

Robert E. Howard's

CONAN



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ROBERT E. HOWARD'S

CONAN

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“Tread the jeweled thrones of the Earth or die in towers of spider-haunted mystery. Crom cares not!”



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"Know, O prince, that between the years when the oceans drank Atlantis and the gleaming cities, and the years of the rise of the Sons of Aryas, there was an Age undreamed of, when shining kingdoms lay spread across the world like blue mantles beneath the stars—Nemedias, Ophir, Brythunia, Hyperborea, Zamora with its dark-haired women and towers of spider-haunted mystery, Zingara with its chivalry, Koth that bordered on the pastoral lands of Shem, Stygia with its shadow-guarded tombs, Hyrkania whose riders wore steel and silk and gold. But the proudest kingdom of the world was Aquilonia, reigning supreme in the dreaming west. Hither came Conan the Cimmerian, black-haired, sullen-eyed, sword in hand, a thief, a reaver, a slayer, with gigantic melancholies and gigantic mirth, to tread the jeweled thrones of the Earth under his sandaled feet."

— The Nemedian Chronicles,
from "The Phoenix on the Sword"

CHAPTER 1

HITHER CAME CONAN...

WITH THESE WORDS ROBERT E. HOWARD introduced one of the greatest characters in all of heroic fantasy fiction, Conan the Barbarian. Writing from a rural Texas town in the 1920s and 1930s, Howard was a highly successful pulp author, a wide range of published work across many genres under his belt. Though “The Phoenix on the Sword” was a re-write of an earlier, unpublished work featuring another of Howard’s heroic characters, this revision was different enough in tone to catch the attention of the editor at *Weird Tales*. It was published in December, 1932, and would define Howard’s career and change the face of fantasy literature, forever.

Conan was perhaps the culmination of Howard’s prior heroic characters. He came from the same stock, yet was suffused with a fierce originality. Despite his barbaric origins, Conan was well traveled and intelligent, cunning and contemplative, and this introductory tale hinted at many other great adventures as-of-yet-unwritten, with a framing device of “The Nemedian Chronicles,” a fictional historical record of Conan’s career. Writing at the peak of his ability, Howard delivered an action-packed tale, replete with bold and dynamic characters, in a rich and detailed world that demanded further exploration.

Into this ancient-yet-familiar world, its exoticism buried under lost and forgotten history, Howard interwove this straightforward adventure story with themes of cosmic horror, borrowing from the Cthulhu Mythos created by his friend H.P. Lovecraft. Against this incredible backdrop, Howard set his hero Conan, contending simultaneously against mortal and supernatural threats...and emerging victorious. It was a triumphant beginning, and firmly established Conan (and the Hyborian Age) as the perfect vessel for Howard’s creative genius.

WHAT'S IN THIS QUICKSTART GUIDE?

Here in this preview of the upcoming roleplaying game from Modiphius is everything needed to begin to adventure in the world of *Conan*. This booklet begins with a brief overview of the Hyborian Age setting, and contains a summarized version of the 2d20 rules system. Next, *To Race the Thunder* is a short adventure full of harrowing danger in the Pictish Wilderness, a battle that only the boldest will survive, and finally, a number of pre-generated characters for use by the players!

Reader feedback to “The Phoenix on the Sword” was as immediate as it was positive. The character was far and away one of the most popular to have graced the pulp magazines, and readers clamored for more Conan stories. And Howard was soon at work with more of them. He hammered out more than twenty over the next few years, including a full-length novel, *The Hour of the Dragon*. These tales represented an astonishing range of subjects and tones, featuring outright horror, swashbuckling derring-do, jungle exploration, weird menace, frontier expansion, locked-room mystery, Orientalism, desert adventure, lost cities, and many others, combining and leaping from genres almost as if the Hyborian Age were a movie back-lot and Conan wandering from set to set, plunging into whatever tableau he found himself in. Eventually, though, the fickle pulp magazine market and ongoing tragedy in Howard’s life soon put an end to this magnificent streak of adventure.

At the time of his death in 1936, seventeen of Howard’s Conan stories had been published in the pages of *Weird Tales*. Literary executorship of the character went to other



“THE PHOENIX ON THE SWORD”

*“When I was a fighting man, the kettle-drums they beat;
The people scattered gold-dust before my horse’s feet;
But now I am a great king, the people hound my track
With poison in my wine-cup, and daggers at my back.”*

—*The Road of Kings,*
from “*The Phoenix on the Sword*”



The first story to feature Conan introduces him boldly and decisively: a raven-haired warrior of savage descent, physically indomitable, tanned and scarred from a lifetime of journey and strife. A barbarian from Cimmeria, a primitive and uncivilized land far to the north, Conan has travelled far and seen much, squeezing all the juice he can from the fruit of life.

“The Phoenix on the Sword” depicts Conan at the height of his ambition: King of Aquilonia, ruler of the greatest country in his world, an honor he has won with the might of his own sword-hand. Yet all is not well within his reign. The story begins with a conspiracy, made up of dissidents and disenfranchised nobles, aided (unwillingly) by an enigmatic sorcerer named Thoth Amon, robbed of his power by the loss of an item invaluable to his sorcery. The cabal meets in secrecy, discussing their plans to stir civil unrest. They plan to usurp the throne, putting one of their own upon its seat, and will act directly against Conan within days.

Though he is unaware of the conspiracy, Conan knows of their ill-will towards him. Despite their provocations, he will not respond, hesitant to act against them lest he prove their lies depicting him as a tyrant. Troubled by thoughts of his rule and his legacy, Conan is restless, stricken with self-doubt. He wonders whether he is truly suited to be king, or if the throne is worth the effort. Like the legend of the Fisher King, the kingdom and king are united, and what afflicts one will bedevil the other. And thus, despite Conan’s reforms and the improved quality of life for all, the citizens of Aquilonia openly call for rebellion, their nostalgia causing them to venerate their former king, as cruel a tyrant as ever there was.

When sent to deliver a message between the conspirators, Thoth Amon finds a means to free himself, regaining the secret of his former power. Before he departs, the fiendish sorcerer summons a demon of the

Outer Dark to avenge his former enslavement, sending it after the noble who tormented him. Meanwhile, the treacherous alliance moves to assassinate Conan in his bedchamber, having separated him from his loyal allies and bribing the captain of his guard. These would-be assassins creep through the castle, their intent...regicide!

Though driven by their righteous cause, the conspirators are unaware that Conan’s rule has the blessing of Mitra, the patron god of Aquilonia. The sleeping barbarian has a dream-like vision sent by that god, warning him of the conspiracy and particularly of Thoth Amon. Mitra, speaking through a long-dead high priest, tells Conan that his destiny is to serve Aquilonia, defending it against the rise of Mitra’s ancient enemy, the serpent-god Set. In this strange dream, Conan’s sword is warded with a blessing of Mitra’s symbol, the Phoenix. When he rouses, he sees that his real sword bears the same marking of the Phoenix, passed from the dream world to the waking one.

Due to Mitra’s warning and his own acute senses, the barbarian king is immediately suspicious, and girds himself for battle. When the assassins enter Conan’s bedchamber, expecting to find a defenseless man, asleep and easily slain, they instead face a partially armored warrior, waiting for them with a sword in hand and fury in his heart. Despite his initial unwillingness to kill them, Conan survives the attack, defeating them with savage ferocity. Then, when Thoth Amon’s demon arrives to kill them all, Conan uses the Phoenix-blessed sword to slay it.

With this triumph, Conan re-asserts his right to live and to be king. Where he thought he was at the end of his road, it is clear to him that his true destiny lies before him...and he is ready to meet it, sword held unshakably in his blood-stained hand.

hands, where it both flourished and suffered. Over the next few decades, Howard's original texts were altered drastically by his editors, who, with others, tried their hands at original Conan stories, or completed unfinished Howard manuscripts, outlines, and story fragments. Stories about Howard's other heroes were reworked into Conan stories, to fill the supposed gaps in Conan's career.

Like the kingdoms described in Howard's "The Hyborian Age" essay, Conan's popularity ebbed and flowed, rose and was buried, to rise anew and flourish again. The character appeared in a variety of mediums: novels, comics, films, toys, a cartoon series, a television series, computer games, boardgames, and more. Some of the material was excellent, some of it less so. Soon, he became one of the most iconic action heroes worldwide, and in the process, "Conan" became a household name.

Generations and generations have experienced Conan in one form or another, and while there has been no shortage of Conan material available, it was not until the late 1990s that a renewed interest in Howard's original stories, *as they were originally written*, became pre-eminent. Dedicated scholars—latter-day Nemedian chroniclers like those who documented Conan's career—continued to discuss and promote the whole of Howard's work, but especially the Conan stories, and eventually Howard's contributions to literature achieved its well-deserved recognition. Authoritative editions of the Conan stories replaced the heavily altered ones, with Howard's own writings crowding out the pastiches.

Robert E. Howard's Conan: Adventures in an Age Undreamed Of emphasizes a focus on the original Conan

stories. It presents the Hyborian Age as an adventure setting unencumbered by the accumulated weight of posthumous collaboration, and is the first such game to be developed with close collaboration—and contributions—by respected Howard scholars and experts. The writing and development team has come together with tremendous enthusiasm for Conan and his world, and the artists are known internationally for their prior work related to Conan.

And so, Modiphius Entertainment is proud to release this quickstart adventure as a preview of the core rulebook, reintroducing this amazing setting and its inhabitants, and setting a new generation of heroes upon a path of adventure in an age undreamed of!

CONAN THE GAME

These rules will be described in greater detail in the **Conan** core rulebook, with additional elaboration and many examples of play. In the months and years to come, players and gamemasters will have the chance to enjoy a wide variety of sourcebooks and expansions, adventures, campaigns, and other play aids, all released with the goal of heroic adventure in the Hyborian Age of Conan.

As this quickstart has been prepared prior to print, the rules may change to some small degree.

Feedback, questions, or other queries should be directed to our contact form at www.modiphius.com/contact.html or to our forums at www.modiphius.com/forum.html

And now, on to an age of adventure!

CHAPTER 2

THE HYBORIAN AGE

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF CONAN! This time, called the Hyborian Age, is an era of great antiquity and renewal, brutality as well as beauty. Kingdoms rise amidst the remains of bygone lands, places that were themselves swept away in cataclysmic upheaval. Forgotten secrets of sorcery, ancient artifacts, and devices of strange science lurk undiscovered in moldering ruins within the walls of lost cities, to be discovered by the daring or the unwary. Gods have flourished and been forgotten, but the great black vale of eternity remains, and within this outer dark are cosmic horrors of a scale unimaginable, their evil beyond all comprehension. Humanity has crawled back from mere savagery time and again, and nations stand ready to rage across the map, sweeping away civilization once more in a tide of blood and iron.

Long buried are the ancient kingdoms of Valusia, Lemuria, and Acheron, yet the Pictish lands have remained almost untouched for tens of thousands of years. Like an

unbreakable rock on the shore, many civilizations have crashed against the Pictish lands and failed to conquer these tribes of eternal savages, and they have remained more-or-less unchanged since the dawn of time. Many kingdoms have pitted their might against the Picts, and the Hyborian Age knows no exception.

Primary among these kingdoms is Aquilonia, proudest and most civilized, a beacon of prosperity and culture. Under the banner of holy Mitra, her armored knights practice chivalry, and in the name of expansion her armies push into the lands north and to the west, earning the hatred of the Pict tribes, and meeting ruin at the blades of the Cimmerian hill-folk, Conan's own people. To Aquilonia's east lies Nemedria, sometimes an ally, a kingdom similar yet less dominant, and still further east is Brythunia, more pastoral yet confined by mountain ranges that limit its ability to expand.

On the coast of the Western Ocean, Zingara also practices chivalry and has a rich, vibrant culture, though it is as a whole less martial a nation than ambitious Aquilonia,



HYBORIAN SHORTHAND

Robert E. Howard's Hyborian Age seems familiar because it's based in part on existing historical eras and cultures. As a writer, Howard wanted to evoke the feeling of history yet not be confined by it, mired in the quagmire of historical accuracy and limited by the cultures he could use. An avid reader, Howard was familiar with both popular and obscure theories of continental drift, recurring cultural patterns, lost worlds, and the notion that much of the historical record has been irretrievably lost. In most cases, he used existing historical names and cultures as the models for the countries and peoples of the Hyborian world. Thus, with the Conan stories, Howard created a world tied thematically to our own, with familiar cultures and names, yet is unknown to us, buried under layer upon layer of geologic and environmental upheaval and change.

Here's a quick overview of the cultural equivalents, grouped thematically:

- AQUILONIA: Medieval France
- ARGOS: Merchant-ruled Italy
- ASGARD AND VANAHEIM (NORDHEIM): Viking-age Denmark or Norway
- BARACHAN ISLES: The Caribbean Islands, particularly Tortuga
- BORDER KINGDOM: Baltic countries such as Estonia or Latvia
- BOSSONIAN MARCHES: Medieval Wales and/or Scotland
- BRYTHUNIA: Medieval Germany, Poland, or Lithuania
- CIMMERIA: Gaelic Ireland and Scotland

- CORINTHIA: Southern medieval Europe
- DARFAR, KESHAN, KUSH, PUNT, ZEMBABWEI, AND THE BLACK KINGDOMS: Ancient African kingdoms such as Darfur, Nubia, Kush, Somaliland, Zimbabwe, and others
- HYPERBOREA: Medieval Rus (Russia), particularly Novgorod
- HYRKANIA: A cross between Mongolia and Scythia
- IRANISTAN: Caliphate Iran
- KHAURAN AND KHORAJA: Both are the equivalent of the Crusader kingdoms in the Middle East, such as Outremer and Jerusalem
- KHITAI: Feudal-era China
- KOTH: The Byzantine Empire
- NEMEDIA: The Germanic Holy Roman Empire
- OPHIR: Medieval southern Europe
- PICTISH WILDERNESS: A combination of Scotland and Native American North America
- SHEM: The west is the Iron Age Levant (Canaan) and Assyria, and the east is Arabian
- STYGIA: Ancient Egypt
- TURAN: Seljuk Turks
- VENDHYA: Mughal India
- ZAMORA: Arabian Nights-inspired Baghdad
- ZINGARA: Reconquista-era Spain

However, these are not exact correlations. Despite their apparent similarities, these countries have their own unique cultures, so players should not assume anything based on real-world knowledge, and the gamemaster is encouraged to customize and describe the Hyborian Age as desired.

and suffers for it. Caught between the expansive maritime kingdom of Argos, plagued by the pirates of the Barachan Isles, and bounded by the Pictish Wilderness to its north, Zingara continually fights border wars with Aquilonia and thus, its dreams of conquest are stymied.

The rest of the middle Hyborian kingdoms—Ophir, Corinthia, and Koth—each surge and falter against one another, but all must contend with being in the shadow of Aquilonia. The eastern land of Zamora is content amidst its own wickedness, a decadence that sets it apart from the rest. South of these lands is Shem, practically two nations...a western one of ziggurat-ruled city-states and an eastern land of steppes and desert herders.

Serpent-haunted Stygia rules supreme over its southern neighbors, a powerful kingdom in service to the evil god

Set, preying upon smaller Kush, Darfar, Keshan, Punt, and the other lands informally called the Black Kingdoms. These latter nations vary in level of civilization, some being tribal and others with highly refined social structures, but still Stygia dominates them and takes slaves liberally from their territories.

To the east, on the shore of the Vilayet Sea, grows an empire: Turan. In the midst of great expansion, this powerful realm continues to expand beyond its borders, swelling the ranks of its armies and testing the will of the Hyborian nations. Wealthier than most nations, it is able to finance this ambition with gold, and mercenaries from many nations march beneath its banners. Its king, Yildiz, dreams of expanding Turan to encompass the whole of the continent, and thus far, only distance prevents him.



These are the lands of the Hyborian Age, a thin veil of civilization drawn over a well of savagery and cosmic horror, a place of heroic adventure and triumph. Though Conan's saga figures prominently within the Nemedian Chronicles, the Hyborian Age is a place where the bold may prosper, and history has yet to be written.

So, dog brothers and sword sisters, make ready to step into the world of Conan! Tread the paths he has walked or blaze new trails across the rich and storied kingdoms, as they glimmer beneath ancient stars. Drink life to its deepest, exult in the mad flame of battle, and seize glory enough to last beyond the march of time!

