times equal to the total number of Magic icons that he has on his character dice (his "safe level" of usage). If he exceeds his safe level of usage, he becomes fatigued and subtracts one success from his total for each use of magic beyond the safe level, and if (after applying the penalty) the character fails to generate any successes, he suffers one damage. A character recovers from fatigue after four hours of full, inactive rest.

Beast Special Abilities

Ability	Icon	Description
Fear caster	(green underline)	Acts as a defend and an independent hindering result to all within 10M.
Fire Breathing	(red underline)	Target damaged by attack also gains flaming die
Flight	(black)	Allows flight (independent)
Hoar Frost/ Flaming	(red underline)	Acts as a Defend <u>or</u> as an independent melee attack against all within 3M (unaffected by armor)
Incorporeal	(blue underline)	Acts as an independant defend <u>against all attackers</u>, permits beast to move through obstructions
Poison	or (green underline)	Target damaged by attack also gains Poison die
Prickly	(yellow underline)	Acts as a Defend <u>and</u> as an independent Melee against all melee attackers
Regenerates	(yellow)	Independent - heals one die of damage
Swim	(blue underline)	Gives freedom of movement in water-- Independent

Task Examples

Skill	Difficulty	Example
Artisan	Easy	Keeping a tavern crowd entertained—Dogs Playing Poker
	Average	Keeping a theater crowd entertained—Starry Night
	Difficult	Keeping the King entertained—The Sistine Chapel
Craft	Easy	Making a bookshelf—shoeing a horse
	Average	Building a barn--Forging a sword
	Difficult	Building a shell keep—Tailoring a suit of plate armor
Healer	Easy	Treating a flesh wound—identifying and treating a common disease
	Average	Treating a significant wound--Identifying and treating a common poison
	Difficult	Treating a head wound--stopping the spread of a deadly poison
Maneuver	Easy	Climbing a tree—a two meter running jump
	Average	Climbing a rope—a four meter running jump
	Difficult	Climbing a cliff face—a six meter running jump
Merchant	Easy	Selling water in the desert—valuing common trade goods
	Average	Selling spices in town—valuing foreign trade goods
	Difficult	Selling ice to an Eskimo—valuing enchanted goods
Outdoorsman	Easy	Tracking a man—finding shelter in the woods
	Average	Tracking a rabbit—finding food in the woods
	Difficult	Tracking an owl—finding water in the desert
Perception (usually contested)	Easy	Hearing loud talking from 10 meters away—noticing a concealed sword
	Average	Hearing quiet talking from 10 meters away—noticing a concealed dagger
	Difficult	Hearing a whisper from 10 meters away—noticing a concealed garrote
Riding	Easy	Bringing your horse to a gallop—staying in the saddle of a flying mount
	Average	Getting your horse to jump a fence—getting a flying mount to go where you want it to go
	Difficult	Getting your horse to jump a chasm—getting a flying mount to attack

Task Examples (continued)

Skill	Difficulty	Example
Sailor	Easy	Raising the sails – navigating a river
	Average	Tacking against the wind – navigating a coastline
	Difficult	Weathering a storm – navigating in open seas
Scholar	Easy	Understanding addition and subtraction—speaking the language of the neighboring country
	Average	Understanding geometry—speaking the language of a far away land
	Difficult	Understanding calculus—speaking and reading an ancient, dead language
Social	Easy	Connecting with the bartender—convincing the dragon to eat you last
	Average	Connecting with the Captain of the Guard—convincing the dragon to listen to you before it eats you
	Difficult	Connecting with the Emperor's general—convincing the dragon to let you go
Stealth (usually contested)	Easy	Sneaking by a commoner—palming a coin
	Average	Sneaking by a guard – palming a dagger
	Difficult	Sneaking by a dragon – palming a shield
Thief	Easy	Opening a cross-bar from the outside – running a successful shell game
	Average	Opening a key lock without the key – running a successful protection racket
	Difficult	Opening a puzzle lock – running a successful thief's guild

Armored	Giant	Raptor
Universal	Universal	Universal
Defend	Double Defend	Perception
Double Defend	Double Defend	Perception
Double Defend	Double Defend	Maneuver
Double Defend	Double Melee	Melee
Triple Defend	Double Melee	Melee
Behemoth	**Herbivore**	**Spirit**
Universal	Universal	Universal
Melee	Perception	Defend
Melee	Perception	Incorporeal
Defend	Defend	Incorporeal
Defend	Blank	Fear Caster
Defend	Blank	Hoar Frost
Demonic	**Pouncer**	**Stalker**
Universal	Universal	Universal
Fear Caster	Maneuver	Stealth
Hoar Frost	Maneuver	Stealth
Regenerate	Stealth	Stealth
Prickly	Stealth	Perception
Poison(melee)	Melee	Perception
Flier	**Predator**	**Undead**
Wing	Universal	Universal
Wing	Stealth	Defend
Wing	Perception	Defend
Wing	Stealth	Defend
Wing	Melee	Melee
Wing	Melee	Fear Caster

Archer	Criminal	Patriciant	Sneak
Universal	Universal	Universal	Universal
Physical	Physical	Mental	Physical
Missile	Stealth	Social	Stealth
Missile	Thief	Social	Stealth
Missile	Perception	Merchant	Stealth
Perception	Maneuver	Scholar	Perception
Cavalry	**Fighter**	**Primitive**	**Thug**
Universal	Universal	Universal	Universal
Physical	Physical	Physical	Physical
Ride	Melee	Outdoors	Melee
Ride	Defend	Stealth	Unarmed
Melee	Missile	Perception	Defend
Missile	Maneuver	Missile	Maneuver
Commoner	**Killer**	**Sage**	**Wizard**
Universal	Universal	Universal	Universal
Mental	Physical	Mental	Mental
Craft	Melee	Scholar	Scholar
Perception	Melee	Scholar	Perception
Craft	Missile	Healer	Magic
Merchant	Defend	Social	Magic
Craftsman	**Merchant**	**Sailor**	
Universal	Universal	Universal	
Mental	Mental	Mental	
Craft	Merchant	Sailor	
Craft	Merchant	Sailor	
Craft	Perception	Sailor	
Artisan	Social	Maneuver	

Number of character dice	Power level
Two	Average peasant
Three	Experienced commoner (gate guard)
Four	Professional (guard captain, merchant)
Five-Six	Experienced (guard leader, master thief)
Seven-Eight	Elite (emperor's champion, merchant prince)
Nine-Ten	Legendary (Lancelot, The Grey Mouser)