BASIC RULES

THIS SECTION SUMMARIZES THE 2D20 SYSTEM rules for *Robert E. Howard's Conan: Adventures in an Age Undreamed Of*, optimized for dramatic pulp adventure and heroic conflict. The gamemaster should take time to become familiar with these rules, reading them beforehand at least once. However, the quickstart adventure introduces the game concepts quickly as they are encountered, to allow everyone to get in and start playing *Conan* as soon as possible.

This quickstart assumes a basic understanding of the role of the **gamemaster** (who serves as the storyteller, narrator, and rules referee) and the players, who each control a **player**

character. The gamemaster will control a variety of other characters, called **non-player characters**, which might be people, monsters, or even gods. The **setting** is the game world that is being described, in this case the Hyborian Age.

CHARACTERS

Robert E. Howard's Conan: Adventures in an Age Undreamed Of will feature a full character creation system, allowing you to create mighty and cunning characters ready to fight for their own lives of adventure. For this quickstart adventure, we have included seven pre-generated player characters on pages 45-51 to get you started.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

In addition to a gamemaster and between one and seven players, you will need the following to use this quickstart adventure:

- **CHARACTERS:** One pre-generated character sheet for each player. We've provided seven of these on pages 45-51.
- **TWENTY-SIDED DICE (d20s):** *Conan* uses the 2d20 System, so you'll need at least two twenty-sided dice (d20s) per player; however, you should ideally have at least five or so per person (or five total, if you don't mind sharing). You can play with just two d20s, re-rolling or passing them around, but having more dice is more convenient. You can use more than 2d20 per roll, and it's easier to keep track of player and gamemaster dice when they're not shared.
- **SIX-SIDED DICE (d6s):** You'll need a dozen or so six-sided dice (d6s) for the group as a whole. These are used as Combat Dice (see page 23 for more information). Alternatively, the *Conan* Combat Dice are made specifically for this game.
- **PAPER, PENS, PENCIL, ETC.:** These can be used to draw maps, keep notes, and track conditions.
- **TOKENS OR BEADS:** These can be anything convenient: poker chips, game pieces, coins, marbles, pebbles, etc. You should have at least five "tokens" per player to track Fortune points, a dozen or more for the gamemaster's Doom pool, and an optional third set of six tokens to track Momentum. There are also official *Conan* Fortune and Doom tokens.

ATTRIBUTES

Attributes indicate a character's inherent abilities, as well as their physical and mental limitations. Player character Attributes usually range from 6 to 12, with 8 representing the human average. Higher Attribute ratings represent greater ability.

- **Agility:** Physical and manual dexterity, sense of balance, body control, and reflexes.
- **Awareness:** Perceptions, sensory acuity, gut feelings, and instincts.
- **Brawn:** Strength, toughness, endurance, and the ability to apply physical force.
- **Coordination:** Hand-eye coordination and spatial awareness.
- **Intelligence:** Wit, intellect, cunning, reason, and the ability to apply knowledge.
- **Personality:** Charisma, comfort in social situations, and the ability to be threatening or charming as required.
- **Willpower:** Grit, determination, and mental resilience.

SKILLS

Skills represent specialized training within a particular field—knowledge, proficiency in tools or devices, conditioning, special techniques, etc. Each skill is tied to a particular Attribute, representing the most common association between that skill and the character's basic capabilities.

For example, the Craft and Lore skills are based on Intelligence.

Skill Expertise

A character's **Expertise** in a skill is the character's mastery of the subject. Expertise with a skill increases the likelihood of success. Expertise is added to the character's Attribute to determine the chance of success. We call this the **Target Number** (or **TN** for short).

For example, Uriah's Coordination attribute is 9 and he has 3 points of Skill Expertise in Ranged Weapons, for a total of 12 (9+3). His player must roll 12 or lower to succeed on Ranged Weapons tests.

Skill Focus

A character's **Focus** in a skill is achieved through constant practice, superior discipline, and deeper insight. Focus with a skill improves the quality of success. Unlike Skill Expertise, it is not added to the Attribute.

For example, Zarina has Skill Focus of 3 in Survival. Any time her player rolls 1, 2, or 3 on Survival tests, Zarina gets an additional success.

SKILL TESTS

Whenever a character attempts a task where the outcome is in doubt, the player or gamemaster will make a skill test to determine whether the task succeeds or fails.

TARGET NUMBER (TN)

The Target Number of the skill test is determined by adding the character's relevant Attribute to the character's Skill Expertise.

DIFFICULTY

A task's difficulty (a value from 1 to 5) is determined by the gamemaster. The levels of difficulty, and some examples of what tasks might fall into each level, are described on the Difficulty Table (page 13).

BASIC SKILL TEST

To make a skill test, roll 2d20. For each d20 that rolls equal to or less than the test's Target Number, the character scores a success. Each d20 that rolls equal to or less than

SKILL LIST

Following are all of the skills characters will use, listed below the linked Attribute:

AGILITY

- Acrobatics
- Melee
- Stealth

AWARENESS

- Insight
- Observation
- Survival
- Thievery

BRAWN

- Athletics
- Resistance

COORDINATION

- Parry
- Ranged Weapons
- Sailing

INTELLIGENCE

- Alchemy
- Craft
- Healing
- Lore
- Linguistics
- Siegecraft

PERSONALITY

- Animal Handling
- Command
- Counsel
- Persuade
- Society

WILLPOWER

- Discipline
- Sorcery

the character's Focus in the skill used for the test generates one additional success.

For example, the Argossian sailor Zachirios is making a Craft test. His Intelligence is 8, he has an Expertise of 3, and a Focus of 2. The Target Number is 11 (8 + 3). Zachirios' player rolls 2d20 and gets results of 13 and 1. The result of 13 generates no successes, but the result of 1 generates two successes: one for being equal to or lower than the TN and a second for being equal to or lower than the Focus in the skill.

If the character scores a number of successes equal to or higher than the difficulty of the test, then the task is a success. Sometimes difficulties are summarized by the number of successes required, such as a one success task summarized as D1.

COMPLICATIONS

Not every situation goes entirely according to plan, even when the plan succeeds. Characters are likely to face challenges and complications, even when things go well.

Whenever a 20 is rolled on any d20 in a skill test, the gamemaster should immediately create and introduce

DIFFICULTY TABLE		
Name	Successes	Examples
Simple (D0)	0	Opening a slightly stuck door. Researching a widely known subject. Shooting a stationary target at optimal range.
Average (D1)	1	Overcoming a simple lock. Researching a little-known subject. Shooting an enemy at optimal range.
Challenging (D2)	2	Overcoming a complex lock. Researching obscure lore. Shooting an enemy at optimal range in poor light.
Daunting (D3)	3	Overcoming a complex lock in a hurry. Researching a forbidden subject. Shooting an enemy at long range in poor light.
Dire (D4)	4	Overcoming a complex lock in a hurry, without the proper tools. Researching secret lore known to only a few. Shooting an enemy at long range, in poor light and heavy rain.
Epic (D5)	5	Overcoming a complex lock in a hurry, without the proper tools in the midst of battle. Researching cryptic secrets, lost to history. Shooting an enemy at extreme range in poor light and heavy rain.

Conan sprang to meet him, and all his tigerish strength went into the arm that swung the sword. In a whistling arc the great blade flashed through the air and crashed on the Bossonian's helmet. Blade and casque shivered together and Gromel rolled lifeless on the floor. Conan bounded back, still gripping the broken hilt.

— "The Phoenix on the Sword"

For example, the Pictish warrior Dakeyah might successfully use Ranged Weapons to shoot an enemy with his bow, but on his test, his player rolls a 20. The arrow strikes the target, but the gamemaster might declare that Dakeyah's quiver is now empty of arrows, and he must find more arrows, or seek other means of killing his foes.

an impediment or problem called a **Complication**. One Complication is created for each 20 rolled, so a bad roll can have multiple Complications.

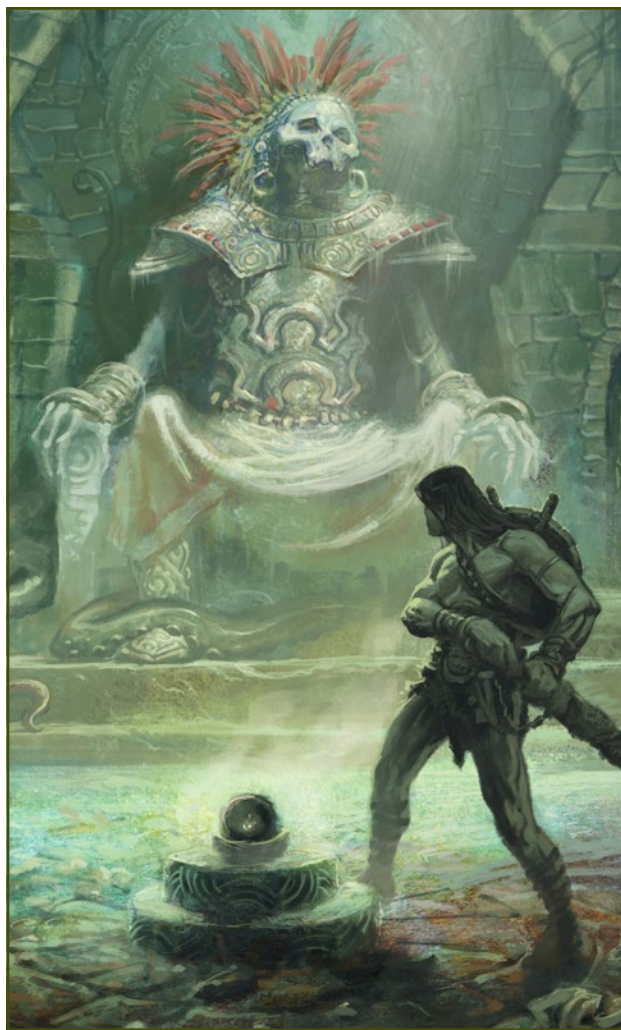
Complications represent an inconvenient change of circumstances. A Complication could present an obstacle to further progress, requiring a new approach (like a route of escape being blocked, requiring a new path), a loss of personal resources (such as using up a resource like arrows or salves), or something that hinders the character temporarily (a twisted ankle or a social *faux pas*).

The important thing to remember is that a Complication is an inconvenience; they are independent of success or failure, and it is entirely possible to succeed at a skill test while simultaneously generating a Complication. The Complication should only take effect immediately after the skill test's results have been applied. A character may leave himself vulnerable when fighting, but if his skill test succeeded, his attack still connects before he suffers the Complication.

Multiple Complications can be resolved separately, or the gamemaster may choose to group them together into a bigger problem.

For example, if Dakeyah's player had rolled multiple 20s, the gamemaster might announce that in addition to being out of arrows, his bowstring has frayed and broken, or that a cloud of smoke has risen and obscured his targets. Combining multiple Complications might mean that instead of minor inconveniences (no arrows, bad bowstring), it might be that Dakeyah's bow cracks when he draws it, making it entirely useless.





DOOM AS COMPLICATION

If no idea for an appropriate Complication springs to mind, the gamemaster can instead choose to add two points of Doom to the Doom pool. This method allows the gamemaster to refresh a dwindling Doom pool, accepting Doom instead of inflicting Complications on the player characters.

If a gamemaster-controlled non-player character suffers a Complication, the gamemaster can have the non-player character suffer Complications, or the players can ask the gamemaster to remove two Doom points from the gamemaster's Doom pool instead. The gamemaster has the final say, however.

Additional results of 20 can be spent on reducing the Doom pool by an additional two points, though it cannot be reduced if it has only one or zero points left.

Doom is explained further on page 29.

MOMENTUM

When the number of successes scored on a skill test is greater than the difficulty rating, the excess successes become **Momentum**. Momentum can be spent immediately to perform the task faster or more effectively, or it can be saved and applied to subsequent actions taken on the same turn. Up to six points of Momentum may be saved at any given time.

If a skill test is not successful, no points of Momentum are earned.

Momentum can also represent cooperation, group dynamics, leadership, action coordination, assistance, and other forms of teamwork. Players who have saved Momentum can also spend it to assist the actions of other player characters, who can then use that Momentum in addition to any Momentum that they might generate themselves through successful skill tests or other effects. If players wish to share Momentum or save it beyond their turn, they place it in a Momentum pool from which all the players can draw. **Players cannot hold onto Momentum of their own beyond their turn: Momentum is either used immediately or during that turn, placed in the shared pool, or lost.**

Most uses of Momentum happen immediately after a successful skill test, though the player or gamemaster does not have to choose how to use it until it is actually needed. Each use of Momentum can only be used once on each skill test, unless that use is noted as Repeatable. Some uses of Momentum are listed as Immediate. This means they can be used at any time, spending points directly out of the group's pool of saved Momentum.

Players are encouraged to be creative in their use of Momentum, as they build success on top of success, but the gamemaster has the final say on the outcome of spent Momentum, especially when it concerns the non-player characters or the setting.

MOMENTUM DEPLETION

At the end of each scene, and at the end of each round during an action scene, the group loses a single point of saved Momentum from their shared pool.

MOMENTUM AND DOOM

The game runs off of two parallel resources: Momentum and **Doom**. Doom is used by the gamemaster to introduce additional hardship on the players, to activate non-player character abilities, and generally make things more difficult for the players. Whenever player characters wish to use Immediate Momentum (such as to buy an extra d20 for a

EXAMPLE USES OF MOMENTUM		
Desired Effect	Cost	Conditions
Perform a task in half the normal time	1	
Add +1 damage on a successful attack	1 per +1	Repeatable
Disarm an opponent	2	
Add an additional d20 to a skill test, before the roll is made	1 per d20	Immediate, Repeatable
Increase an opponent's skill test difficulty by +1	1 per +1	Immediate, Repeatable
Ask the gamemaster a pertinent question about the situation, the characters present, or something else that the player character might be able to discern with that skill test	1 per piece of info	Repeatable

TRACKING MOMENTUM

A useful method of tracking Momentum—player and/or group—is to place a large or distinctive-looking d6 in a highly visible place, with the number of the die turned up to indicate the amount of current Momentum. If the d6 shows a 3, there are three points of Momentum available. Another method is to use a pool of tokens or additional d20s to track the amount of saved Momentum. Just don't mix them up with other dice or tokens!

Whichever the case, everyone should try to keep the amount of saved Momentum visible to everyone at the table, to make coordinating actions easier!

task), they may do so by adding 1 point to Doom instead of spending 1 point of Momentum.

Similarly, the gamemaster does not need to keep track of any Momentum earned by non-player characters. Instead, any unspent Momentum from non-player character skill tests are added to the Doom pool, and can be spent by the gamemaster as Doom.

STRUGGLES

Whenever two or more characters are in opposition to one other or are competing towards the same goal, each character involved in the task performs a skill test. This is called a **Struggle**. In a Struggle, the character achieving the greatest quantity of Momentum succeeds, achieving the goal. The winner then reduces his Momentum by an amount equal to the loser's Momentum. If there are no other factors involved, the difficulty of a Struggle is usually Simple (D0), or Average (D1) when attacking and defending in combat.

For example, if Damastinos and Lucretia are running a race against one another, the winner will simply be whichever of them has the better skill test, based on the number of successes.

In the case of a tie, the player character wins against any NPC, unless the NPC is willing to spend one point from Doom to break the tie instead. If two player characters are tied, the outcome is either a tie, or the GM can determine a random winner.

Struggles with higher difficulties represent situations when everyone participating in the task has the potential to fail.

For example, if two characters are both trying to be the first person to decipher a Challenging (D2) riddle, it is possible that neither of them will be able to solve the riddle.

If either side has some particular circumstance which would make the test more challenging than for their opponent, the gamemaster should simply adjust the difficulty of the test, making it potentially more difficult for one to succeed than the other(s).

UNSKILLED TESTS

Characters can make a skill test using a skill in which they possess no Expertise. The Target Number for the test is equal to the relevant Attribute, unmodified.

However, unskilled tests are a little sloppier, and come with greater risk of mishap. Complications occur on rolls of 19 or 20 (instead of just 20) when characters lack the Skill Expertise for a particular skill test.

TURNING THE TIDE

While succeeding at most common tasks is a straightforward matter, even the most proficient character cannot succeed at the most difficult tasks without effort, opportunity, or assistance. Skill Focus can allow a character to achieve higher difficulties some of the time, but to truly triumph, a character needs to find some other way of improving the odds. This is normally done by finding some way to add extra d20s to a skill test.

A character cannot use more than three additional d20s on a single skill test, so no more than five d20s in total can be rolled. The only exception is Teamwork, where multiple characters can work together, contributing d20s towards a single task. Any additional d20s from Momentum or other bonuses must be added before the test is attempted.

BUYING EXTRA DICE WITH DOOM

As noted in Momentum (page 15), a character can pay one Momentum (Immediate, Repeatable) to buy an extra d20 for a skill test. This requires that the group has available Momentum to spend, or that instead of spending Momentum, the character is willing to generate Doom points for the gamemaster.

DOOMED!

The gamemaster can use Doom to trigger events, activate effects, boost the effectiveness of non-player characters, and otherwise make the characters' lives more interesting.

See page 29 for more detail on how the gamemaster uses Doom.

FORTUNE

A character can spend a point of **Fortune** before attempting a skill test to "buy" a bonus d20 to use with the skill test. However, unlike Momentum dice, this d20 is not rolled. Instead, it is simply set on the table with the 1 facing up, as

FICKLE FORTUNE!

Fortune points can be used for more than just buying extra dice. See page 28 for more about how this powerful resource is used.

if the player had rolled the best possible result. The special result is then counted normally, which means it automatically counts as a success, or two successes if the character has 1 or more points of Focus with that skill.

TEAMWORK

When facing a task too great for one character, additional characters can work together as a team, assuming the situation, time, and the gamemaster permit it. With team efforts, one character is designated as the leader, and the other characters are designated assistants. The gamemaster may decide that only a certain number of characters may assist, or apply other limitations, depending on the circumstances.

To assist with a skill test, each player must describe how his character is assisting the leader. If the gamemaster approves, each assistant then rolls one d20, using his own Attribute, Expertise, and Focus to determine if any successes are scored. The leader makes a normal skill test. Assistants may not use any means to roll additional dice, though the leader may use Momentum, Doom, Resources, Fortune, or any other available methods of gaining extra d20s. Because these dice are rolled by other characters, they do not count towards the limit of three bonus d20s applied to a task.

If the leader scores at least one success on his roll, then any successes generated by the assistants are added to the leader's total. If the leader does not generate any successes, then any successes scored by the assistants are lost, their efforts negated by unsuccessful leadership.

Characters providing assistance do not have to use the same skill as the character they're assisting: assistance may sometimes be best provided by someone contributing different knowledge and training. In such cases, the gamemaster should determine how different skills might be utilized in pursuit of the same goal.



ACTION SCENES



NO MATTER WHERE THEY GO, CHARACTERS will find themselves confronted by rivals and enemies. These foes—whether man, beast, or monstrous other—must be faced in perilous conflicts, collectively described as **action scenes**.

ROUNDS

Action scenes are divided into rounds. Each round represents a distinct slice of time, during which characters can attempt actions and respond to the actions of their enemies. These rounds are of no fixed duration. Instead, their length will vary based on the encounter in question: an intense battle in the cramped corridors of a ruined castle may have rounds that last only a few seconds, while a band of raiders attacking a village may have rounds that last for minutes. A massive sea battle between war-galleys could even have rounds lasting a quarter hour or more.

ACTIONS

Regardless of how much time a round may represent, during the round each character will have a single turn. Each turn, a character can take a single **Standard Action**, a single **Minor Action**, and any number of **Free Actions**.

FREE ACTIONS

Free Actions require very little time or effort. Characters can perform any number of Free Actions on their turn (at the gamemaster's discretion), but cannot perform the same Free Action more than once during any given turn.

MINOR ACTIONS

Minor Actions do not require much energy or effort, but they do require a certain level of focus.



WHAT TYPE OF ACTION IS IT?

For some actions, the type of action is obvious and already defined. *For example, it requires a Standard Action to Withdraw from an enemy's reach.* At other times, the gamemaster will need to make a judgment call about what type of action is required.

Here are some rules of thumb for the gamemaster to use:

- Actions that could be resolved in the blink of an eye (like dropping an item held in hand) or which can be done while simultaneously focusing on other tasks (like talking) are probably a **FREE ACTION**. If a skill test is required, it is not a Free Action.
- Most tasks that require a Simple Do skill test or no skill test at all are Free Actions. However, if a character wishes to roll the dice on a Simple (Do) skill test in order to generate Momentum, that makes it a **STANDARD ACTION**.
- Any action that requires focus or effort but does not require a skill test—such as crossing a room—is probably a **MINOR ACTION**.
- Any action that requires a skill test is usually a **STANDARD ACTION**, unless specified otherwise.

INDECISION

If the players spend too much time deliberating and discussing their choices during an action scene rather than taking action, the gamemaster can add 1 point of Doom to the Doom pool as a warning that the player characters are ceding the initiative to their opponents.

If the players' deliberation continues, the gamemaster can take additional Doom points, warning the players periodically until they act, or until the gamemaster chooses to spend the Doom, allowing any non-player characters to act first.



STANDARD ACTIONS

Standard Actions are the focus of action scenes and take up most of a character's attention and effort. A character can also use a Standard Action to perform any Minor action.

REACTIONS

Reactions do not occur during a character's turn, but are special actions triggered by some other event (like an enemy attacking), and many Reactions turn an enemy's skill test into a Struggle. A character may perform several Reactions during a round, but at an increasing cost: the first Reaction a character attempts during a round requires that he pay a single point of Doom (into or out of the pool, depending on whether the character is a player character or non-player character). The second Reaction costs 2 points of Doom, the third Reaction costs 3, and so forth, with each successive Reaction costing 1 more point of Doom than the previous Reaction.

TURN ORDER

During each round, the player characters act first. The players can simply agree among themselves which player character will act next, but once a character begins his turn he must resolve all of the actions he wishes to take before other characters can take their turns.

Once all the player characters have taken their turns, all of the non-player characters take their turns (in whatever order the gamemaster wishes).

After all player characters and non-player characters have taken their actions in a round, that round is over. The shared Momentum is depleted by 1 and a new round begins.

SEIZING INITIATIVE

At the start of the round before anyone has acted, or at any time immediately after a player character has finished his turn (and before another player character has begun his turn), the gamemaster can spend 1 point of Doom to interrupt the player characters and allow a non-player character to immediately take its turn.

The non-player character resolves its actions normally. Once its turn is done the turn order passes back to the player characters, unless the gamemaster spends additional points of Doom to allow additional non-player characters to take their actions before the player characters. That non-player character does not get to act again that round.

SURPRISE

When one group of characters attempts to gain an advantage over another group of characters by taking them by surprise, the attempt is resolved as a Struggle (see page 15). Each side nominates a leader to attempt the skill test, with other members of the group assisting and the GM awarding bonus momentum as appropriate.

If the group attempting surprise succeeds at the Struggle, each character on that side gains the benefits of an Exploit Action *for free* (see page 25) and acts immediately at the start of combat (non-player character's do not need to spend Doom to gain this, nor should the GM spend Doom to override this.).

If the group attempting surprise fails at the Struggle, the winners may choose to add two points to Doom or spend one Fortune point (for the whole group) to gain the benefits of surprise instead. Typical surprise scenarios include an ambush (Stealth vs. Observation) or betraying supposed allies at a peaceful celebration (Persuade vs. Insight).

For example, in a Cimmerian village, Asgardian raiders approach the smithy. When battle commences, they look around for cover and see a wagon, a pile of hay (currently ablaze), and a nearby hut. It should be easy for the players to imagine them running from the wagon (one zone), across the dirt track (another zone), to the blazing heap of hay (a third zone).

Because zones are of no fixed size, they can also be varied to accommodate other factors in the scene.

For example, a battle amidst the towering trees of a forest might be divided into many small zones among the trees (difficult to navigate and offering lots of cover) and a couple of larger zones representing clearings (easy to see or run across).

ZONES

During an action scene, knowing where everyone is can be of vital import, and determining both absolute position (where characters are in the scene) and relative position (how far apart anyone is from a given friend or foe) is crucial. Rather than tracking everything using precise distances, the setting of the action scene is divided into abstract **zones**.

At the start of an action scene, the gamemaster will define the zones which make up the setting. (Generally three-to-five distinct zones are a good place to start, although this number will vary depending on the exact nature of the scene.) Each zone is a small, contiguous area. A zone will be adjacent with one or more zones, but will likely be separated from others by intervening zones.

There are no hard-and-fast rules when it comes to defining the size or boundaries of a zone, but the identity of a zone will generally flow naturally from the divisions and logic of the setting.

For example, during the siege of an Aquilonian fortress, groups of warriors clash within the fortress itself. Several of the fortress's defenders are holed up in a guardroom, while the attackers are trying to batter the door down from the corridor outside. The guardroom is one zone, while the corridor is another.

Similarly, think about the landmarks by which people will define their position.

RANGE AND MOVEMENT

To keep things simple and fluid, the distance between zones is handled in an approximate manner, using five broad range categories:

- **Reach** is when an object or character is within arm's length. Characters enter Reach to interact with objects manually, to attack in close combat, and to perform any other actions where they may need to touch the subject of their action. A character can move within Reach of a target as part of any movement action that ends in the same zone as the target. Moving out of an enemy's Reach may be risky, as it leaves characters open to the Retaliate Reaction unless they take a Withdraw Action. Retaliate and Withdraw are described on pages 25 and 26.
- **Close** range is defined as the character's current zone. Moving within Close range is a Free Action.

CREATING DISTANCE WITH ZONES

For a scene in which there are only two zones of interest that should nonetheless feel distant from each other, the gamemaster can fill the space between them with any number of "empty" zones, in order to create the right feel. Characters wishing to go from the first zone of interest to the second must pass through these place-holding zones first.

DISTANCE AND PERCEPTION

The further away something is, the harder it is to notice. The gamemaster should increase the difficulty of Observation and Insight tests by +1 at Medium range, by +2 at Long range, and by +3 at Extreme range.

- **Medium** range is defined as any zone adjacent to the character's current zone. Moving to a point within Medium range is a Minor Action.
- **Long** range is defined as any point two zones away from the character's current zone. Moving to a point within Long range is a Standard Action, but the character increases the difficulty of all tests by one until the start of his next turn.
- **Extreme** range is defined as any point three or more zones away from the character's current zone. A character cannot move to Extreme range in a single action.

Characters cannot perform more than one movement action per turn.

For example, a character cannot use a Minor Action to move to an adjacent zone and then use her Standard Action to move an additional two zones.

ZONE EFFECTS

Individual zones can have terrain effects defined by the gamemaster. Only a few key options are described here, but a wider variety will be found in the **Conan** core rulebook. Additionally, the gamemaster is encouraged to create additional such effects as desired.

Under normal circumstances, moving around requires no skill test. Moving to anywhere within Close range takes only a Free Action. Moving to anywhere within Medium range takes a Minor Action. Moving to anywhere within Long range takes a Standard Action, which adds +1 to the difficulty of all other tests the character makes until the start of his next turn, including those to traverse difficult terrain.

However, movement in some circumstances may require a Terrain test. This is a skill test, typically using either Acrobatics or Athletics for characters and creatures, though unusual terrain may require a different test, as will riding animals or operating vehicles. A situation may only allow use of one of these skills exclusively, or in some cases either of them, depending on how the character attempts to traverse the terrain. If movement requires a skill test



They were following no marked trail, but dipping down into ravines so deep the sun never struck bottom, laboring up steep slopes where loose shale threatened to slide from beneath their feet, and following knife-edge ridges with blue-hazed echoing depths on either hand.

— “The People of the Black Circle”

with a difficulty of Average (D1) or higher, then it cannot be performed as a Free Action, even if the movement is only within Close range. Under no circumstances can a skill test be attempted as a Free Action.

Broadly, any circumstances that require a Terrain test can be split into three categories: **Obstacles**, **Hindrances**, and **Hazards**. A fourth type, **Cover**, does not generally require a Terrain test, but has useful effects that characters may take advantage of.

- **Obstacles:** These exist at the points where two zones meet, impairing efforts to pass between those zones. Climbable walls and fences, ladders, and similar barriers can all serve as obstacles. Attempting to bypass an obstacle requires a Terrain test, normally with a difficulty of Average (D1), but particularly difficult obstacles may increase this (while straightforward obstacles might reduce this to Simple (D0), removing the need for a test unless other factors pose a problem). Failing this test prevents the character from moving across the obstacle.
- **Hindrances:** These affect entire zones, slowing movement within them. Moving within a hindrance for any portion of your movement requires either giving up a portion of your movement (moving one fewer zone than you normally would with that action), or attempting a Terrain test, with failure meaning that the character stops moving within the hindering terrain. The Terrain test is normally Average (D1), but some terrain may require a more difficult test. Areas of deep water, thick snow, or broken ground might be considered to be Hindrances.
- **Hazards:** These function in the same way as obstacles or hindrances (this will be detailed in each

individual case), but with one significant difference: they cause harm upon a failed Terrain test. A typical hazard inflicts Ψ 3 physical damage with the Stun quality, but different hazards may vary in quantity of damage, qualities applied, or even the type of damage.

- **Cover:** This is one of the most common terrain effects, representing objects that interfere with a character's ability to see or attack a target clearly. Cover provides additional Soak against physical attacks, as described in the Damage and Recovery section, below, and is normally divided into Light Cover (providing Ψ 2 Soak) and Heavy Cover (Ψ 4 Soak).

ATTACKS

There are three different methods of attacking a target: **Melee**, **Ranged**, and **Threaten**. As a Standard Action, an attacker picks a single target within range and declares the type of attack they are making against that target.

The target has the option of performing a Defense Reaction, in which case the attack is resolved as a Struggle,

MAKING AN ATTACK

The process for making an attack is as follows:


1. Declare the attack:
 - a. Choose the type of attack being made: **MELEE**, **RANGED**, or **THREATEN**.
 - b. Choose a **TARGET** for the attack. The target chosen must be a viable type of target for the type of attack.
 - c. Choose a **WEAPON** (for Melee and Ranged attack) or a **METHOD** of scaring the target (for a Threaten attack).
 - d. The target chooses whether or not to make a **DEFENSE** Reaction.
2. The attacker makes a **SKILL TEST** to attack. This is an **AVERAGE (D1)** test, or a **STRUGGLE** if the target is taking a Defense Reaction.
3. If the attacker fails the skill test or is defeated in the Struggle, the attack ends. If the attacker succeeds, then the attacker rolls **DAMAGE**:
 - a. The attacker rolls a number of **COMBAT DICE** Ψ determined by the weapon/attack used and the associated attribute scores. Each 1 or 2 rolled applies that much damage. Each 5 or 6 rolled creates an **EFFECT**, which applies 1 damage and triggers certain attack qualities, such as Piercing or Vicious. Add up all the damage applied: this is the **TOTAL DAMAGE**.
 - b. The defender determines their total **SOAK** at the same time. This is a combination of fixed value (from armor or Courage) and dice (cover and morale). Roll the Ψ and add the total rolled (1s, 2s, and Effects) to the fixed value. The result is the character's total Soak.
 - c. Subtract the defender's total Soak from the attacker's total damage. If one or more damage remains, this removes a number of points of **STRESS** equal to the number of points of remaining damage.
 - d. If there are five or more points of damage remaining, or the defender is reduced to 0 Stress of that type, or the defender had no stress of that type remaining, the defender suffers a point of **HARM**.

RANGED COMBAT

Range

Ranged weapons and Threaten attacks can be used at a distance. Broadly, each ranged weapon and each method of threatening a foe has a listed range. This will be Close, Medium, or Long (abbreviated to C, M, or L, respectively). That is the range category that is optimal for that weapon, and attacks at that range suffer no penalties for range. If the target is at a different range (nearer or further away), each range category difference increases the difficulty of the skill test to attack by one step. Thus, a weapon with a range of Close suffers +1 difficulty at Medium range, +2 at Long, and +3 at Extreme, while a weapon with a range of Medium suffers +1 at Close or Long ranges, and +2 at Extreme.

Ranged Weapons

Under normal circumstances, each time a ranged weapon is used, it uses up a single shot. This may be a handful of arrows or bullets, or a single crossbow bolt, or it might be a hurled weapon like a dart or even a loose rock. Drawing a shot is part of the Standard Action used to make the attack, but the character may only have a finite amount of shots available, and once the character has no more shots available, the ranged weapon can't be used again. At the end of the scene, the character rolls  for each shot used. On an Effect, the shot is damaged or broken and cannot be used again. (See also Volley, page 28.)

Melee weapons can be thrown as ranged weapons, as if they had a Range of Close, but as they're ill-balanced for this, the Ranged Weapons test increases in difficulty by two steps. Each melee weapon counts as a single shot: once a sword has been thrown, it is no longer available for use until it is recovered.


Reach and Guard

Melee attacks can only be used within Reach, but they have a Reach value of their own, used to determine relative length and ability to attack. Further, characters have a state known as Guard when in melee. A character has Guard if he is on his feet, aware of an attack, and able to defend himself, but he can lose this if knocked prone, or an attacker spends 2 points of Momentum after a successful attack. A character regains Guard by taking a Minor Action and a Parry test with a difficulty equal to his opponent's Reach (Simple Do, as a Free Action, if not in melee).


When a character makes an attack, compare the Reach of the weapon he is using with the Reach of his opponent's weapon (opponent's choice). The defender is assumed to be keeping the opponent at bay with the preferred weapon. If the defender has Guard, then the difficulty of the attack increases by one step for every point the defender's Reach is longer than the attacker's (D1 to D2, for example). If the defender's Guard has been lost, then the attacker gains +1d20 for every point of Reach less than the defender, having slipped past the defender's weapon or shield.

ALTERNATE MODES OF ATTACK

Improvised Attack

A melee attack made without a weapon. It has a Reach of 1 and deals 2  physical damage, with the Stun, Thrown, and Improvised qualities (described on pages 28).

Steely Glare

A basic Threaten attack has a Range of Close, and deals 2  mental damage, with the Stun quality (see page 28).

Other Sources of Damage


Some environmental effects can also inflict damage, such as falling from a great height, being set on fire, or encountering something terrifying.

using the skills shown on the Attack Table (below). If the target does not perform a Defense Reaction, the attacker makes an Average (D1) test with the skill required for that type of attack. The difficulty of the attacker's tests may be modified by their range.


ATTACK TABLE

Attack	Skill	Damage Type	Defense Reaction
Melee	Melee	Physical	Acrobatics or Parry
Ranged	Ranged Weapons	Physical	Acrobatics
Threaten	Persuade	Mental	Discipline


DAMAGE

If an attack is successful, it inflicts damage. The amount of damage is determined by the damage rating of the weapon or method used to make the attack. Damage ratings are a number of Combat Dice, or . Some characters may have bonus damage when using a particular attack. This will be noted on the pre-generated character sheets where appropriate.

COMBAT DICE

Combat Dice are a particular way of rolling and reading d6s. They are used for determining damage and governing special effects. When rolling a , ignore any results of 3 or 4. Results of 1 or 2 are counted normally, while 5s and 6s are referred to as Effects. These count as a result of a 1, and also trigger a range of special qualities.

COMBAT DICE	
Roll	Result
1	Success
2	Two Successes
3, 4	Ignored
5, 6	Success, adds an Effect

For example, Valka, an Aesir warrior, uses her axe to strike an attacking winter wolf. She is successful! Her axe deals 4  damage, so Valka's player takes four d6s and rolls, getting 4, 1, 2, and 6. The result of 4 is ignored. The results of 1 and 2 are added together for a total of 3 damage. The result of the 6 is an Effect, which adds 1 to the total rolled, and also triggers the axe's qualities. The axe has the Vicious 1 quality, which inflicts an extra +1 damage. Valka's final damage total is 5.

ALTERNATIVE HARM

Some attacks do not inflict the usual Wounds or Trauma. These attacks still reduce a target's Stress normally, but if they would inflict Harm, they will cause an alternative effect instead. These alternative effects do not count towards a character's normal maximum number of Harms, but impair the character in a different way. Such effects will be specified where they occur in the quickstart adventure.

SOAK

As shown on the Damage Table, one type of protection can shield against damage from each type of attack. These protections are referred to as **Soak**, which comes as both a fixed value and as dice. Soak dice (if any) are rolled at the same time as damage, and all Soak reduces damage 1 for 1. (It is possible for Soak to reduce the damage of a successful attack to 0.) Soak dice are d6s, used just like Combat Dice, as described on page 21.

STRESS AND HARM

When a character takes damage from any source, it is marked off from a particular form of **Stress**. Physical attacks reduce **Vigor**, while mental attacks reduce **Resolve**.

If this attack causes 5 or more damage, or reduces Vigor or Resolve to 0, the character suffers a point of **Harm**. If both events occur, the character suffers two Harms.

Harm has different names and effects depending on what caused the Harm. Mental damage inflicts **Trauma**, which increases the difficulty of Awareness, Intelligence, Personality, and Willpower tests by 1. Physical damage inflicts **Wounds**, which increases the difficulty of Agility, Brawn, and Coordination tests by 1.

The effects of these Harms are cumulative.

DAMAGE TABLE

Damage Type	Stress	Harm	Soak	Recovery Skill	Treat Skill
Physical	Vigor	Wounds	Armor (fixed) Cover (dice)	Resistance	Healing
Mental	Resolve	Trauma	Courage (fixed) Morale (dice)	Discipline	Counsel

INCAPACITATION AND DEATH

If a character suffers 4 points of Wounds or 4 points of Trauma, the character becomes incapacitated and can only take an action by spending a Fortune point. If the character takes a 5th Wounds point, the character will die. If the character takes a 5th point of Trauma, the character is driven irrevocably mad or rendered comatose, at the gamemaster's discretion.

Minor non-player characters are generally incapacitated or forced to flee if they suffer 1 or 2 points of Harm. At the gamemaster's discretion, significant non-player characters can endure Harm as a player character can.

RECOVERY

A character recovers Stress fully at the end of an action scene, with Vigor and Resolve returning to their full values. This is automatic, requiring only a brief rest.

Harm, on the other hand, must be treated using the appropriate skill (as indicated on the Damage Table). A skill test to treat a patient's Harm can only be made once per day and has a difficulty equal to the number of Harms (of that type) afflicting the character. On a success, the character treats 1 Harm plus 1 additional Harm of that type for each

Momentum spent (Repeatable). Treated Harm doesn't impose any penalties, but it isn't fully healed, and if the character suffers a new Harm of that type, then treated Harms immediately return, as wounds reopen under the strain.

Complete healing takes time, rest, and possibly the attention of a healer.

OTHER COMBAT ACTIONS

CLEAR (MINOR)

As a Minor Action, a character can attempt a skill test to end a current condition (such as Bleeding or Staggered). If the condition has a specific rating (such as Burning 3), the difficulty of the test is equal to the rating. If not, the test is Challenging (D2).

Physical conditions require a Resistance test and psychological conditions a Discipline test.

DROP ITEM (FREE)

The character drops a single item held in one or both of their hands. The item falls within Reach.




DROP PRONE (FREE)

The character immediately drops to the ground. Ranged attacks targeting a prone character at Medium range or further are made at +1 difficulty and the prone character also gains +2 Soak for each Effect rolled on cover dice. However, melee attacks and ranged attacks made at Close range gain +1 Momentum. When making a movement action, a prone character moves one fewer zone than normal.

A character cannot drop prone and stand in the same turn.

EXPLOIT (STANDARD)

The character takes additional time and concentration readying his next attack, to find vulnerabilities in his target's defenses. The character nominates a target he is able to perceive, and attempts an Average (D1) Observation test (modified by distance, lighting, and so forth as normal for Observation tests). If this succeeds, the character's first attack before the end of his next turn gains the Piercing 2 quality. If the character wishes, he may spend 1 point of Momentum on this test to add one bonus d20 to the attack's skill test, and +1  to the attack's damage. This is Repeatable, but these bonus d20s count towards the normal limit of three bonus d20s on any skill test. The benefits of this action can only be gained once per round.

READY (STANDARD)

The character may declare that he is waiting for a certain situation or event to occur before performing a Standard Action, which he must choose when he determines the triggering condition. When this triggering situation occurs, the character with the readied action temporarily interrupts the acting character's turn to resolve the readied action. Once the readied action is resolved, the acting character continues his turn as normal. If the triggering situation does not occur before the character's next turn, the readied action is lost.

Characters who take a readied action can still take Minor and Free Actions during their turn as normal.

RECOVER (STANDARD)

The character hunkers down, grits his teeth, and fights through the pain. The character chooses a single type of damage (physical or mental), and attempts an Average (D1) skill test: Resistance for physical or Discipline for mental. On a successful test, the character regains 2 points of Vigor (physical) or Resolve (mental), plus 2 more points for each Momentum spent (Repeatable).

Because the focusing is first and foremost on survival, a character taking the Recover Action re-roll any cover dice rolled until the start of the next turn. Cover is explained on page 21.

SPEAK (FREE)

The character may talk to allies, bellow a war cry, shout an order, threaten a rival, or otherwise converse using a few phrases or short sentences. This action cannot be used to attempt a Command or Persuade test, or to attempt any other skill test that involves speech. For such actions, the Use Skill action (below) should be used instead.

STAND (MINOR)

A prone character may take this action to stand, losing all the benefits and disadvantages of being prone.

USE SKILL (STANDARD)

Any other task not already covered by another action, which requires a Difficulty 1 or higher skill test, takes a Standard Action.

WITHDRAW (STANDARD)

A character attempting to leave an enemy's Reach may be attacked by the enemy using the Retaliate Reaction. To prevent this, a character can use the Withdraw action. A character that chooses to Withdraw moves to any point within Close range which is not within Reach of an enemy, and cannot be the target of a Retaliate Reaction that turn. This is a Movement action.

If the character and his allies within Reach outnumber the enemies within Reach, then he may Withdraw as a Free Action instead of a Standard Action.

COMBAT REACTIONS

DEFEND

The character attempts to defend himself from an attack. This Reaction may be used when an enemy attack is attempted, with the character declared as the target of that attack. This turns the attacker's skill test into a Struggle. The skill used by the defender is determined by the type of attack (see the Attack Table, page 22).

PROTECT

The character attempts to defend an ally from an attack. This Reaction may be used when an enemy attack is attempted, with an ally within Reach of the character declared as the

target of that attack. This turns the attacker's skill test into a Struggle, with the character testing against a difficulty of Challenging D2. If the skill test is failed outright, the attack hits its original target. If the skill test is successful, then the character becomes the new target, and the Momentum scored is used to determine whether or not the attack was successful, as normal for an Opposed test. The skill used for this Reaction is the same as is used for a Defense Reaction against an attack of that type.

RETALIATE

The character lashes out at a nearby foe. This Reaction may be used when an enemy attempts to make a non-attack skill test while within Reach of the character, or when an enemy attempts to move out of Reach of the character without using the Withdraw action. The character may immediately attempt a melee attack.

Resolve the Retaliate Reaction before the action it is a reaction to; if the character's melee attack is successful, then the character may spend Momentum to increase the difficulty of the skill test being interrupted (as per the Create Obstacle Momentum spend), counting the movement as a (Do) Terrain test to bypass an Obstacle.

Kerim Shah had unslung the powerful Turanian bow that killed at five hundred paces, and the Irakzai looked to their own lighter and less lethal bows.



— Conan, "The Hour of the Dragon"

COMBAT MOMENTUM

Momentum is a key tactical resource. When characters generate Momentum in combat they have numerous options available which can help overcome enemies, empower allies, and bolster their own prowess.

The following table provides a number of options available to characters when they generate 1 or more Momentum in combat, but players should remember that they always have the option of creating new uses for Momentum. The gamemaster may also establish scene-specific Momentum spends.

Under Cost, an **R** means the spend is Repeatable, and an **I** means the spend is Immediate. If neither note is present, then the Momentum spend may only be used once per round at most.

MOMENTUM IN COMBAT		
Momentum Spend	Cost	Effect
Bonus Damage	1 R	A character can increase the damage inflicted by a successful attack, regardless of the type of attack. Each Momentum spent adds +1 damage.
Confidence	1 R	The character gains  1 Morale Soak per Momentum spent (maximum  4) until the start of his next turn.
Disarm	2 or 3	One weapon held by the target is knocked away and falls to the ground within Reach. This costs 2 points of Momentum if the target is holding the weapon in one hand or 3 Momentum if the weapon is braced or held in two hands.
Penetration	1 R	The damage inflicted by the current attack ignores an amount of Soak equal to twice the Momentum spent.
Re-roll Damage	1	The player may re-roll any number of damage dice from the current attack
Second Wind	1 R	The character recovers 1 point of Vigor or Resolve for each Momentum spent.
Secondary Target	2	A second target within Reach of the primary target is also affected by the attack, and suffers half the attack's damage, rounding down.
Swift Action	2	The character gains an additional Standard Action, increasing the difficulty by one step on any skill test that action requires. This may only be done once per round.
Withdraw	1	The character leaves the Reach of an enemy, without triggering any Retaliate Reactions.

CONDITIONS

There are a number of detrimental conditions that can afflict a character during action scenes. The most common of these are described below.

- **Blind:** The character's vision has been severely damaged. Upon being blinded, a character suffers Ψ 3 mental damage, and any skill test reliant on vision (Insight, Observation, Ranged Weapons, etc.) increases in difficulty by two steps.
- **Burning X:** The target is set alight. This condition lasts for a number of rounds equal to the number of Effects rolled on the attack that inflicted it. If no Ψ were rolled, the cause of the burning effect will list a duration. At the end of the target's turn, it suffers Ψ X physical and mental damage (roll once and apply it to both), ignoring armor Soak. Any physical damage caused by Burning X has the Incendiary attack quality, and Effects rolled increase the number of rounds that the character remains aflame. A character may attempt a Clear Minor Action to remove this effect, while a prone character can spend his Standard Action rolling around, extinguishing the flames, which works as a Clear Action, but reduces the difficulty by two steps. If the character is hit by another Burning attack or effect while already ablaze, the existing status is extended by a number of rounds equal to the number of Effects rolled.
- **Dazed:** All skill tests performed by a Dazed character increase in difficulty by one step until the Dazed condition ends.
- **Deaf:** The character's hearing has been severely damaged. Upon being deafened, a character suffers Ψ 3 Resolve, and any skill test reliant on hearing (Observation, Insight, Command, Persuade, etc.) increases in difficulty by two steps.
- **Hindered:** The character's movement is hindered, slowing him down. The character cannot attempt any movement-based Free Action. Further, he may only move to within Close range as a Minor Action move, and only to within Medium range as a Standard Action move. Finally, the difficulty of all terrain tests is increased by one step.
- **Staggered:** A Staggered character can only perform a Standard Action on his turn if he is willing to pay 1 point of Doom. A Staggered character cannot perform a Reaction unless he spends 1 Fortune point in addition to its normal Doom cost.

WEAPONS

Weapons are defined by a number of different factors, which determine the item's effectiveness in combat, any special abilities it may possess, and other relevant information.

Weapons are broadly divided into two categories: ranged and melee. Melee weapons are only affected by targets within Reach, while ranged weapons are effective at greater distances. All weapons have the following values: **Damage**, **Size**, and **Qualities**. Melee weapons also have **Reach**, while ranged weapons have **Range**.

For the purposes of this quickstart adventure, armor provides a single Soak value for the character.


- **Damage** is listed as a number of Ψ .
- **Size** determines how difficult the weapon is to wield.
 - ▶ **One-handed** weapons (1H) can be used in one or two hands without penalty.
 - ▶ **Two-handed** weapons (2H) can be used in two hands without penalty; if used in one hand, the difficulty of tests to use the weapon increase by two steps. Two-handed ranged weapons cannot be used in one hand.
 - ▶ **Unbalanced** weapons (Unb) count as one-handed if the wielder has a Brawn of 9 or higher, or as two-handed if the wielder has a Brawn of 8 or less.
- **Qualities** are the special abilities and Effects that apply to the weapon.
- **Reach** determines the length of the weapon, and how easy it is to fend off opponents with the weapon. All melee weapons have a Reach of 1, 2, or 3, with higher values representing longer weapons. In different circumstances, weapons of different Reach values may have an advantage, as described on page 22.
- **Range** is listed as Close, Medium, or Long, and determines the distance that the weapon is most effective at, as described on page 22.

QUALITIES

The following weapon qualities are used either by the pre-generated characters or are found in the quickstart adventure.

- **Grappling:** In addition to dealing damage, the weapon may ensnare the target if one or more Effects is rolled. An ensnared target is unable to move or take action except to attempt an Acrobatics or Athletics test equal to the number of Effects rolled. Against an ensnared target, the difficulty of the


Exploit Action is reduced by one. If this is a melee weapon, the weapon's wielder may only attack the ensnared target while that target remains ensnared, though he may release the creature as a Free Action.

- **Hidden X:** The weapon is easy to conceal, with the X indicating the difficulty to find it. When the weapon is hidden, any search of the owning character requires an Observation test, with a difficulty of X, to locate the weapon.
- **Improvised:** The weapon is not as sturdy or effective as a proper weapon. Improvised weapons do not add 1 to the total for each Effect rolled.
- **Intense:** If the weapon inflicts one or more Wounds, it inflicts one additional Wound.
- **Knockdown:** The weapon knocks the target prone if one or more Effects are rolled. The target may ignore this if they generate Doom for each Effect rolled.
- **Parrying:** The weapon is effective at deflecting other attacks. A character wielding one or more Parrying weapons reduces the Doom cost of a Defense Reaction using the Parry skill by one, to a minimum of 0.
- **Piercing X:** The weapon is good at overcoming armor, and ignores X points of the target's Soak for each Effect rolled.
- **Shield X:** This weapon is extremely effective at protecting from attacks. When wielding a Shield, the character may use Parry on Defense Reactions against ranged attacks as well as melee attacks. A Shield X grants the wielder X  additional Cover Soak against melee and ranged attacks. Additionally, if the wielder would suffer a Wound from an attack, he may sacrifice the Shield in order to not suffer that Wound. The Shield is then destroyed.
- **Stun:** The weapon inflicts the Staggered condition to the target if one or more Effects are rolled, lasting until the end of the target's next turn. The target may ignore this if they generate one Doom for each Effect rolled.
- **Thrown:** The weapon can be thrown effectively. When throwing a melee weapon with the Thrown quality, the character does not increase the difficulty of the Ranged Weapons test. Some weapons may be listed as Thrown (M), in which case they are treated as ranged weapons with a range of Medium when thrown.

Conan, stooping above the body of the Agha, made no move to escape. Shifting his reddened simitar to his left hand, he drew the great half-blade of the Yuetshi. Khosatral Khel was towering above him, his arms lifted like mauls, but as the blade caught the sheen of the sun, the giant gave back suddenly.

— "The Devil in Iron"



- **Unforgiving X:** If the target of this weapon was affected by an Exploit action immediately before this attack was made, then this attack gains Vicious X.
- **Vicious X:** A weapon with this quality inflicts X additional damage for each Effect rolled.
- **Volley:** This ranged weapon can be used quickly, allowing the wielder to use more shots in a short space of time. Wielders often carry more ammunition as a result, carrying Loads rather than individual shots. When making an attack with a Volley weapon, the character does not need to use up a Load to make the attack. Further, when attacking with the weapon, the wielder may spend one Load in order to add a bonus d20 to the Ranged Weapons test to attack, and adds +1  to the weapon's damage if the attack hits.

FORTUNE

Player characters have access to a special type of resource called Fortune points. This reflects the fact that the player characters have drive, ambition, and determination above and beyond most people, and can succeed where others

might fail. Whether or not they are viewed as heroes, the player characters are destined for greatness.

A player character begins each session with 3 points of Fortune, and cannot have more than 5 Fortune points at any point. The gamemaster should award Fortune points during a session for reaching milestones, creating entertaining moments at the table, and other in-game accomplishments.

As a general guideline, there should be two or three opportunities for players to gain Fortune points per hour of play.

USING FORTUNE POINTS

Here are just a few of the ways in which Fortune points can be spent during play:

- **Bonus Die:** Add an extra d20 to a skill test, up to the maximum of three additional d20s. The extra die is treated as having automatically rolled a 1.
- **Bonus Action:** Perform an additional Standard Action on your turn.
- **Second Wind:** Recover all lost Vigor or Resolve (choose one).
- **Overcome Weakness:** Ignore effects of Wounds or Trauma (choose one) until the end of the current scene.
- **Story Declaration:** Introduce a fact or add a detail to the current scene. The gamemaster may veto some story declarations, or require multiple Fortune points for particularly large or significant declarations.

DOOM

The gamemaster's greatest tool is the pool of Doom points. At the beginning of a session, the gamemaster's Doom pool will have a number of points equal to the total number of Fortune points at the table.


For example, if there are four player characters with 3 points of Fortune each, the gamemaster will begin play with 12 points of Doom.

During each adventure, the Doom pool will grow and shrink as the player characters take action and the gamemaster responds (and *vice versa*). Doom is an abstract measure of potential threats and dangers: the larger the Doom pool, the greater the likelihood that something will endanger or imperil the player characters. Spending Doom turns that potential danger into actual problems.

USING DOOM


The gamemaster can use Doom for non-player characters the same way player characters can, though in reverse. That is, a non-player character can do anything that would generate one or more Doom, but instead of generating Doom, an equal number of Doom points are removed from the pool. Similarly, just as player characters can add points to Doom when they suffer complications, a non-player character suffering a complication can cause the Doom pool to shrink.

- **Non-player Character Resources:** Shots, poultices, reagents, and other expendable resources used to boost the effect of a skill test are not tracked individually for non-player characters. Instead, a non-player character can be granted the benefit of a single unit of a resource by paying 1 point of Doom.
- **Activating Special Abilities.** Some particularly powerful or experienced non-player characters may have access to potent abilities or equipment. As noted in their descriptions, these abilities may require the gamemaster to spend 1 or more points of Doom to activate them.
- **Seize the Initiative.** The gamemaster may spend Doom to interrupt the action order and allow one of the non-player characters to act early by spending 1 point of Doom (see page 18).
- **Triggering an Environmental Effect.** Dramatic scenes often play out in exciting environments: a battle in a crumbling ruin, a chase through a busy marketplace, a chasm over a raging river, etc. When describing encounters, the gamemaster is encouraged to provide details to the players to help them visualize the scene, and sometimes it can be interesting to bring the environment alive through the use of Doom. Triggering an environment effect comes in two levels of magnitude. Minor effects, costing 1 point of Doom, are typically things like flickering candle light, crumbling walls, thick smoke, which add to the difficulty of skill tests, or force tests where one was not previously required. Major effects, which cost 2 or more points of Doom, may pose significant impediments to the characters, even causing them short-lived conditions or harm (physical or mental).
- **Other Complications:** The gamemaster can also introduce other complications into a scene. As a general guideline, spending 1 point of Doom should create a complication requiring a Minor Action to fix, overcome, or circumvent. A complication created by spending 2 points of Doom should require a Standard Action to do the same.



Fort Tuscelan stood on the eastern bank of the Black River... There, at the fort, civilization ended. This was no empty phrase. Fort Tuscelan was indeed the last outpost of a civilized world; it represented the westernmost thrust of the dominant Hyborian races. Beyond the river the primitive still reigned in shadowy forests, brush-thatched huts where hung the grinning skulls of men, and mud-walled enclosures where fires flickered and drums rumbled, and spears were whetted in the hands of dark, silent men with tangled black hair and the eyes of serpents.

— “Beyond the Black River”



CHAPTER 5



TO RACE THE THUNDER



THIS QUICKSTART ADVENTURE IS INSPIRED by the climactic events of Robert E. Howard's story "Beyond the Black River," in which Conan battles his ancient enemies, the Picts, on the frontier of the greatest kingdom in the world, Aquilonia, a country he will one day end up ruling.

Here, the player characters are a motley collection of rangers, mercenaries, and others, dwelling at the edge of the Thunder River, near Fort Tuscelan. On the way back from a patrol, they stumble into an unprecedented Pictish uprising, a savage assault against civilization that will see the destruction of the fort and the slaughter of hundreds of settlers in the region. The player characters find themselves attacked and doggedly pursued by bands of bloodthirsty Picts, and are forced to flee toward the relative safety of the settlements on the Thunder River.

Along the way there are countless opportunities for adventure, terror, savage battle, and heroism.

PREPARATION

To begin with, the gamemaster should thoroughly read through the rules summary and the adventure, and have copies of the pre-generated player character sheets (pages 45-51). Consult *What You Need to Play* on page 11 for information on the type and number of dice and other basic requirements.

Names and backgrounds have been provided for each of the pre-generated player characters, but the gamemaster should allow players to alter these as desired, so long as the changes are not out-of-place in the setting and intended tone of the adventure.

If there are more than seven players, the gamemaster is encouraged to make additional copies of the characters provided and alter their names and backgrounds.



OPENING NARRATION

The gamemaster should read the following aloud to the players, summarizing or paraphrasing as desired:

Night is falling on Conajahara, the territory between the Black and Thunder Rivers. You have each come here for reasons of your own—the lure of gold, wanderlust, or the challenge of life at the edge of civilization—but for now you are serving as scouts out of Fort Tuscelan, sent out to roam the forests along the Black River, hunting game and investigating reports of bands of Picts sighted along the far shore. The hunting is good in this area, but few civilized folk venture there, and even fewer return.

It has been a long and tiring day, made all the more wearisome by the distant, ceaseless murmur of drums from within the dark western woods.

To your northwest is Fort Tuscelan, a woefully understaffed Aquilonian outpost. Its purpose is to protect the settlers of the Westermarck—an Aquilonian colony located between the Black and Thunder Rivers—territory wrested from the clutches of the savage Picts who now lurk across the Black River, plotting their revenge. Throughout the region are settlers who dwell here in defiance of the Picts, lone farmsteads and small crofts, and you have been charged to protect them and to look in on them while on your patrols.

It is time now to begin the long journey back home, toward the relative safety of the Thunder River, but in the gathering gloom, as shadows deepen in the primal forest, the drums change their tempo, becoming more aggressive, louder, echoing from far beyond the Black River.

Soon the staccato drum-beat is joined with howls, angry whoops and Pict war-songs, growing ever closer...

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

To simplify skills for non-player characters, Fields of Expertise show their capability in these broad areas, represented as a single value, a value that serves as both Expertise and Focus for the skills included in each group.

- **COMBAT** includes Melee, Parry, Ranged Weapons, and Siegecraft.
- **FORTITUDE** includes Discipline, Resistance, and Survival.
- **MOVEMENT** includes Acrobatics, Athletics, Sailing, and Stealth.
- **SENSES** includes Observation, Insight, and Thievery.
- **SOCIAL** includes Command, Counsel, Persuade, and Society.
- **KNOWLEDGE** includes Alchemy, Animal Handling, Craft, Healing, Lore, Linguistics, and Sorcery.

THE DRUMS OF DOOM

The player characters from Fort Tuscelan are trekking back northward through the forest when the sound of Pictish war-drums filters across the Black River from the west. The tempo of the drums seems ominous, seemingly a call to battle, a command to slaughter.

All present must make an Average (D1) Discipline test or suffer 2 mental damage, due to fear.

The drums also present a grim choice for the members of the group: do they head for the fort, just a few miles to the north, to warn them of the potential for a Pictish attack, or are they compelled to strike eastward to warn and protect the defenseless settlers?





The player characters are probably obligated to make for the fort, though surely the forces there have already heard the drums. Still, there is refuge to be found there... probably. The gamemaster should allow the players to choose their destination, perhaps splitting the group. There are arguments to be made for keeping the group together—safety in numbers, and the need to split up later and spread the word through the settlements—but if the players spend too much time discussing the issue, the gamemaster should add another point to the Doom pool, encouraging them to make a decision with greater haste (see page 29).

THE FIRST ATTACK

Shortly after the player characters hear the drums, they are attacked by a band of Pict warriors. There are a number of Picts equal to the number of player characters plus one additional Pict.

If the group split and went their separate ways, each group is attacked by a number of Picts equal to the size of

each group, plus one additional Pict for each group. This skirmish breaks out close enough after the player characters set out that even if they are going separate directions, each group will hear the other's scuffle, and may go to aid the other and/or regroup when the fighting is done.

The fight begins with the screeching lunge of a handful of half-naked savages, dressed in deer-hide loincloths and little else, their bodies painted with sinister designs of blue and black and red. With hate filling their eyes and armed with bronze hatchets and knives, they hurl themselves at the civilized Hyborians.

The Picts will fight to the death. Once they are slain, the player characters must again decide where they wish to go: the fort or the settlements.

Complications

Any Complication rolled in this encounter may result in the player character (or foe) losing his weapon in the fray. A Challenging (D2) Observation test is needed to find and recover the weapon from the dark underbrush. More severe Complications (from multiple 20s rolled) may indicate the weapon is lost altogether, sunk into mud, lost in the waters, or vanished into leaves and underbrush.

PICT WARRIORS




ATTRIBUTES			
Agility	Awareness	Brawn	
10	9	9	
Coord.	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	7	7	7

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	1	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	0	Social	0

STRESS & SOAK

Vigor	5	Armor	0
Resolve	4	Courage	1

ATTACKS

- **Hatchet (M):** Reach 2, 5  damage, 1H, Vicious 1
- **Knife (M):** Reach 1, 4  damage, 1H, Hidden 1, Thrown, Unforgiving 1
- **Bow (R, if applicable):** Range M, 4  damage, Volley

BELONGINGS

Hatchet, knife, bow, loin-cloth.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

Languages

Though the *Conan* core rulebook will address starting languages, for the purpose of this quickstart adventure, it is assumed that all of the pre-generated characters share a common language and can converse normally, and that none of them speak the Pictish tongue. Characters with prior experience in Pictland before can attempt a Linguistics test (D2) to understand the dialect of the Picts encountered in this adventure.

Doom

The gamemaster begins the game with a number of Doom points equal to the number of Fortune points at the table (3 for each character), so if all seven pre-generated characters are used, the gamemaster starts with 21 points of Doom!

Healing

This adventure consists of many combat skirmishes with Pict warriors and other fearsome foes native to the Pictish Wilderness, natural and supernatural. The gamemaster should remind the players that they can use their Healing and Counsel skills to treat Wounds and Trauma. Allow one such roll per player character after each encounter/battle.

Replacement Weapons




Bear in mind also that after each skirmish in this adventure, the player characters may salvage whatever weapons the Picts may have had: knives, hatchets, bow and arrows, etc. The player characters' own weapons may be lost, damaged, or depleted, so they may very well need these replacements. In most cases, these weapons will be fashioned of wood and bronze, but should be roughly equivalent.

Light Sources

Strictly speaking, since the events of this adventure all transpire at night, in the darkness of a primeval forest, the player characters and their opponents should suffer penalties to their skills due to the darkness. However, there is sufficient moonlight to allow enough visibility to carry out most actions, and the player characters' eyes are accustomed to working in the gloom. All player characters are assumed to have flint and steel for making fire, so they can create and use torches if desired.

If the gamemaster wishes, perhaps he can allow normal Difficulty levels in open, lighted areas such as near the fort and along the settlers' road, but may increase the Difficulty of tests made elsewhere in the forest, along the creek, and so forth. This added Difficulty is entirely optional, but if used it should be used for the Picts as well (but should not be applied to the panther or the *chakan*).

Doom and Despair

To reflect the doom-laden atmosphere of this tale—a handful of civilized people alone in the dark forest of their savage enemies, who outnumber them by the hundreds or even thousands—the gamemaster is urged to call for an Average (D1) Discipline test whenever one of the player characters is killed or left behind: failure inflicts 2  mental damage. On the other hand, each fight in which the player characters are triumphant and all their enemies are slain allows an Average (D1) Discipline test which, grants 1  Morale Soak, plus 1  per Momentum (Repeatable) until the end of the next scene. Morale will ebb and flow considerably during this night's events, and other encounters may also inflict mental damage, as outlined in the specific entries below.

TACTICS & ABILITIES

- **Seize the Initiative:** The Picts can act before a player in a turn if the gamemaster pays 1 Doom point for each Pict.
- **Minions:** Pictish Warriors are defeated after one Wound or Trauma. It's up to the gamemaster if this means they're dead, playing dead, cowering, fleeing, or unconscious. They only roll 1d20 each for skill tests normally.
- **Mob:** The gamemaster may decide that a group of two or more minions are acting as a mob: they will take a single turn for the group, rather than a turn for each minion. When the mob acts, it rolls 1d20 per member for the skill test. When attacked, the mob counts as a single target, and each time a member of the mob is taken out, any remaining damage carries on to the next member of the mob; continue until there is no more excess damage, or there is no more mob.

A FATEFUL DECISION

Once the player characters have dealt with the first Pict attack, allow them to decide where they are going: north to the fort, or east to warn the settlers. If they warn the fort, proceed to *The Bridge on Bramble Creek* (below) and *Worse than Water Moccasins* (page 36), proceeding on to the fort. If they bypass the fort, skip down to *The Settlers' Road* (page 37) and proceed from there.

If all the player characters chose to bypass the fort, the gamemaster can still use *The Bridge on Bramble Creek* and *Worse than Water Moccasins* encounters, altering them if desired.

THE BRIDGE ON BRAMBLE CREEK

The player characters should each attempt Average (D1) Observation tests. Any who succeed hear the sounds of water splashing and wood chopping ahead. The player characters all know that there is a wooden bridge ahead over Bramble Creek; it's neither wide nor deep, but the bridge means the difference between staying dry or wading through waist- to chest-deep waters, in the dark. If all the player characters fail their Observation tests, the Picts hear them coming and are able to attack with surprise (they attack first without spending any Doom) as the group crosses the bridge.

There are a number of Pict warriors present equal to half the number of player characters, rounded up (a minimum of two). One Pict will be near the top of the bank, armed with a bow and arrows, while any others are in the waters below,

PURSUED BY FURIES

In this quickstart adventure, the player characters learn of and can attempt to rescue a captive settler named Rowana in the sections titled "The First House" (page 37) and "A Scream in the Distance" (page 39). The gamemaster may wish to introduce her earlier and in a more active role.

In this case, she can be introduced as early as the in the opening segment, "The First Attack" (page 32), having Rowana charge out of the brush, her dress dirtied, one shoe lost, with a bloody sharp-edged rock in her hand, knotted leather cords cut loose at her wrists. Close behind her are a handful of Pict warriors, whooping with fury, one of them with a bloody cut on his forehead... a gift from Rowana, courtesy of the sharpened rock she freed herself with.

There are four Pict Warriors (page 34), and if Rowana survives the encounter, she will tell the player characters that she escaped when the Picts stopped at the bridge on Bramble Creek (page 33), arguing with themselves about something she could not understand. Though traumatized by the loss of her family, Rowana will fight on alongside the player characters if given the chance, and will provide them with guidance and knowledge of the area if they request it. At one point, she may volunteer the knowledge that the Picts who attacked her home had with them "some sort of witch-man. He spoke to them as if he were their chief. He called a great black panther from the woods and spoke to it, then it ran away and he followed."

Rowana can accompany any other rescued settlers back to the relative safety of the Thunder River, to be encountered at the finale. If Rowana is so used, the gamemaster should ignore the "A Scream in the Distance" encounter.

hacking at the bridge supports with hatchets. The bow-armed Pict will try to hold off any enemies while his companions try to finish sabotaging the bridge. Each round, each Pict saboteur does 3 damage to the supports. The bridge has 20 Structure and can withstand 5 Breaks (see *Inanimate Objects* below) before the wooden structure collapses into the creek; the player characters must either wade the deep waters here—risking damage to their bows and arrows—or ford across shallower water elsewhere. If the bow-armed Pict is slain, his brethren charge up the bank to attack his killers.

Complications

A Complication rolled by a character in the river is liable to see the character slip over (becoming prone) or otherwise lose his footing, adding +1 difficulty to Acrobatics or



“The fort’s doomed. The Picts are blood-mad, and won’t stop until they’re all killed. There are too many of them for the men in the fort to kill. We couldn’t break through, and if we did, we could do nothing but die along with Valannus.”

— Conan, “Beyond the Black River”

INANIMATE OBJECTS

Some inanimate objects can be attacked in the same way as creatures can. Structure is used for objects used in the same fashion as Vigor, and Breaks are equivalent to Wounds.

As objects can’t take action on their own, the skill tests penalized by a Break are those made by any character using the object. In the case of the bridge, this means any skill tests made to move across the bridge itself, as the damage makes it increasingly unstable.

Athletics tests for the next turn. Bow-armed characters risk getting their bows and arrows soaked in the river, and a soaked ranged weapon increases the Difficulty of attacks using it by two steps until it’s been dried out (the next scene).

WORSE THAN WATER MOCCASINS

This attack only occurs if the player characters failed to save the bridge on Bramble Creek. Otherwise, the gamemaster should assume they have crossed and will reach the fort or reach the settlers’ road without further incident.

If the Picts succeeded in sabotaging the bridge, the player characters may want to find another place to cross the creek. They can cross near the bridge, but the water is deeper here, and as stated above their weapons may get wet and hamper their effectiveness. Even if they do cross at the bridge site, this attack still occurs, as these additional Picts have been hidden along the bank waiting for just such an ambush.

As the player characters wade through or ford across the creek, they are horrified to see several dark dripping shapes rise from the black waters and silently lurch forward to attack...Picts! There are a number of Picts present equal to the number of player characters, minus one (a minimum of two Picts). All skill tests for both sides increase in Difficulty by one step due to the deep, cold water, sucking mud, and inky darkness.

Complications

The damp and darkness means that characters may slip and leave themselves vulnerable, giving an attacker a

TO BUILD A FIRE



*"Do you know why the Picts are not trying to burn the fort with fire-arrows?
Because they don't want a flame that might warn the people to the east.
They plan to stamp out the fort, and then sweep east before anyone knows of its fall."*

– "Beyond the Black River"

Clever players may realize that the Picts are avoiding the use of fire in their attacks on the fort and the settlers, because this would warn the settlers to the east of their attack. The player characters may then decide to set their own blaze to achieve that end. At least two player characters must carry out the planning and construction of the signal fire: chopping and gathering wood, striking flint and steel, etc. As they do so, just before the fire is lit a group of five Pict warriors will attack, and additional waves of Picts will attack as the fire begins to burn and blaze brightly. The gamemaster should use the writeup for the Picts on page 34.

There may be several minutes between each wave attack, as nearby bands of Picts notice the fire and come

rushing to investigate. The gamemaster must spend costs 2 points of Doom for each successive wave. The player characters can abandon the signal fire at any time, but if they leave before the last Pict band is slain, the savages douse the fire, and the player characters do not gain the benefit listed below.

If the player characters manage to light the fire and hold off the Picts, each may make an Average (D1) Discipline test. Each player character succeeding in the test gains 1  Morale Soak, plus another +1  per Momentum (Repeatable).

Hopefully, some distant scout on the Thunder River will see the blaze and warn the settlers that something is amiss in the western woods.


bonus d20 on an attack, falling prone, or making his movements and attacks one step more difficult until the end of his next turn.

FORT TUSCELAN

Once the player characters have fought their way through the woods and made it across Bramble Creek, the path to Fort Tuscelan is clear. Unfortunately, even before they reach the fort, the player characters hear the ululating cries from hundreds of savage throats on the river ahead. Creeping forward, the player characters see bands of dozens of painted Pictish warriors passing by them in the forest, converging on the fort.

There, limned by flickering torchlight on the stockade walls, the player characters see scores...swarms...hordes...hundreds...of Picts attacking the walls in fits and waves. Arrows arc over the walls into the fort, and valiant-but-out-numbered archers on the walls loose their shafts into the hordes outside. More painted savages arrive every minute.

The player characters should realize at once that there is no way to enter the fort, or to save it: there are simply too many Picts. Fort Tuscelan is lost, along with the few hundred inhabitants inside. No one living has ever dreamed of, let alone seen, such a gathering of Pictish tribes. This is unprecedented, even apocalyptic.

Each player character must now make a Daunting (D3) Discipline test or suffer 3  mental damage, Vicious 1 due to this terrible loss, which leaves the entire province of Conajohara unprotected—including any friends or loved ones! In addition, if the player characters linger for a few rounds/minutes, the gamemaster should have each attempt a Challenging (D2) Siegecraft test to notice that the Picts avoid using fire so as not to warn settlers to the east: they intend to sweep through the forest and settlements, killing as many of the Hyborian trespassers as possible.

With no hope of joining or rescuing the forces inside the fort, the player characters' only hope is to strike out to the settlements, to warn the settlers, gathering them and helping get them across the Thunder River to safety. The banks of the Thunder River are their only hope at this point, else they will all end up as corpses, cooling as their life-blood sinks into the black and hungry earth.

THE SETTLERS' ROAD

If the player characters opted to leave the fort to its fate and set out to warn the other settlers to the east, they soon come upon what is generally referred to as the "North

Settlers' Road," a ragged track through the wilderness between the fort and the Thunder River, along which perhaps a dozen or so families reside. These habitations are usually log cabins of up to four rooms, and barns of similar construction. Each of these families have cleared a few acres of woodland in which to grow meager fields of crops, raise a cow, a pig or two, a few dozen chickens, or some combination of all of these. Each farmstead may own a horse or an ox, have a wagon or cart, piles of firewood, maybe a bow and arrows, but likely no weapons other than wood axes, hatchets, knives, or—rarely—a spear. A typical woodland farm has between four and eight residents, two or three of whom will be adults or adult children, the rest adolescents.

THE FIRST HOUSE

The first such settler's home the player characters come upon has already been struck by the Pict raiders: the farmhouse door stands ajar, as does the barn. If the player characters are familiar with the area and the settlers (each player can decide), they know this as the home of Canaeus and his family.

From a distance, Challenging (D2) Observation tests discern the corpses of several chickens and a pig in front of the barn. Inside the barn, a pair of oxen have been slaughtered, their throats cut, their blood soaking and pooling across the hay-strewn floor.

The farmhouse is even worse: the hacked and mutilated bodies of a man, woman, and four children lie scattered throughout the little house's four rooms. From the signs of it, Canaeus and his wife Iphisa fought valiantly, but were overcome. The children had apparently barricaded themselves into one small bedroom, but the door was hacked through and the children met grisly ends at the hands of the merciless Picts. Clothing, kitchenware, and other goods have been broken, torn, and strewn about the cabin's ruined interior, all stained with spatters of blood and gore. Little is left of value here.

Success at a Challenging (D2) Insight test reveals that a single shoe appears to be for a young girl that doesn't jibe with the ages and sizes of any of the deceased children present. A captive, perhaps?

Investigating this scene of carnage calls for a Challenging (D2) Discipline test for each player character, with failure causing 2 mental damage. This atrocity will be but one of several hundred committed throughout this night, unless the player characters can warn the other settlers.

THE SECOND HOUSE


The next farmhouse is over a quarter-mile down the road, a family from the Bossonian Marches. Player characters familiar with the area, or in service to Fort Tuscelan for a while may even know them by the names: the father Ulgram, Eald's Son; his wife Freide; and their children are



Edel, Cenred, Cenric, Aldred, and Rimhilde. Ulgram served in Aquilonia's peasant levies, so he may be able to defend himself and his family under normal circumstances, but not against an unending tide of savagery.

As the player character near the farm, successful Observation tests let them hear the sounds of shouting and screaming ahead, mixed amidst the unnerving cries of blood-mad Picts!

Here, the cabin is being attacked by a number of Pictish warriors equal to the number of player characters plus one. These naked painted slayers are armed with knives and hatchets, and their attentions are directed toward the occupants of the cabin. This allows the player characters one free round of attacks against the preoccupied raiders. If attacked by outsiders, the Picts turn their attention to these new enemies.

Each round, the gamemaster should assume the defenders inside the cabin (Ulgram and his wife Friede) do 1  of damage to a random Pictish fiend, stabbing through holes in the wall with a spear and hacking with a wood-axe at the Picts who reach through attempting to pull holes through the wall. The gamemaster can spend a Doom point to negate this damage, if desired. Additionally, the gamemaster may choose to spend 1 point of Doom per Pict to allow the attackers to notice the new combatants before they are ambushed, and thus not lose their first round of attacks. Alternately, for every 2 points of Doom spent, one Pict can be upgraded to have the stats of an Elite Warrior (described on page 41).

Complications


A Complication rolled here indicates that one of the persons inside the cabin was slain by one of the Picts prior to the player characters' appearance; alternately, a Complication may indicate that the player character's attack strikes one of the cabin defenders rather than the Picts.

In the Red Aftermath...

Assuming the player characters prevail, there are 1D6+1 surviving family members inside the cabin, minus any lost due to Complications. If the entire family was slain by the Pict raiders, the gamemaster should ask for the player characters

REPLACEMENT HEROES?

If the gamemaster and players wish, any of the "rescued" settler families might be able to provide replacement player characters for any lost earlier in the adventure, or a slain player character might be replaced by another scout from Fort Tuscelan, encountering the group in the aftermath of the attack on the fort. In either case, the gamemaster should pick one of the existing pre-generated player characters, altering the name and background as desired.


to each attempt a Challenging (D2) Discipline test, with failure causing 2  mental damage. In this case, the player characters arrived in time, but were still too late to help the terrified settlers, and may be haunted by this failure.

After the battle, the player character rescuers may tend to the family (if any are still alive). They are told that the Picts attacked the cabin first, so Ulgram's two draft horses yet live in the barn; kindly/wise player characters might suggest the family take them and head up the road toward Thunder River, warning other settlers as they go.

If the player characters wish to attempt a Simple (D0) Persuade test, the gamemaster may allow Ulgram's to supply them with whatever extra simple weapons they may have, depending on how much Momentum they spend: knives, hatchets, a spear, and a wood axe cost 1 Momentum each (Repeatable) while a short sword, bow, or a quiver of arrows might cost 3 point of Momentum each. They have only one spear, one sword, and one wood axe, however, and Ulgram might balk at surrendering all of his family's weapons.

A PASSAGE THROUGH PICTLAND

The next step should be determined by the actions of the player characters and the gamemaster's own choices, based on what has happened so far. Will the player characters accompany Ulgram's family to the next homestead, or will they hurry them on ahead and instead act as a rear-guard, letting them rouse the other settlers into flight? Which of these options do the players take?

If the players stay with Ulgram's family, one possible subsequent encounter might have the player characters and the family encounter a horde of average Pict warriors (see page 34) screaming down the road from the west. There will be one Pict for every member of the group including the members of Ulgram's family, children and all. This will be a desperate fight, one that would likely prove deadly to the family, and perhaps the player characters as well. Ulgram and Friede can fight as average Picts, but the children will be helpless, and any successful hit on one of them should be considered fatal or at least incapacitating. If the player characters win this battle, the bloody and tragic aftermath should hit them in the form of a Challenging (D2) Discipline test. Failure inflicts X  mental damage, X equal to the number of Ulgram's family members killed in this fight.

Alternatively, if the player characters sent the family on ahead of them—even if they only did so just as the wailing Pict horde rushed toward them, the number of Picts might only be equal to the number of player characters plus two.

The gamemaster should allow the player characters to do as they wish from this point onward: accompanying Ulgram's family to other settlers' homes, gathering frightened settlers from their cabins, or checking silent cabins for

survivors or victims. At some point the gamemaster may wish to separate the player characters from a potentially large gathering of settlers. Two ways of doing this are to have successful Average (D1) Observation tests indicate something moving in the forest nearby (see below) or to indicate that a scream has been heard somewhere out there (*A Scream in the Distance* on page 41).

DEATH'S DARK MESSENGER

This encounter should be used as desired, to draw the player characters away from the settlers they have gathered and rescued along the road, or as a sudden attack on their smaller party if they have sent the settlers ahead and are acting as a rear guard. Only with a successful Daunting (D3) Observation test will the player characters notice that something is shadowing them, moving with incredible stealth among the trees nearby—sometimes among the branches above, sometimes on the ground below!

When the thing attacks, it is a shadowy blur hurtling from the darkness beside the trail: a black panther. The gamemaster should choose a random target for a Struggle between the target's Observation and the black cat's Stealth (use its Agility and its Movement Field of Expertise). If the panther wins, it gains surprise (see page 19). The panther normally strikes from the shadows and flees, then follows its prey and strikes again a short time later, but if there are only two or three people in the group it may stay for a round or two, slashing at its bedraggled prey. In any case, if the thing loses more than half its Vigor it flees and shadows the party at a distance, waiting for another chance for an ambush, preferably against weak or injured prey.

If desired, the gamemaster can assign to the creature an unnatural origin, at the cost of 1 point of Doom. In this case, the gamemaster should indicate that the panther's sides have been branded with strange sigils, noticeable with a successful Challenging (D2) Observation test. A following successful Average (D1) Lore test allows a player character to recall that these are Pictish mystical signs, sacred to their bestial gods. These revelations call for an Average (D1) Discipline test, with failure inflicting 1 mental damage. The unnatural aspect of this creature can only mean that the bloodthirsty Pict attackers may have a shaman lurking this far east, aiding in the massacre.

Complications

In this encounter, a potential Complication may indicate that a player character has slipped and fallen prone, possibly giving the panther a bonus d20 for its attack rolls against him. Other possibilities include a broken or lost weapon, or a serious wound that continues to bleed, causing the victim to lose 1 Vigor during each round of combat for the rest of the adventure, unless a Challenging (D2) Healing test is made. In this case, only one roll is allowed by each player character.

BLACK PANTHER

ATTRIBUTES

ATTRIBUTES			
Agility	Awareness		Brawn
15	13		11
Coord.	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
6	4	6	3

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	1	Movement	2
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	0	Social	0

STRESS & SOAK

STRESS & SOAK			
Vigor	12	Armor	2
Resolve	7	Courage	1

ATTACKS

- **Savage Bite (M):** Reach 1, 6 damage, Vicious 2
- **Raking Claws (M):** Reach 2, 5 damage, 1H, Vicious 1

TACTICS & ABILITIES

If the panther makes a Raking Claws attack in the same turn as it moves, it adds the Knockdown quality to its Raking Claws, and increases their Reach to 3 for that attack.

- **Night Vision:** The panther takes no penalties from darkness.
- **Mighty Beast:** The panther can take up to 5 Trauma and Wounds, as a player character can. Further, it may spend 3 points of Doom on any turn in order to gain the effects of a Fortune point, such as a bonus Standard Action, adding a bonus d20 that has already rolled a 1, or regaining all lost Vigor or Resolve.



A SCREAM IN THE DISTANCE

This encounter may be used to draw the player characters away from the North Settlers' Road, especially if they are in the company of several other settlers. As the group hurries down the tree-lined forest path, a sharp cry echoes from the dark expanse of trees to one side. A successful Average (D1) Observation skill test allows the player characters to hear the harsh voices of several Picts, along with one young woman, whose plaintive screams cut through the night.

If the player characters decide to avoid the screaming woman (it could be a trap, after all), each must roll a Challenging (D2) Discipline test or suffering 2 mental damage for abandoning what could have been a settler, clearly in need.

Assuming the player characters attempt to rescue the young woman, the gamemaster should have the player characters attempt a Struggle, with their Stealth skill test results pitted against the Picts' Observation skill tests (use their Awareness and Senses), to determine if the player characters manage to the surprise the Picts (see page 19 for rules on surprise situations).

This party of Picts is naked, their bodies painted with crude and rude symbols, their faces in particular painted black with white highlights so that they appear to have leering skulls for heads. Most are armed with hatchets and knives, but a few carry spears as well. There is one Pict per player character, and half of these (rounded down, but at least two) are Elite Warriors (see below); these latter are the deadlier, spear-wielding Pict slayers.

This fierce band of Picts fights in silence, weaving and waving their blades about, their black-painted eyes burning with malice. If their number is reduced to one, that warrior breaks off his attack and attempts to kill the female captive. If the gamemaster pays a Doom point, this last Pict may Withdraw from combat as a Free Action; a player character may spend 1 point of Momentum (Immediate) to interpose between the charging Pict and the girl, or 2 points of Momentum (Immediate) to block the Pict's retreat and remain within Reach.

The girl is in her late teens, a settler's daughter—the one whose plundered home the player characters initially came to on the North Settlers' Road. Her hands are bound together tightly at the wrists, her feet tied so that she has about two feet of slack between them, and a rope is wound around her neck that one of the lesser Pict warriors holds like a leash. Her clothing is torn, one foot is bare, and she is muddy and bloody from dozens of minor scratches and bruises. This is Rowana, and she might be used as a replacement player character, if the player characters' ranks have been whittled down badly enough. Rowana is brave and strong-willed, despite her terrible ordeal.

Short men, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, lean-hipped. They were naked except for scanty loin clouts. The firelight brought out the play of their swelling muscles in bold relief. Their dark faces were immobile, but their narrow eyes glittered with the fire that burns in the eyes of a stalking tiger. Their tangled manes were bound back with bands of copper. Swords and axes were in their hands. Crude bandages banded the limbs of some, and smears of blood were dried on their dark skins. There had been fighting, recent and deadly.

— “Beyond the Black River”

Complications

As usual, a lesser Complication might cause a player character to stumble and fall prone. More serious Complications might have one of the Picts harm the helpless girl, doing normal attack damage.

ELITE PICT WARRIOR

ATTRIBUTES

Agility		Awareness		Brawn	
12		10		13	
Coord.	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower		
10	7	7	6		

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	0	Social	0

STRESS & SOAK

Vigor	14	Armor	1
Resolve	8	Courage	2

ATTACKS

- **Spear (M):** Reach 3, 7 damage, Unb, Piercing 1
- **Hatchet (M):** Reach 2, 7 damage, 1H, Vicious 1
- **Knife (M):** Reach 1, 6 damage, 1H, Hidden 1, Thrown, Unforgiving 1

TACTICS

- **Seize the initiative:** The Picts can act before a player in a turn if the gamemaster pays 1 point of Doom for each Pict.
- **Hardened Foes:** Elite Pict warriors are defeated after suffering two Wounds or two Trauma. It's up to the gamemaster if this means they're dead, playing dead, cowering, fleeing, or unconscious.

ROWANA, CAPTIVE SETTLER

ATTRIBUTES			
Agility	Awareness	Brawn	
11	10	8	
Coord.	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	8	9	9

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	0	Movement	1
Fortitude	0	Senses	1
Knowledge	0	Social	1

STRESS & SOAK			
Vigor	8	Armor	0
Resolve	9	Courage	1

ATTACKS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvised Attack: Reach 1, 2  damage, Improvised, Stun, Throw 	

TACTICS & ABILITIES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desperate to Survive: Rowana can withstand up to five Wounds and five Trauma: as much as a player character can. 	

HOPELESSLY OUTNUMBERED

This encounter may be used as the finale of the adventure, or it may be the penultimate battle, depending on how badly the player characters are injured at this point. If the party is too badly injured or running out of weapons, the gamemaster should choose either this or the following encounter (*The Horror from the Trees*, page 43) as the finale of the adventure. If the party is still in good shape, the gamemaster is encouraged to run both of these scenes.

The player characters are getting close to the Thunder River, where they hope to find some safety from the hordes of murderous Picts. After dealing with the fearsome skull-faced Picts and their young captive, the remaining player characters once again strike out east. They can almost hear the trickle of the river ahead...

...when a babble of angry yelping voices breaks out not far behind them! More of the damnable Picts!

The player characters can try to outrun this horde—it sounds like a dozen of them, at least! Or they can stand and fight, hoping to pick them off with ranged weapons

before they get close. It should be obvious, however, that even if they could outrun the Picts, the fiends will surely catch them as they try to cross the river. Should the player characters decide to run, they may make this realization later, at the river. In this case, the gamemaster should add +1 difficulty to their attacks and physical skill tests, as they will have winded themselves in their flight.

There are twice as many average Pict warriors in the band as there are player characters. The gamemaster can spend 3 points of Doom apiece to make up to three of those Picts Elite Warriors rather than Average, though this makes this skirmish extremely tough, especially if the player characters are already winded (see above).

The player characters will have one free round of ranged attacks against the oncoming Pict horde before they get into close combat; by expending 2 points of Momentum (Immediate), a player character may get off an extra ranged attack before the howling madmen reach them. What follows is desperate carnage, as the blood-mad Picts hurl themselves at the hated Hyborian invaders.

If Rowana yet lives, she too fights with whatever weapons the player characters give her, or whatever weapon she may have scrounged from dead Picts, willing to die fighting as retribution for the massacre of her family.

Unless the player characters are doing extremely well, the gamemaster should refrain from using additional Doom points in this encounter to allow the Picts to attack first: they already have the advantage of greater numbers.

Complications

In this frenzied battle, a Complication might mean a player character has accidentally struck an ally within Reach, or accidentally dropped a sweat- or blood-slick weapon. Multiple Complications might indicate the character is shoved into the river (if applicable), making any subsequent actions one difficulty step harder.

Victory Without Reward

If this is the finale, the gamemaster should let the results of the battle stand as determined by the dice. If all the player characters die, so be it. There's a virtually impossible flight to safety. If the gamemaster wishes a happier ending, it might arrive in the form of a handful of settlers, fellow scouts, or even re-enforcements from across Thunder River, arriving just in time to aid the last few player characters, helping them take down the remaining the Picts.

If the player characters make it through this tough fight with a little bit of steel left in them, the gamemaster may wish to throw one last encounter at them, a Pict shaman responsible for part of this carnage...

THE HORROR FROM THE TREES

The gamemaster should decide whether to use this encounter or the previous one as the climax of the adventure, or he may play both if the player character can take the punishment.

As the player characters catch their breath and tend to their wounds, either from rescuing Rowana or dealing with the horde of Picts near the edge of the Thunder River, the gamemaster should call for an Average (D1) Observation test from all. Success detects the sound of something or someone moving in the brush nearby. If one of the player characters spends 2 points of Momentum, the character will also detect shadowy movement in the treetops at the edge of his vision. Then, a harsh, gabbling voice calls out from the forest, the speaker apparently moving to circle them, taunting them in the brutish Pictish tongue.

If any player characters generated Complications on that Observation test, they are the first targets of the ensuing attack. Otherwise, the gamemaster should choose whoever received the most failures or fewest successes. While the player characters hearken to the Pictish taunts, a large ape-like beast has been approaching quietly through the tree limbs above, finally to swing down and launch itself at its target. This is the bestial ape-man thing called the *chakan*, a creature of legend and folklore among the residents of the Westermarck. Few have seen these powerful ape-things, and even fewer have seen one this close...and lived!

The *chakan* attempts to grapple and strangle its target, killing one then fleeing into the trees to launch another possible ambush, killing the Pict shaman's enemies one by one.

The *chakan*'s master is indeed a lesser Pict shaman, named Anavenagar. It was he who sent the black panther after the player characters earlier, and he who directed most of the night's attacks upon them. Lurking in the darkness, it was Anavenagar who has plagued them, and he now directs his final vengeance against them.

The shaman hides in the shadows, watching as the *chakan* (hopefully) slays his foes, occasionally rising up out of cover to cast a spell or throw a spear or hatchet. Player characters who make a Challenging (D2) Observation test can spot him and make a ranged attack, or can attempt to follow him as he circles his prey. If they decide to close in, spending 2 points of Momentum allows player characters to confront the devil in close combat.

Anavenagar's spells include *Face of Fear* (his face appears to be bat-like or otherwise nightmarish/bestial, causing terror in those who see him), *Spectral Knife* (allows him to attack at a distance with an invisible knife), and *Command Mighty Beast* (allowing it to control the panther and the *chakan*). These spells are described with his writeup, below.

Otherwise, Anavenagar continues to circle and harass the player characters until the *chakan* is dead, at which time he attempts to flee. In this case, the chase becomes a Struggle of the fleeing shaman's Movement versus the pursuers' Observation. If the shaman wins he escapes, but if the player characters prevail they can catch up to the fiend and may battle him to the bloody end.

Complications

A Complication rolled during this encounter might cause either the *chakan* or the shaman to choose that person as the target of the next attack, with a bonus d20 added to that attack, or a free point of Doom on the spell. Alternately, the usual predicaments of lost or broken weapons, or fallen combatants, can be used.

CHAKAN

ATTRIBUTES			
Agility		Awareness	
13		9	
Coord.		Brawn	
11		15	
Intelligence		Willpower	
5		7	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE			
Combat	2	Movement	1
Fortitude	2	Senses	1
Knowledge	0	Social	0

STRESS & SOAK			
Vigor	17	Armor	2
Resolve	9	Courage	2

ATTACKS	
■ Grasping Hands: Reach 1, 8  damage, Grappling, Unforgiving 2	
■ Brutal Slam: Reach 2, 7  damage, Knockdown, Stun	

TACTICS & ABILITIES	
The <i>chakan</i> uses its brutal slam against enemies that seek to harm it, but it reserves its Grasping Hands for the foes that it singles out.	
■ Night Vision: The <i>chakan</i> takes no penalties from darkness.	
■ Mighty Beast: The <i>chakan</i> can take up to 5 Trauma and Wounds, as a player character can. Further, it may spend 3 points of Doom on any turn in order to gain the effects of a Fortune point, such as a bonus Standard Action, adding a bonus d20 that has already rolled a 1, or regaining all lost Vigor or Resolve.	

ANAVENAGAR, PICT SHAMAN

ATTRIBUTES

Agility		Awareness		Brawn	
12		13		9	
Coord.	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower		
12	11	12	13		




FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	0	Movement	0
Fortitude	1	Senses	2
Knowledge	1	Social	1



STRESS & SOAK

Vigor	10	Armor	0
Resolve	14	Courage	3

ATTACKS

- **Spear:** Reach 3, 5  damage, Unb, Piercing 1
- **Hatchet:** Reach 2, 5  damage, 1H, Vicious 1
- **Knife:** Reach 1, 4  damage, 1H, Hidden 1, Thrown, Unforgiving 1

TACTICS & ABILITIES

- **Mighty Foe:** Anavenagar can take up to 5 Trauma and Wounds, just as a player character can. Furthermore, he may spend 3 points of Doom on any turn in order to gain the effects of a Fortune point, such as a bonus Standard Action, adding a bonus d20 that has already rolled a 1, or regaining all lost Vigor or Resolve.
- **Lurking:** Anavenagar may re-roll one d20 when making a Stealth test, but must accept the new result.
- **Beast-wise:** Anavenagar may re-roll any one d20 on a skill test involving animals, but must accept the new result.
- **Sorcery:** Anavenagar may spend Doom points as a Standard Action in order to create a range of sorcerous effects.
 - ▶ **Face of Fear:** Costs 3 points of Doom. When cast, one enemy in Medium range must attempt a Daunting (D3) Discipline test or suffer 3  mental damage. Stun, Vicious 1.
 - ▶ **Spectral Knife:** Costs 2 points of Doom. When cast, Anavenagar may attack one visible enemy in Medium range with an Average (D1) Sorcery test (Willpower plus Knowledge). The target may attempt a Defense Reaction as if avoiding a ranged attack. If it hits, the spectral knife deals 4  damage with Vicious 2.
 - ▶ **Command Mighty Beast:** Costs 3 points of Doom. When cast, the caster may nominate a single mighty beast (such as the panther, or the chakan) within Medium range. The target creature gains one additional Standard Action and a bonus d20 on any skill test that action requires.

PRE-GENERATED CHARACTER



PETRUS, CURIOUS NOBLE



THE YOUNGEST SON OF A WEALTHY AQUILONIAN FAMILY, PETRUS CAME INTO HIS INHERITANCE just as his elder siblings finished gambling it away. With little to his name, he set off to the Westermark and the Bossonian Marches, where King Numedides of Aquilonia is giving away land to his barons. Though trained in the ways of war, Petrus is far more suited as a diplomat and a leader. Mitra willing, he will command a noble house one day, perhaps as a baron or greater. Currently, Petrus has found employ as hired mercenary at the edge of Pictland.

Petrus is just out of his teens, and is tall, of average build, with dark, curly hair and brown eyes. His war-gear is well-made, and bears his family crest, two hounds snarling at one another, their bodies twined in a ring.

AGILITY	9	
Skill	TN	Focus
Acrobatics	12	3
Melee	10	1
Stealth	10	1

AWARENESS	7	
Skill	TN	Focus
Insight	7	
Observation	8	1
Survival	8	1
Thievery	8	1

BRAWN	8	
Skill	TN	Focus
Athletics	9	1
Resistance	8	

COORDINATION	8	
Skill	TN	Focus
Parry	9	1
Ranged Weapons	8	
Sailing	9	1

INTELLIGENCE	9	
Skill	TN	Focus
Alchemy	9	
Craft	9	
Healing	9	
Linguistics	9	
Lore	11	2
Siegecraft	9	

PERSONALITY	11	
Skill	TN	Focus
Animal Handling	13	2
Command	13	2
Counsel	12	
Persuade	13	2
Society	13	2

WILLPOWER	10	
Skill	TN	Focus
Discipline	10	
Sorcery	10	

SOAK	
Armor	2 (Brigandine)
Courage	0

STRESS	
Vigor	██████████
Resolve	██████████

SERIOUS HARMS	
Wounds	██████████
Trauma	██████████

BONUS DAMAGE (included below)	
Ranged	0
Melee	0
Presence	+2 🐾

ATTACKS	
■ Sword (M): Reach 2, 1H, 4 🐾, Parrying	
■ Small Shield (M): Reach 2, 1H, 2 🐾, Knockdown, Parrying, Shield 2	
■ War Bow (R): Range L, 3 🐾, 2H, Piercing 1, Volley	
■ Steely Glare (T): Range C, 4 🐾 mental, Stun	

TALENTS	
■ Agile: When making an Acrobatics test Petrus can re-roll one d20, but must accept the new result.	
■ Commanding: When making a Command test Petrus can re-roll one d20, but must accept the new result.	
■ Observant: When making an Observation test Petrus can re-roll one d20, but must accept the new result.	

OTHER BELONGINGS	
Basic Travelling Provisions, 1 Load of Arrows	

PRE-GENERATED CHARACTER



LUCINA, BRAVE HERDER



BORN IN THE WESTERMARCK, THE REGION RUNNING BETWEEN THE BLACK RIVER AND AQUILONIA, Lucina has seen the steady increase of settlements and the traffic of Aquilonia's advance into Pictish territory. She has also seen firsthand the effects of the Pict's response, a trespass met with blood and fire. Trained in herbalism and a tradition of magical arts by her mother—a hedge witch—Lucina knows a few tricks and has used them to keep herself and her flock alive.

She is tall, willowy and has reddish-brown hair which she braids to keep from catching in branches. Her clothes are common to the folk of the Westermarck, browns and green with a quilted tunic.

AGILITY	8	
Skill	TN	Focus
Acrobatics	9	1
Melee	9	1
Stealth	10	2

AWARENESS	8	
Skill	TN	Focus
Insight	8	
Observation	10	2
Survival	10	2
Thievery	8	

BRAWN	9	
Skill	TN	Focus
Athletics	10	1
Resistance	10	1

COORDINATION	8	
Skill	TN	Focus
Parry	9	1
Ranged Weapons	10	2
Sailing	8	

INTELLIGENCE	8	
Skill	TN	Focus
Alchemy	8	
Craft	9	1
Healing	9	1
Linguistics	8	
Lore	8	
Siegecraft	8	

PERSONALITY	9	
Skill	TN	Focus
Animal Handling	13	4
Command	9	
Counsel	9	
Persuade	9	
Society	9	

WILLPOWER	12	
Skill	TN	Focus
Discipline	15	3
Sorcery	12	

SOAK	
Armor	1 (Padded)
Courage	0

STRESS	
Vigor	
Resolve	

SERIOUS HARMS	
Wounds	
Trauma	

BONUS DAMAGE (included below)	
Ranged	0
Melee	+1
Presence	+1

- | ATTACKS | |
|---|--|
| ■ Battle Axe (M): Reach 2, Unb, 5 , Intense, Vicious 1 | |
| ■ Small Shield (M): Reach 2, 1H, 3 , Knockdown, Parrying, Shield 2 | |
| ■ Sling (R): Range C, 3 , 1H, Stun, Volley | |
| ■ Steely Glare (T): Range C, 3 mental, Stun | |

- | TALENTS | |
|---|--|
| ■ Accurate: When rolling damage for a ranged attack Lucina may re-roll up to 1 . | |
| ■ Observant: When making an Observation test Lucina may re-roll one d20, but must accept the new result. | |
| ■ Stealthy: When making a Stealth test Lucina may re-roll one d20, but must accept the new result. | |

OTHER BELONGINGS	
Basic Travelling Provisions, Healer's Bag (1 poultice—each poultice adds 1 bonus d20 to Healing tests), 1 Load of Sling Stones	

PRE-GENERATED CHARACTER



EDRIC, GRIZZLED VETERAN



THOUGH BORN THE SON OF A PEASANT, EDRIC WAS PRESSED INTO MILITARY SERVICE DURING one of Nemedi's wars with its neighbors. During this pageant of battle, he became a skilled fighter, eventually mustering out and joining a mercenary company made up of Nemedian and Brythunian veterans. Edric has gone where the gold is, a road that has led him to the border between Pictland and Aquilonia.

Edric is of average height and has short-cropped brown hair, hazel eyes, and a slight beard. He is rangy and compact, some visible scars hinting at his past. His armor and weapons are those of a seasoned warrior—a display of competence rather than glory.

AGILITY	10	
Skill	TN	Focus
Acrobatics	11	1
Melee	13	3
Stealth	11	1

AWARENESS	10	
Skill	TN	Focus
Insight	10	
Observation	11	1
Survival	11	1
Thievery	10	

BRAWN	9	
Skill	TN	Focus
Athletics	11	3
Resistance	9	1

COORDINATION	9	
Skill	TN	Focus
Parry	13	4
Ranged Weapons	11	2
Sailing	9	

INTELLIGENCE	9	
Skill	TN	Focus
Alchemy	9	
Craft	10	1
Healing	10	1
Linguistics	9	
Lore	9	
Siegecraft	9	

PERSONALITY	8	
Skill	TN	Focus
Animal Handling	9	1
Command	8	
Counsel	8	
Persuade	9	1
Society	8	

WILLPOWER	8	
Skill	TN	Focus
Discipline	9	1
Sorcery	8	

SOAK	
Armor	2 (Brigandine)
Courage	0

STRESS	
Vigor	
Resolve	

SERIOUS HARMS	
Wounds	
Trauma	

BONUS DAMAGE (included below)	
Ranged	+2
Melee	+1
Presence	0

ATTACKS	
■ Sword (M): Reach 2, 1H, 5 , Parrying	
■ Small Shield (M): Reach 2, 1H, 3 , Knockdown, Parrying, Shield 2	
■ War Bow (R): Range L, 5 , 2H, Piercing 1, Volley	
■ Steely Glare (T): Range C, 2 mental, Stun	

TALENTS	
■ Deflect: When Edric makes a Defense Reaction using the Parry skill, he pays one fewer Doom than normal (minimum 0).	
■ No Mercy: Edric may re-roll up to one when rolling damage for a melee weapon.	
■ Rigorous Training: Whenever Edric rolls at least one success on an Athletics test, he gains one additional success automatically.	

OTHER BELONGINGS	
Basic Travelling Provisions, 1 Load of Arrows, Healer's Bag (1 poultice — each poultice spent adds 1 bonus d20 to Healing tests)	

PRE-GENERATED CHARACTER



ADELSTAN, YOUNG KNIGHT



ADELSTAN'S FATHER WAS A KNIGHT IN SERVICE TO AQUILONIA, KILLED IN ONE OF KING NUMEDIDES' MANY border wars with Zingara, and his mother, a noble's handmaiden who died in childbirth. Thus orphaned, Adelstan was fostered as a squire, learning the way of mounted horsemanship, chivalry, and armed combat. With little but his war-gear, Adelstan has come to the Aquilonian border to make a name for himself, so that he can return to more civilized lands and earn some sort of rank or title.

Adelstan is tall and broad-shouldered, with a thick shock of tawny hair and brown eyes, a wisp of a beard upon his chin and cheeks. His armor and weapons are inherited from his father, well-made and serviceable, and have seen much use.

AGILITY	10	
Skill	TN	Focus
Acrobatics	11	1
Melee	11	1
Stealth	11	1

AWARENESS	10	
Skill	TN	Focus
Insight	11	
Observation	11	1
Survival	11	1
Thievery	10	

BRAWN	10	
Skill	TN	Focus
Athletics	11	1
Resistance	13	3

COORDINATION	10	
Skill	TN	Focus
Parry	13	3
Ranged Weapons	11	1
Sailing	10	

INTELLIGENCE	7	
Skill	TN	Focus
Alchemy	7	
Craft	7	
Healing	8	1
Linguistics	7	
Lore	9	2
Siegecraft	7	

PERSONALITY	7	
Skill	TN	Focus
Animal Handling	8	1
Command	7	
Counsel	7	
Persuade	7	
Society	10	3

WILLPOWER	8	
Skill	TN	Focus
Discipline	10	2
Sorcery	8	

SOAK	
Armor	3 (Mail)
Courage	2

STRESS	
Vigor	
Resolve	

SERIOUS HARMS	
Wounds	
Trauma	

BONUS DAMAGE (included below)	
Ranged	+2
Melee	+2
Presence	0

ATTACKS	
■ Broadsword (M): Reach 2, Unb, 7 , Parrying	
■ Large Shield (M): Reach 2, Unb, 4 , Knockdown, Shield 4	
■ Light Crossbow (R): Range M, 5 , Unb, Unforgiving 1, Volley	
■ Steely Glare (T): Range C, 2 mental, Stun	

TALENTS	
■ Courteous: When making a Society test Adelstan may re-roll one d20, but must accept the new result.	
■ Enduring: When making a Resistance test, Adelstan may re-roll any dice that didn't generate a success on the initial roll, but must accept the new result.	
■ Courageous: Adelstan has two Courage Soak, which applies against all mental attacks. When making a Discipline test, Adelstan may also re-roll one d20, but must accept the new result.	

OTHER BELONGINGS	
Basic Travelling Provisions, 1 Load of Light Crossbow Bolts	

PRE-GENERATED CHARACTER



MAEVE, TALENTED ARCHER



FEW CIMMERIANS LEAVE THEIR RUGGED HILLS, BUT MAEVE IS ONE OF THESE ODDITIES. BORN to one of the southern-most hill-tribes, Maeve's folk were not so hostile towards the folk of the Bossonian Marches, and intermarried with them at times. And thus, indulging her wanderlust, Maeve joined one of their companies, learning the ways of the famed Bossonian archers. Since then, she continued southward, currently seeing what the border between Aquilonia and Pictland has to offer.

Maeve is tall and lean, with a fierce countenance, with a night-black mane of hair and eyes like chips of ice. She wears the gear of a Bossonian archer, as well as the thick woolen garments of her homeland.

AGILITY	10	
Skill	TN	Focus
Acrobatics	12	2
Melee	11	1
Stealth	12	2

AWARENESS	10	
Skill	TN	Focus
Insight	10	
Observation	11	1
Survival	12	2
Thievery	10	

BRAWN	7	
Skill	TN	Focus
Athletics	8	1
Resistance	7	

COORDINATION	11	
Skill	TN	Focus
Parry	13	2
Ranged Weapons	15	4
Sailing	11	

INTELLIGENCE	9	
Skill	TN	Focus
Alchemy	9	
Craft	10	1
Healing	9	
Linguistics	9	
Lore	10	1
Siegecraft	9	

PERSONALITY	7	
Skill	TN	Focus
Animal Handling	9	2
Command	8	1
Counsel	8	1
Persuade	7	
Society	7	

WILLPOWER	8	
Skill	TN	Focus
Discipline	9	1
Sorcery	8	

SOAK	
Armor	2 (Brigandine)
Courage	0

STRESS	
Vigor	
Resolve	

SERIOUS HARMS	
Wounds	
Trauma	

BONUS DAMAGE (included below)	
Ranged	+2
Melee	0
Presence	0

ATTACKS	
■ Sword (M): Reach 2, 1H, 4 , Parrying	
■ Dagger (M): Reach 1, 1H, 3 , Hidden 1, Parrying, Thrown, Unforgiving 1	
■ War Bow (R): Range L, 5 , 2H, Piercing 1, Volley	
■ Steely Glare (T): Range C, 2 mental, Stun	

TALENTS	
■ Accurate: When Maeve rolls damage for a ranged attack, she may re-roll up to 1 .	
■ Deflect: When making a Defense Reaction using the Parry skill, Maeve pays one fewer Doom than normal (minimum 0).	
■ Educated: When attempting a Lore test, if Maeve generates at least one success, she may immediately roll an extra d20 and add the result to the test.	

OTHER BELONGINGS	
Basic Travelling Provisions, 3 Loads of Arrows	

PRE-GENERATED CHARACTER

OTHWALD, EXPERIENCED TRACKER

BORN IN THE GUNDERLAND PROVINCE IN NORTHERN AQUILONIA, OTHWALD IS OF THAT FIERCE, pure breed of Hybori stock. A rugged frontiersman, Othwald learned the ways of the forest when he was but a whelp, and has years-hard experience tracking and scouting the Pictish Wilderness, often as part of the Aquilonian advance into that region. Restless among civilized folk, Othwald has come to the border, seeking to know what lies beyond the tree line.

Compact of build, Othwald has grey eyes, a shaggy mop of tawny hair, and wears a short beard. His garb is that of a tracker and seasoned woodsman, well-worn leather, fur, and wool, his weapons plain yet serviceable.

AGILITY	9	
Skill	TN	Focus
Acrobatics	11	2
Melee	12	3
Stealth	11	2

AWARENESS	9	
Skill	TN	Focus
Insight	9	
Observation	12	3
Survival	12	3
Thievery	10	1

BRAWN	9	
Skill	TN	Focus
Athletics	10	1
Resistance	9	

COORDINATION	8	
Skill	TN	Focus
Parry	9	1
Ranged Weapons	8	
Sailing	8	

INTELLIGENCE	10	
Skill	TN	Focus
Alchemy	10	
Craft	10	
Healing	11	1
Linguistics	10	
Lore	11	1
Siegecraft	10	



PERSONALITY	8	
Skill	TN	Focus
Animal Handling	10	1
Command	9	
Counsel	9	
Persuade	9	
Society	9	





WILLPOWER	8	
Skill	TN	Focus
Discipline	9	1
Sorcery	8	


SOAK	
Armor	1 (Fur and Leather)
Courage	0

STRESS	
Vigor	10
Resolve	10

SERIOUS HARM	
Wounds	0
Trauma	0

BONUS DAMAGE (included below)	
Ranged	+1 
Melee	+1 
Presence	0

ATTACKS	
■ Spear (M): Reach 3, Unb, 5  , Piercing 1	
■ Battle Axe (M): Reach 2, Unb, 5  , Intense, Vicious 1	
■ Dagger (M): Reach 1, 4  , 1H, Hidden 1, Parrying, Thrown, Unforgiving 1	
■ Steely Glare (T): Range C, 2  , mental, Stun	

TALENTS	
■ No Mercy: When Othwald rolls damage for a melee weapon, he may re-roll up to one  .	
■ Observant: When making an Observation test, Othwald may re-roll one d20 but must accept the new result.	
■ Survivor: When making a Survival test, Othwald may re-roll one d20 but must accept the new result.	

OTHER BELONGINGS	
Basic Travelling Provisions, Healer's Bag (2 poultices — each poultice spent adds 1 bonus d20 to Healing tests)	

PRE-GENERATED CHARACTER

AMALA, BLADE FOR HIRE

BORN IN ONE OF HYPERBOREA'S BLEAK STONE FASTNESSES, AMALA WAS THE DAUGHTER OF A Brythunian slave, her father a petty warlord. Life was hard and treacherous, with a dim future ahead. While on a raid into the Border Kingdoms, Amala saw that even those meager towns offered a better life. She escaped, exploring the Hyborean kingdoms to the west of her homeland. Eventually, Amala ventured to the Bossonian Marches, where quick wits and a ready blade may provide her with what her birthright could not.

Amala is tall and lean, with a ragged shock of grayish-blond hair and pale blue eyes. Her tunic and garments are of dull leather and wool, with a voluminous cloak of dark muted purple. Her broad girdle boasts a sword and knife, and hidden around her person are more such weapons.

AGILITY	12	
Skill	TN	Focus
Acrobatics	13	1
Melee	13	1
Stealth	15	3

AWARENESS	9	
Skill	TN	Focus
Insight	9	
Observation	10	1
Survival	10	1
Thievery	10	1

BRAWN	8	
Skill	TN	Focus
Athletics	10	2
Resistance	9	1

COORDINATION	10	
Skill	TN	Focus
Parry	12	2
Ranged Weapons	11	1
Sailing	10	

INTELLIGENCE	8	
Skill	TN	Focus
Alchemy	8	
Craft	8	
Healing	9	1
Linguistics	8	
Lore	10	2
Siegecraft	8	

PERSONALITY	8	
Skill	TN	Focus
Animal Handling	8	
Command	8	
Counsel	8	
Persuade	8	
Society	8	

WILLPOWER	11	
Skill	TN	Focus
Discipline	13	2
Sorcery	11	

SOAK	
Armor	1 (Leathers)
Courage	0

STRESS	
Vigor	
Resolve	

SERIOUS HARMS	
Wounds	
Trauma	

BONUS DAMAGE (included below)	
Ranged	+1
Melee	0
Presence	0

ATTACKS	
■ Sword (M): Reach 2, 1H, 4 , Parrying	
■ Dagger (M): Reach 1, 1H, 3 , Hidden 1, Parrying, Thrown, Unforgiving 1	
■ War Bow (R): Range L, 4 , 2H, Piercing 1, Volley	
■ Steely Glare (T): Range C, 2 mental, Stun	

TALENTS	
■ No Mercy: When Amala rolls damage for a melee weapon, she may re-roll up to one .	
■ Stealthy: When making a Stealth test Amala may re-roll one d20, but must accept the new result.	
■ Many Blades: Amala is never unarmed, always carrying at least a dagger concealed about her person. Even if something would cause her to lose all her weaponry, she may add 1 point to the Doom pool to produce a concealed dagger as a Minor Action.	

OTHER BELONGINGS	
Basic Travelling Provisions, Healer's Bag (2 poultices — each poultice spent adds 1 bonus d20 to Healing tests)	

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